



Implementing Tobacco-Free Outdoor Policy in Allentown, PA

Introduction

This proposal advocates for the establishment of a comprehensive **Tobacco-Free Outdoor Policy** targeting the City of Allentown's parks, sponsored events, public spaces, and/or City permitted special events. Drawing inspiration from successful implementations in other third-class cities like Easton, Erie, and Scranton, the initiative aims to:

- Protect public health by reducing exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Promote healthier lifestyles among residents and event goers.
- Enhance the cleanliness and safety of public recreational areas and public events.

By aligning with statewide public health strategies, Allentown can foster a more health-conscious community environment.

Total Population:	377,754¹
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Children Under 18: 83,731

Adults 65 & Over: 68,317

Pediatric Asthma: 8,304

Adult Asthma: 30,139

COPD: 21,645

Lung Cancer: 201

Cardiovascular Disease: 30,293

Pregnancy: 3,765

Poverty Estimate: 44,748

People of Color: 153,783

Current Landscape in Allentown

In Allentown, it has been noted that the current parks policy only prohibits tobacco litter, not tobacco use. The Blue Zones Project Allentown discovery process revealed various spaces where smoking was observed, including along sidewalks, in front of building entrances, within local bars, and in vehicles. The research showed that there are

¹ <https://www.lung.org/research/sota/city-rankings/states/pennsylvania/lehigh>

gaps in local tobacco policies that leave residents vulnerable to tobacco marketing and secondhand smoke exposure.

This is all evident in the proliferation of Tobacco and Vape shops specially in the lower income areas of the city, with neon signage an increasingly amplified presence of Tobacco advertising.

In Lehigh County, 17% of adults use tobacco.² In addition, 6% of youth (grades 6-12) report vaping e-cigarettes in the past 30 days and more than half (56%) report vaping nicotine in the past year.³ Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death, disease, and disability in the United States.⁴ Both smoking and vaping increase risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, and other life-threatening conditions.⁵ Exposure to secondhand smoke increases risk for sudden infant death syndrome, asthma, and respiratory infections in children; and increases risk for lung cancer, stroke, and heart disease in adults.⁶ Moreover, Hispanic and Latino ethnic groups suffer from poorer health outcomes related to the use of commercial tobacco products.⁷ Each of the four leading causes of death among Hispanic and Latino people (cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes) can be caused by tobacco use.⁸

Public Health Context

According to the American Lung Association's 2023 "State of Tobacco Control" report for Pennsylvania, Lehigh County, which encompasses Allentown and Bethlehem received the following grades:

- **Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Funding:** F
- **Smoke-Free Air:** C
- **Tobacco Taxes:** F
- **Access to Cessation Services:** D
- **Tobacco 21 Laws:** A

The current overall grade for Lehigh County is F. These grades highlight significant areas for improvement, particularly in smoke-free air policies and cessation support. Implementing a tobacco-free parks and events policy would directly address these deficiencies by reducing public exposure to tobacco smoke and promoting cessation efforts.

² <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/pennsylvania/lehigh?year=2024>

³ <https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/Documents/2023%20PAYS/2023%20County%20Reports/Lehigh%20County%20Profile%20Report.pdf>

⁴ https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/tobacco_industry/marketing/index.htm

⁵ <https://evidence.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/EVIDoa2300229#ap4>

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/priorities/tobacco-use.html>

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-health-equity/collection/hispanic-latino-health-burden.html>

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-health-equity/collection/hispanic-latino-health-burden.html>

Project Goals

1. **Policy Implementation:** Enact a city-wide ordinance and updated licensing process banning the use of all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, in parks and public events.
2. **Public Health Promotion:** Reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, thereby decreasing associated health risks among park and event-goers, especially children and vulnerable populations in parks and public events.
3. **Environmental Enhancement:** Decrease tobacco-related litter, leading to cleaner and more aesthetically pleasing park environments and public venues through the engagement with local communities.
4. **Community Engagement:** Educate residents about the dangers of tobacco use and the benefits of smoke-free public spaces, fostering a culture of health and wellness.

Alignment with Blue Zones Project Allentown Goals - Year One.

The Blue Zones Project Allentown has four primary goals and best-practice strategies to address the negative impacts of commercial tobacco. And for year one of implementation two Policy Strategies have been selected to promote Tobacco-free Outdoors and Smoke-free Events. These policy goals and strategies are supported by existing evidence and CDC Best Practices. The Blue Zones Project Tobacco Policy Goals include:

- **ELIMINATE EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE** works to lower the negative health impacts and high death rates of tens of thousands of US non-smoker residents per year related to second and thirdhand smoke exposure. These policies promote smoke and vape-free zones across a wide variety of indoor and outdoor spaces, both publicly and privately owned.
- **PREVENT INITIATION OF TOBACCO USE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE** limiting tobacco product availability and access. This policy area promotes addressing the regulated commercial tobacco retail environment and its relation to higher rates of nicotine addiction and smoking that substantially lowers life expectancies and increases preventable disease and disability.
- **ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY BY IDENTIFYING AND ELIMINATING COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCT-RELATED INEQUITIES AND DISPARITIES** advances opportunities for health and longevity for all communities through retail and smoke-free policies and promotion of prevention education and tobacco-cessation support. This policy area builds health solutions, resilience and protections for vulnerable populations.
- **PROMOTE QUITTING TOBACCO AMONG ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE** expand availability and increase use of tobacco cessation treatment to help lower rates of use.

