

Queens Councilman to propose smoking ban in NYC housing

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Smokers in city subsidized housing would have to butt out under a new bill in the City Council.

The legislation being introduced Thursday would ban smoking in apartments at all new city-financed affordable housing and existing NYCHA developments.

Queens Councilman Donovan Richards's proposal would slap the prohibition on units that get city subsidies, tax breaks, loans or cheap land after it takes effect — expected to cover tens of thousands of units under Mayor de Blasio's plan to build or preserve 200,000 affordable homes over a decade.

“There is no safe amount of secondhand smoke,” Richards said. “We want to make sure we're doing everything we can to protect people's health, especially if we're putting taxpayer dollars into buildings.”

It would also apply to hundreds of public housing developments run by NYCHA.

The federal government has been encouraging housing authorities to go smoke free, and if the Department of Housing and Urban Development issues a nationwide policy restricting smoking in coming months it would preempt the city move for NYCHA properties.

“We've done bars. We've done the parks. This is the last frontier in the debate about smoking,” Richards said of the proposal, which would push beyond the broad anti-smoking policies passed under former Mayor Mike Bloomberg.

Most buildings allow residents to smoke inside their apartments, but some landlords have chosen to enact smoke-free policies at their properties.

Public housing authorities in cities from Philadelphia to Albany have also recently instituted bans.

Richards brushed off concerns that a ban would infringe on people's right to smoke in their own homes, adding outdoor areas could be designated for smokers.

“When you smoke, you're affecting your neighbors,” he said. “You have a right to do what you want to do in your apartment — except when it's hurting people next door or upstairs.”

The legislation does not yet specify penalties.

Richards said residents might get warnings, followed by fines for repeat offenses.

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