

Times of Trenton

Princeton ready to douse smoking on municipally-owned public outdoor sites

By [Jon Offredo/The Times of Trenton](#)

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PRINCETON — A proposed ordinance to ban smoking on municipal property, town-owned public parks and outside pools would make Princeton the first town in Mercer County to do so.

“This is exciting for us moving forward,” Councilwoman Heather Howard said. “Smoking is the number one preventable cause of death. This is the ability to save lives.”

The ordinance, up for a vote at the town’s board of health meeting on March 19, would see no smoking signs installed outside affected locations and \$250 fines passed out to first-time violators.

Health officers and Princeton police would enforce the ordinance and issue tickets for violations, Howard said. “Our hope is not to fine people, it’s to prevent smoking,” she said. Funding for the no-smoking signs would come from the American Cancer Society, which recently published a report studying similar programs across the state.

The ban would cover all municipal areas, buildings, parks and entrances to pools. Smokers would have to move away 35 feet. Princeton hot spots like Hinds Plaza are already covered under a smoking ban due to the open space’s proximity to the public library.

Karen Blumenfeld, Executive Director of Global Advisors Smokefree Policy, said that Princeton’s potential ban would offer multiple benefits. “For decades Princeton has been a leader on tobacco control and making all parks 100 percent smoke-free will benefit the community at large,” she said. “And this new ordinance will help kids to learn not to smoke.”

One hundred and sixty-four other towns and municipalities in the state have similar ordinances, but this would be the first such restrictive ordinance in Mercer County, according to Blumenfeld.

Town manager Bob Bruschi said that right now the ban would not affect smoking at the 400 Witherspoon municipal complex, where there is a remote patio for smokers that can be only accessed through the building.