Strategies were selected after a rigorous discussion and public consensus process with community stakeholders that took place during the Discovery phase of the Blue Zones Project Allentown:

Policy Strategy 1: Adopt comprehensive tobacco-free outdoor space policies, including signage.

Policy Strategy 2: Establish smoke-free policies for public outdoor events and festivals.

Proposed Activities

Initiative	BZP-Allentown Support
1. Policy Development • Drafting Ordinance: Collaborate with city officials to draft an ordinance and create / update licensing process that prohibits the use of tobacco products in all city-owned parks, recreational facilities and public outdoor events. • Legal Review: Ensure the proposed ordinance aligns with state laws, particularly the Pennsylvania Clean Indoor Air Act, which permits local governments to regulate smoking in outdoor public spaces.	• Provide support on drafting implementation plans for outdoor policy and updating the licensing process for city's special events permits. • Provide educational materials for city council, parks departments, and the public. • Host informational sessions and community forums to explain the benefits of tobacco-free environments.
2. Public Notification • Community Outreach: Inform residents about the new policy through city websites, social media platforms, local newspapers, and community meetings. • Stakeholder Engagement: Engage with local schools, health organizations, and community groups to disseminate information and gather support.	• Engage with community leaders, local partners and organizations to promote compliance (declaration of intention / social media campaign). • Support social media engagement programs both in Spanish and English. • Engage with local institutions and function as implementation partners during the implementation period. • Assist in the design, funding, and placement of tobacco-free signage across parks and event venues.

3. Signage Installation

- **"Young Lungs at Play" Program:** Partner with the Pennsylvania Department of Health to obtain and install "Young Lungs at Play" signs in all city parks and public venues, indicating the tobacco-free status.
- **Strategic Placement:** Place signs at park entrances, playgrounds, sports fields, and other high-traffic areas to ensure visibility.
- Support on grant writing for demonstration projects.
- Collaborate with Allentown School District and local youth organizations to raise awareness and promote peer-led initiatives.
- Host tobacco prevention workshops and student contests to design signs and social media messages.

4. Enforcement Plan

- **Policy Enforcement:** Train park staff and city enforcement officers on the new regulations and enforcement procedures.
- **Penalty Structure:** Establish a clear penalty structure for violations, such as fines or removal from premises, to ensure compliance.
- Support the city in collecting baseline and follow-up data to track changes in litter, compliance, and community sentiment.
- Provide evaluation tools to help report on policy effectiveness.

5. Educational Campaigns

- **Health Education:** Conduct workshops and seminars in collaboration with local health organizations to educate the public on the risks of tobacco use and the benefits of smoke-free environments.
- **Youth Involvement:** Encourage student participation in creating bilingual educational materials, such as posters and social media content, to promote the tobacco-free initiative.
- Support on grant writing for demonstration projects.
- Identify strategic placement of bilingual signs and provide valuable best practices from previous implementations in other BZP communities.

Success Stories from Other Pennsylvania Cities

Easton, PA

- **Policy:** Prohibits smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco products in all city-owned or leased parks and swimming facilities.
- **Enforcement:** Violators are subject to a \$100 fine and may be removed from the premises.

Erie, PA

- **Policy:** Designates all city-owned parks and recreation areas as "tobacco-free zones," banning all tobacco products and electronic cigarettes.
- **Enforcement:** Violators may be fined up to \$100 plus prosecution costs.

Scranton, PA

- **Policy:** Prohibits the use of any tobacco product or electronic cigarette in city parks and playgrounds where children are present.
- **Enforcement:** Violators may be fined \$25 and asked to leave the premises.

These cities have successfully implemented tobacco-free policies, resulting in healthier public spaces and increased community satisfaction.

Expected Outcomes

- **Health Improvements:** Reduction in exposure to secondhand smoke, leading to decreased respiratory issues and other health problems among residents.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Cleaner community with less tobacco-related litter, enhancing the aesthetic appeal and safety of public parks and venues.
- **Behavioral Changes:** Promotion of smoke-free norms, particularly among youth, contributing to lower smoking initiation rates.
- **Community Engagement:** Increased community involvement in health promotion activities and greater awareness of public health initiatives.

