

Frequently Asked Questions -Tobacco Free Parks & Trails



1. Why do we want the City of Wichita to adopt this ordinance?

Tobacco-free parks and trails ordinances create cleaner parks, promote wellness, reduce youths' exposure to tobacco, enhance park users' experience, and aligns parks with the school system. A tobacco-free ordinance sends a clear message that we care about the health of the community, especially our youth.

2. Whom does the policy apply to?

Everyone, all residents, parks and trails staff and visitors are prohibited from using tobacco products on all City of Wichita park and trail properties.

3. Where does this policy apply?

No tobacco products, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, "vapes," smokeless tobacco, cigars and more, would not be permitted for use at any City of Wichita park or trail.

4. Are there existing policies that are working?

Yes! According to a 2004 survey of Minnesota park directors in cities with such policies, 88% of reported no change in park usage (no loss of park users), 71% reported less smoking in parks, and 58% reported cleaner park areas. If anything, not having a policy is likely to decrease people's use of these shared public spaces because they don't want to be around the tobacco products. 20+ Kansas communities have adopted tobacco free parks resolutions or ordinances.

6. How is enforcement of a tobacco-free parks be policy handled?

Community education, prominent and clear signage, and staff education work well for enforcing this type of policy. The Police Department will have ultimate authority for writing citations, just as they would for other parks and trails policies, such as alcohol.

7. Why tobacco-free rather than smoke-free?

Municipalities often set out not only to prevent secondhand smoke exposure, but also to protect the natural environment, decrease exposure to toxic tobacco litter, promote a positive health message, and contribute to a tobacco free community norm. Policies that prohibit all tobacco use, including electronic products, are most effective at achieving these combined goals.

8. Why include e-cigarettes?

While electronic smoking devices do not have as many harmful chemicals as traditional tobacco products, they are by no means "harmless" for either users or those exposed to the secondhand aerosol emissions that they produce. E-cigarette aerosol has been found to contain nicotine, heavy metals and a variety of other chemicals that are known human carcinogens. It also helps with enforcement issues and takes away an opportunity for youth vaping in parks and trails (e-cigarettes are the #1 used tobacco product among youth).

9. What if I see someone smoking in the tobacco-free parks?

Public parks are everyone's responsibility. If you see someone who is smoking or using tobacco products, please ask that person if they are aware of the tobacco-free parks ordinance. Most tobacco users will be happy to comply. If a person does not comply, don't insist. Contact park staff, umpires, or the police if needed.