



North Bergen approves ban on smoking in township parks; takes effect next month

By [Michaelangelo Conte/The Jersey Journal](#)

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NORTH BERGEN - No ifs, ands or butts: smoking in township parks and properties will be banned as of next month.

Mayor Nicholas Sacco and the township commissioners voted unanimously Wednesday to adopt the ordinance banning smoking in public parks and property.

Sacco cited his concern for public health, especially that of the many children who frequent North Bergen's parks, as the driving factor behind the decision.

"We are proud to adopt this ordinance and join the growing list of smoke-free communities in New Jersey," Sacco said. "It is a law whose time has come and we are always proud to make North Bergen even more of a healthy, safe and progressive community."

North Bergen resident Gerald Reiner brought up the possibility of a smoking ban at a commissioners meeting. Sacco later discussed the matter with Reiner and then instructed the township attorney to craft the ordinance, North Bergen spokesman Phil Swibinski said.

"Mayor Sacco has always strived to make North Bergen a safe community and I am proud to have worked with the mayor to help protect our children by ensuring the air they breathe will be a little cleaner while they are at play," said Reiner, who works with New Jersey GASP or Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy.

According to the ordinance, anyone caught smoking inside a township park will be subject to a \$50 fine, with higher amounts for repeat offenses, Swibinski said.

Signage will be placed in each park to inform residents of the ban and will be provided at no cost to local taxpayers by NJ GASP, which is a nonprofit organization.

The smoking ban will take effect late next month. The Hudson County Board of Freeholders was scheduled to vote on a similar ordinance banning smoking in county parks last night.

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