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Politics

## Smoke on the council agenda

**City officials may start a study on imposing restrictions on smoking in public places in Glendale.**

By Jason Wells

CITY HALL — Momentum from tighter controls put on tobacco retailers last year, together with actions other cities have taken, may soon produce restrictions on smoking in public places in Glendale if a community survey finds broad support for such a measure.

The City Council on Tuesday is expected to authorize city officials to embark on a community outreach effort seeking input from residents, business owners and health advocates on curtailing smoking in public areas such as sidewalks, bus stops, outdoor shopping areas and city parks.

“Second-hand smoke is just as bad [as smoking] — it’s been proven, and I think it ought to be restricted,” said Councilman Dave Weaver, who asked for a report on the matter nearly six months ago.

He is among a growing chorus of anti-smoking advocates in Glendale who say it’s time to join the ranks of dozens of other California cities that have adopted strict limits on smoking in public places.

“I just feel like this is something that we just don’t need for health, but for safety reasons as well,” said Glendale resident Amiee Klem, who is leading an ad hoc group of concerned residents in support of the restrictions, some of whom plan to attend the City Council meeting Tuesday to press for the survey.

The potential move to begin studying possible restrictions comes after the City Council in September approved an ordinance requiring sellers of cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products to hold a city permit as a way to leverage state laws prohibiting sales to minors.

A permit can be suspended up to two times for selling tobacco to minors before it is revoked. At the time, anti-smoking advocates hailed the new rule as an important step toward clamping down on retailers who had been selling to underage buyers.

Those same advocates point to a March 4 police sting operation — in which more than half of the 44 Glendale markets and convenience stores targeted sold cigarettes to decoys aged 15 to 18 — as proof that the city lags behind other cities in their efforts to kick the habit, and needs to catch up.

“When you get that kind of reaction from people, then that’s when the protections go into place,” said Steven Gallegos, a community advocate for Glendale Adventist Medical Center who worked on Glendale’s draft tobacco permit ordinance and has been active in county efforts to curb smoking.

He is also a program coordinator for the American Lung Society of California, which in February

released its health report card for Orange and Los Angeles counties. Glendale scored a C based on average efforts to curtail second-hand smoke in recreation, outdoor dining and other areas, according to the report.

In 2005, Glendale strengthened state regulations by prohibiting smoking at the Chess Park on Brand Boulevard, inside city buildings, within 25 feet of outdoor seating areas in city parks and recreation facilities and during public events.

But other cities have taken their restrictions further over the last few years.

In August, Burbank started enforcing a ban on smoking on all city property, including all downtown sidewalks, alleys and other pedestrian areas and city parks. Since that time, hundreds of violators have been fined up to \$200 each.

In Los Angeles, that fine can reach \$250 per violation as of a September 2007 ordinance that extends a ban on smoking at all city beaches to all parks and recreational areas.

More than 30 cities in Los Angeles County have established some level of local control on smoking in public places beyond the standard state regulations, which prohibit smoking within 25 feet of playgrounds, 20 feet of doorways of government buildings and inside all restaurants and bars, according to a city report.

Santa Monica, Burbank and Calabasas have among the most stringent second-hand smoke restrictions in Southern California, with bans that cover almost all public gathering areas and city-owned property.

What Glendale eventually adopts would depend heavily on community input received through at least two public meetings on the topic should the City Council authorize the survey, city officials said.

In preparing their report, some smokers say city officials should take into account the effects any new restrictions would have on personal freedoms and ethnic populations where smoking is a dominant part of the culture.

For Marcia Talamini, who puffed on a Marlboro Light while waiting for a bus Friday near the corner of Brand Boulevard and Broadway, news of Glendale's potential jump into an age of citywide public smoking restrictions was met with an audible sigh.

"Seriously, there's a point where the government just gets too involved with every little thing," she said. "What are they going to do, stop me from eating a Twinkie, too? They might as well ban all McDonalds.

"Over-eating is more of an issue, I think."

But for anti-smoking advocates, there is no such thing as second-hand calories.

"The fact is, [smokers] are taking away the clean air that's meant for everyone to breathe," Gallegos said.

If a survey is approved, city officials would also form a coalition of representatives from the local business, medical, education and residential communities for input on a draft ordinance before bringing it back to the City Council later this year.

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