



Agenda Item

Park Planning and Community Events Commission

Item #: 4.1.

3/17/2026

File #: 26-0139

TO: Chair and Members of the Park Planning & Community Events Commission

THRU: Leslie Hardy, Community and Library Services Director

FROM: Emily Bustamante, Community Services Assistant Director

1. SUBJECT

Consideration of Prohibition of Smoking in City Parks

2. SUMMARY

Review and consideration of a potential prohibition of smoking in City parks, including evaluation of regulatory options and enforcement considerations, and formulation of a recommendation to the City Council.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Review and evaluate options related to smoking in City parks and provide a recommendation to the City Council.

4. FISCAL IMPACT

None.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 3: Enhance Public Communication Strategy and Quality of Life.

6. DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND

At the February 10, 2026 City Council (Council) Meeting, the Council directed staff to present an item to the Park Planning and Community Events Commission (Commission) to discuss the prohibition of smoking in parks and provide a recommendation for Council consideration.

Orange Municipal Code (OMC) 12.48.165 (B) prohibits smoking or vaping in any park within 25 feet of a playground, facility, or youth activity, consistent with the California Department of Public Health and Safety Code. At this time, the City does not impose a citywide prohibition on smoking in all park areas beyond what is required under State law. Based on input received from Council, the Commission can consider the following options:

1. Maintain Current Regulations (Status Quo)

Under this option, the City would continue to adhere to State law requirements without adopting

additional local restrictions. Smoking would remain permitted in park areas except where otherwise prohibited under State law. Current park signage states: *“No smoking within 25 feet of a playground, facility, or youth activity - H&S Code § 104495”*.

Considerations:

- No additional enforcement or signage beyond current requirements.
- Continues consistency with California Health and Safety Code.
- May not address community concerns regarding secondhand smoke exposure, litter, or park user experience.

2. Designated Smoking Areas or Distance Requirements

Council discussion included consideration of establishing designated smoking areas within parks, increasing buffer distances from playgrounds, sports fields, picnic shelters, and other high-use areas or prohibiting smoking in smaller parks.

Considerations:

- Requires clear mapping, signage, and public education.
- May create confusion regarding permissible versus restricted areas.
- Could present enforcement challenges in determining compliance with distance requirements.
- Would require ongoing monitoring and potential physical improvements to identify designated zones.

3. Prohibit Smoking in All City Parks

Under this option, smoking and vaping would be prohibited in all City-owned and operated park properties, including open space, sports fields, playgrounds, and trails.

Considerations:

- Provides a clear and consistent rule for park users.
- Simplifies signage and public messaging.
- Addresses public health and environmental concerns, including secondhand smoke exposure and cigarette litter.
- Requires ordinance amendment and updated signage.
- Precedence has been established as a smoking ban in parks has been codified in many Orange County cities including Anaheim, Buena Park, Placentia, Fountain Valley, and Newport Beach.

The Orange Police Department (OPD) has reviewed the options and recommends that, from an implementation and enforcement standpoint, the City adopt a clear and consistent standard. OPD advises that a partial approach, such as designated smoking areas or varied distance requirements, may create ambiguity for park users and enforcement personnel. A uniform “all or nothing” approach (either permitting smoking consistent with State law or prohibiting it entirely in parks) would provide clarity, reduce confusion, and support consistent enforcement.

7. ATTACHMENTS

- None