

# City Launches Campaign To Keep Its Parks Smoke-Free

Tana McPherson, Sunday, September 30, 2012 • 11:23am





PATERSON, NJ – In recent weeks, Paterson’s parks have added a new feature – 200 signs declaring them smoke-free zones.

The City Council actually adopted the ordinance outlawing smoking in the parks back in April, but enforcement was put on hold until the recent arrival of the signs donated by the American Cancer Society.

“Passage of this ordinance is very significant from a state perspective because when the ordinance was passed Paterson became the most populated city in the state to have smoke free parks,” said Karen Blumenfeld, executive director of New Jersey’s GASP (Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy).

Paterson is following the lead of New York City, which also bans smoking in its parks. More than 100 officials, activists and anti-smoking advocates gathered in Eastside Park on September 22 for a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the smoke-free law. In addition to GASP, other groups involved were the Hispanic Council on Social Policy Center for Community and Men amongst Men.

Under the ordinance, anyone smoking within one of the city’s “parks, playgrounds, ball fields, or similar property owned/possessed by the City, including parking areas, driveways, which have no smoking signs,” will be subject to fines between \$50-\$100 for a first offense and up to \$500 for a third offense.

Of course, it remains to be seen whether folks will adhere to the ban and whether city officials enforce it. In many of Paterson’s parks, empty alcohol bottles and drug paraphernalia provide plenty of evidence of those illicit

activities.

"It will be challenging to enforce but at least in the play areas where children are playing they won't be subjected to the smoke," said Jesus Castro of the Hispanic Council.

Local activist, Lydia Robles said she saw a drastic decrease in the litter and drug activity in Greene Park at Spring Street and 21st Avenue after she adopted and began cleaning through Paterson's "adopt a park" program. "Now that there's an ordinance I am fully confident that residents will stand up," Robles said of the smoking ban.

Councilman Anthony Davis said the city is working with the county to set up a police substation in East Side Park, the purpose of which would be to assist with enforcement.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention says that "smoke free policies can reduce smoking among all ages. By challenging the perception of smoking as normal adult behavior, smoke free policies can change the attitudes and behaviors of adolescents, resulting in a reduction in tobacco use initiation."

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