

Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story

Summary

Rockland, after thorough and extended consideration, adopted a Tobacco Free Policy to protect all its properties, including Parks and Recreation sites (such as Harbor Park pictured below), from tobacco exposure.

Challenges

At 37.7%, tobacco products are the most commonly littered item collected in sites such as recreational areas or retail zones. Vaping devices compound the problem with batteries, plastics and toxic chemicals that don't degrade. In addition to being an environmental pollutant, tobacco waste and usage in recreational areas also create health hazards. They expose people, including children playing in parks, to dangerous second/thirdhand smoke and to environmental toxins and waste. Smoking in public recreation areas also models behaviors that are costly to individuals, families and communities. Municipalities are interested in providing healthy recreational environments for people of all ages. (World Health Organization and <https://tobaccofreeca.com/environment/vape-waste-more-harmful-than-you-think/>)



"Thank you for all your help in this process. It has taken awhile, but it is a great step to take for the health of our city."

--Sarah Austin, Rockland City Council

Results/Success

Rockland joins its neighboring towns of Rockport and Camden in creating parks and recreational areas that are safer and cleaner for people of all ages to use, without fear of exposure to tobacco toxins, second or third hand smoke.

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Department of Health and Human Services

As with most policy endeavors, patience and persistence were the watch words for Molly Stone as she assisted the City of Rockland in passing a Tobacco-Free policy covering all city owned, leased and affiliated buildings, recreational properties and parks, and vehicles. Initially, the City worked to pass an ordinance. However, when it was presented at the September 2019 Council meeting, concerns about enforcement and the impact on people living in poverty prompted the Council to vote down the ordinance and instruct the Recreation Committee to resubmit it as a policy. The policy was passed November 13, 2019, but additional delays (including COVID-19) meant signage was not available for posting until late 2020.