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South Jersey Town Bans Smoking on Streets, Sidewalks, Stoops and Steps

BY **VICTOR FIORILLO**, OCTOBER 14, 2014 AT 12:11 PM

Gloucester City is a 2.7-square mile town along the Delaware River just south of Camden, with the New Jersey end of the Walt Whitman Bridge sitting within its boundaries. And thanks to a new ordinance, you can't light up in part of Gloucester City unless you are sitting inside of your home.

The new smoking ban just went into effect in the Monmouth Street Business District, the "Main Street" area of Gloucester City, as it were. The law prohibits cigarette smoking and all other forms of tobacco use in any outdoor areas within the boundaries.

So, if you're caught smoking or chewing or vaping outside the Knights of Columbus building or Ben's Barber Shop or your home within that district, you will be fined \$100 to \$250 for the first offense and \$500 to \$1,000 for any subsequent offenses.

"We've had issues with this area," explains Gloucester City administrator Jack Lipsett of the origins of the law. "We're spending a hell of a lot of money to refurbish it, and we've got people standing outside everywhere smoking. There are cigarette butts everywhere, and people can't get by because people are smoking on the street. We put out these nice flower urns, and they are filled with cigarette butts."

The owner of the building that houses the Knights of Columbus and an athletic club claims that Gloucester City is using the new law to force him to sell the building to the town, which he says it tried to buy in the past.

"When some people drink, they like to smoke," he told the *Gloucester City News*. "When they go outside to have a cigarette, we have no control over them. Our rentals will suffer because of this no smoking ban."

But city solicitor John Kearney laughs at the notion that Gloucester City is trying to push them out. "That building may have the biggest concentration of smokers on sidewalks in the area," he says. "But this wasn't a targeted effort against them. That said, if they decide to smoke outside of the building and throw their butts in the street, the law will be enforced."

Naturally, the smokers' rights people will use this occasion to invoke the old slippery slope argument: *What's next? A ban on smoking inside my house?*

"We wouldn't even *think* of trying that," promises Kearney. "At least three out of seven of the people on the Council are smokers."

<http://www.phillymag.com/news/2014/10/14/gloucester-city-smoking-ban-south-jersey/>