

Tobacco-Free Parks Policies



Background

Definition

Tobacco-free parks policies restrict the use of cigarettes and other tobacco products, often including electronic smoking devices, in community parks and open spaces. Tobacco-free parks policies contribute to the de-normalization of smoking, supporting attitudes and views of smoking as outside typical healthy behavior. Additionally, they reduce litter from cigarette butts and other tobacco products.

Health, equity and sustainability considerations

Tobacco-free parks policies reduce public exposure to second-hand smoke. Exposure to second-hand smoke has a disproportionate health impact on vulnerable populations including children and the elderly. Additionally, discouraging tobacco use is an integral component of other public health programs and initiatives for cessation.

Tobacco-free parks policies are a useful tobacco exposure reduction tool in Washington State, specifically in areas where local governments are otherwise pre-empted from enacting restrictions on smoking in workplaces, tobacco advertising, or regulation of retailers.

South King County communities have a higher than average rate of tobacco use than the rest of King County. Public Health – Seattle & King County [reports](#) that countywide smoking rates are at 11% compared to 14% to 20% in South King County communities.

20% of adults smoke in South King County communities.

The January 2014 Public Health- Seattle & King County [report on tobacco policies in public parks](#) reported on the four cities in King County with 100% tobacco-free policies: Bothell, Shoreline, Woodinville, and Burien. Of the four cities, Burien is the only city in south King County. However,

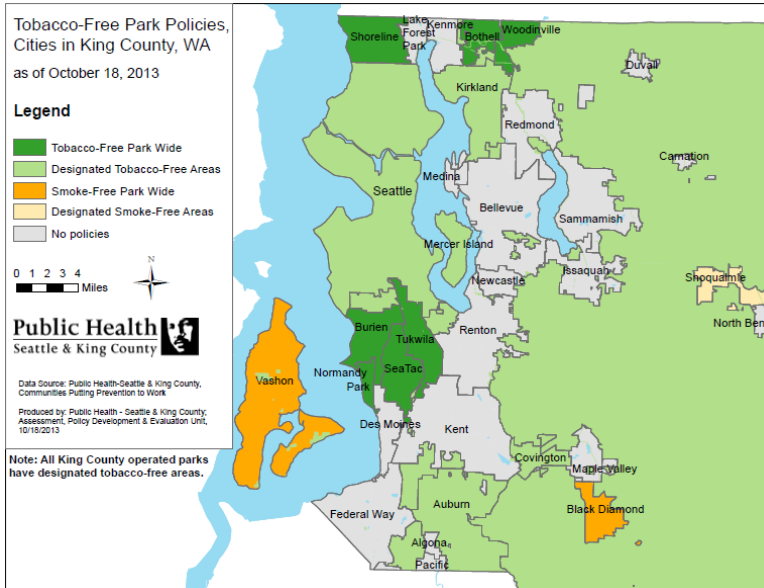
the majority of cities (26) in King County have no tobacco-use policies for parks.

Kirkland, SeaTac, Woodinville, Tukwila, and Covington (42% of cities with policies) differentiated tobacco-use enforcement measures from enforcement of other types of park conduct (i.e., littering, alcohol use, etc.). The remainder enforced their tobacco policy in the same manner as other provisions in their parks' code of conduct. No cities explicitly restrict e-cigarette use.

Program and Policy Examples

Program examples—How is it used locally?

A number of communities in King County have instituted restrictions on smoking or tobacco use in their parks. The policies vary by jurisdiction.



King County jurisdictions with tobacco-free parks policies, October 2013.

Burien’s ordinance requests youth athletic associations to enforce the restrictions during their events. See City of Burien, [Policy 3000.300.10](#).

Normandy Park recently amended its tobacco-free parks policy to include restrictions on the use of “unapproved nicotine delivery products” such as electronic or “smokeless” cigarettes. See City of Normandy Park, [Ordinance 904](#).

SeaTac restricts the ban on tobacco use to designated parks. See City of SeaTac Municipal Code, [2.45.365](#).

Development regulations and model ordinances

The Washington state [Smoking in Public Places law](#), enacted in 2005, prohibits smoking in “public places” including bars, restaurants, and private residences used to provide childcare and other social services. The law also prohibits smoking within 25 feet of entrances, exits, windows that open, and ventilation intakes. While this law makes great strides to curb the detrimental effects of cigarette smoke in enclosed spaces, it does little to address tobacco use in public outdoor spaces. Local jurisdictions have added additional smoking restrictions to their municipal codes and city ordinances. See Program Examples above for example regulations and ordinances.

Decision-making applications

Developing tobacco-free parks policies are relatively inexpensive and demand minimal time and resources. Extensive local policy sets ideal precedent for additional jurisdictions to build policy language. Implementation can be more challenging and resource demanding as new policy may require outreach and enforcement to encourage behavior change and make tobacco-free parks a new social norm.

Implementation

Developing policy language

The majority of King County residents (72%) support prohibiting smoking in outdoor public areas. Public Health—Seattle & King County provides an implementation guide with a number of case studies, models, contact information and other resources. See [Tobacco-Free Parks: Policy Implementation Guide](#). Pages 6-7 of the guide focus on model policy language and provide example policy.

Opportunities for funding

Tobacco-free park policies often require little to no additional funding. The policy can build on a jurisdiction's existing tobacco prohibition policies and park conduct enforcement. If linked with other policies and programs, such as sustainable parks and open spaces, and child physical activity, there may be opportunities for shared funding.

Considerations for local implementation

Tobacco-free and smoke-free parks are becoming a norm across Washington state. More than 25 cities in 12 counties throughout Washington have already adopted policies promoting tobacco and smoke free public outdoor areas. Jurisdictions can build on existing policies and precedent to help quick start and streamline local efforts.

In King County, the [Communities Putting Prevention to Work \(CPPW\)](#) grant helped to lay a robust framework for creating neighborhoods where it's safer to walk or bike, where schools and childcare settings are providing healthier foods and drinks, and where all King County residents can breathe smoke-free air.

Challenges to implementation

The 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Survey conducted by the Washington State Department of Health reports that a majority of King County residents (72%) support prohibiting smoking in outdoor public areas. Nonetheless, while the examples highlighted above demonstrate how policies have been adapted to a community's needs, there may be additional resistance to policies related to outdoor facilities, where the risk of exposure to second-hand smoke is ostensibly diminished.

Other cities have demonstrated legislative rationale for smoke-free parks policies by declaring legitimate government interest in such issues as reducing parks maintenance costs and fire risks, increasing park access to vulnerable populations such as children and seniors, and the right to regulate "nuisances."

[Public Health—Seattle & King County](#) can provide additional resources to jurisdictions seeking to implement smoke-free parks policies.

Resources

Michael Johns, PhD, et al, "[Evaluating the NYC Smoke-free Parks and Beaches Law: A Critical Multiplist Approach](#)," 2013