Resources and References

- **Young Lungs at Play Toolkit:** Provides materials and guidance for implementing tobacco-free policies in parks and recreational areas. ([Home](#))
- **Live Healthy PA - Tobacco-Free Parks:** Offers information on the benefits of tobacco-free parks and steps for policy implementation. (livehealthy.phmc.org)
- **Pennsylvania Clean Indoor Air Act Guidance:** Outlines state regulations on smoking in public places and provides guidance for local policy development. ([Home](#))
- **American Lung Association - State of Tobacco Control 2023: Pennsylvania - Lehigh County:** Evaluates tobacco control policies and provides recommendations for improvement. ([Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia](#))
- American Lung Association - Creating Healthy, Safe and Enjoyable Outdoor Events. ([CREATING HEALTHY, SAFE, & ENJOYABLE OUTDOOR EVENTS](#))

Conclusion

Implementing a tobacco-free parks policy in Allentown is a proactive step toward enhancing public health, protecting the environment, and fostering a culture of wellness. By learning from the successes of other Pennsylvania cities and utilizing available resources, Allentown can create safer, cleaner, and more enjoyable public spaces and events for all residents.

Appendix

City of Easton PA, Chapter 404 Parks:

- I. Tobacco use. No person shall smoke tobacco or use smokeless tobacco products at any City of Easton-owned or City-leased park or swimming facility. All areas in which smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco are prohibited shall be properly posted. Failure to comply shall result in the following penalty:

[Amended 11-21-2000 by Ord. No. 3874; 6-26-2013 by Ord. No. 5416; 8-27-2014 by Ord. No. 5475]

- (1) A fine of \$100 and requirement to cease tobacco use or removal from premises.
- (2) (2)Definitions. As used in this subsection, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

SMOKING: The carrying by a person of a lighted cigar, cigarette, pipe or other lighted smoking device used for tobacco.

TOBACCO USE: Use, including smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco in any form.

City of Erie PA, ARTICLE 747 Tobacco Use in Recreation Areas:

Ord. 77-2019, passed 12-18-2019

- 747.02 - Designated tobacco-free areas.
All City-owned parks and recreation areas shall hereby be designated a "tobacco free zone," and the use of any tobacco product or electronic cigarette, in any form, shall be prohibited hereafter.
- 747.03 - Notification of public.
The community shall be notified of this article.
- 747.04 - Signage.
"Young Lungs at Play" signs or other appropriate signage will be posted delineating said tobacco-free zones.
- 747.05 - Violations and penalties.
Any person who violates this article shall, upon conviction thereof in a summary proceeding before any Magisterial District Justice having jurisdiction of such offense, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than \$100, plus costs of prosecution.
- 747.06 - Severability.
In the event any provision, section, sentence, clause or part of this article shall be held to be invalid, such invalidity shall not affect or impair any of the remaining provisions, sections, sentences, clauses or parts of this article; it being the intent of the City of Erie that the remainder of the article shall be and shall remain in full force and effect.

City of Scranton PA, Article IV Tobacco-Free Areas

[Adopted 5-5-2016 by Ord. No. 23-2016]

- 332-24 - Prohibition of tobacco where children are present.
All City, parks and playgrounds within the City of Scranton where children are present shall be designated as tobacco-free and the use of any tobacco product or electronic cigarette, in any form, shall be prohibited hereafter; a list of all City parks and playgrounds is attached hereto as Exhibit A[1]
- 332-25 - Signs designating tobacco-free areas.
Appropriate signage shall be posted to designate said tobacco-free areas.
- 332-26 - Notice.
The residents of the City of Scranton shall be notified of this article and the designation of the tobacco-free zones as stated herein;
- 332-27 - Violations and penalties.
Any person in violation of this article shall be: forced to leave the park or playground and may be fined for violation of this section in the amount of \$25; and
- 332-28 - Monitoring and compliance.
Council hereby authorizes its elected and appointed officials to make periodic observations of tobacco-free areas to monitor compliance and promote awareness of this section.

City of Bethlehem PA, Not in the code:

Young Lungs at Play in place in all city owned and operated parks.

<https://patch.com/pennsylvania/bethlehem/city-bans-smoking-in-parks-playgrounds>

City of North Lehigh Township, Approved by the Council:

LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Minutes of the August 13, 2013, Meeting

<https://www.lehightownship.com/minutes/13aug13.pdf>

Self enforced.

Municipalities with Smokefree Park Laws Enacted as of October 2, 2017 - This list includes those municipalities that specified that all city parks and/or specifically named city parks are smokefree. The list does not include those municipalities that have designated smoking areas in city parks, those that provide coverage only a certain number of feet from playgrounds or youth areas, and those that provide coverage only during youth events. Visit our outdoor air resource page at www.no-smoke.org/outdoor.html for more information.

1185. Bethlehem PA
1219. East Pennsboro Township PA
1221. Easton PA
1236. Hanover Township PA
1247. Lehigh Township PA
1248. Lehighton Borough PA
1282. Palmerton Borough PA
1284. Penn Township PA
1289. Pocono Township PA
1293. Quakertown PA
1315. Stroudsburg PA
1325. Upper Saucon Township PA