



CONTRA COSTA
TOBACCO PREVENTION COALITION

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Interest in Secondhand Smoke Policies Heating Up in Contra Costa

The city of San Ramon has adopted new stringent secondhand smoking protections, while two other Central County cities are discussing similar measures.

On February 26th, San Ramon became the sixth community in Contra Costa (following unincorporated Contra Costa, Martinez, Richmond, Pleasant Hill and Pinole) to adopt a comprehensive community-wide secondhand smoke protections ordinance. The new law prohibits smoking in many outdoor areas including doorways of buildings open to the public, parks and recreations areas (except golf courses) and certain areas of multi-unit housing.

Mischa Fritz, Vice Chair of the San Ramon Youth Council, testified that the Youth Council requested a stronger ordinance because the current city ordinance “does not adequately protect people from secondhand smoke in public places.” He went on to cite findings on the hazards of secondhand smoke, including the declaration from U.S. Surgeon General’s Report that, “there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.”

The same night San Ramon adopted the new policy, the Concord City Council voted to discuss city-wide secondhand protections in their Housing and Economic Development Committee after requests made by residents at public comment. A week earlier, Walnut Creek committed to studying policy options and drafting a similar type of city-wide ordinance.

Almost sixty communities in California have comprehensive secondhand smoke protections policies that prohibit smoking in outdoor areas such as doorways of buildings open to the public, outdoor dining areas, public events (farmer’s markets, fairs, etc), parks and recreation areas. Communities may also prohibit smoking in all indoor workplaces such as smokeshops and owner-owned businesses. A growing number of communities prohibit smoking in certain areas of multi-unit housing such as common indoor and outdoor areas like laundry rooms and swimming pools, as well as inside individual units.

Advocates are thrilled that policymakers are discussing secondhand smoke protections in public meetings. Emily Justice, Co-Chair of the Tobacco Prevention Coalition said, “Members of the Coalition and community residents have been meeting with policymakers in Concord and Walnut Creek for years on this issue. We are so happy that things are moving forward.”

For more information on tobacco prevention and secondhand smoke protections, contact the Tobacco Prevention Coalition at (925) 313-6216 or email

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