



## N.C. Smoke-Free/Tobacco-Free Parks

# Health in All Policies: The journey to tobacco-free parks in Burlington

## Summary:

Building on the value of “Health in All Policies,” the Alamance Wellness Collaborative supported Burlington Parks and Recreation to advance a 100 percent tobacco-free policy with the strong backing of their Parks and Recreation Commission and their

community.

**Challenge:** Burlington, a town of approximately 53,000, boasts a 25-plus park system with generous family amenities like walking trails, sports facilities, a dog park, splash park, lakes and children’s amusement rides. Although the children’s areas were declared smoke-free in 2012, the ordinance did not always see compliance and tobacco use was still prevalent during adult sporting events, along greenways, and in the parking lots where families were loading and unloading their cars. Due to the limited nature of the policy, cigarette litter was heaviest in the bleachers, the dog park, and just outside the children’s amenities.

## Solution:

The Alamance Wellness Collaborative is led by Impact Alamance (a Cone Health Foundation program), Healthy Alamance and Healthy Places by Design. The enthusiastic 25-organization collaborative represents local government, nonprofit, education, healthcare and business sectors. Its mission is to focus beyond individual behavior to improve community health through policy change and built environment. The Collaborative encouraged local governments to view their actions through a lens of “Health in All Policies,” a resolution which was unanimously adopted by Burlington City Council in 2018.

The Burlington Parks and Recreation Commission put its decision-making power behind that promise in late 2018. The Commission presented a tobacco-free policy to the Burlington City Council. Broad community participation included staff of Impact Alamance, Burlington Parks and Recreation, the Alamance County Health Department, the Regional Tobacco Prevention Manager and Elon University Fellows. This enthusiastic community group convened a bi-monthly tobacco-free committee, gathered a giant jar of cigarette litter from area parks, researched other tobacco-free park policies, collected letters of support and wrote the draft policy they presented to City Council.

On January 15, 2019, when 10 engaged citizens spoke out in favor of this policy, this collective effort led to the city council adopting a tobacco-free policy for all of city park properties.

## Quote:

*“After two months in effect the new ordinance has been received positively by the community. There have been a few complaints of course, but they have been few and far between. This ordinance depends on voluntary compliance and that is working. We are happy to have our parks system become a healthier place to be and more inviting for all.”*

**Tony Laws, Director of Burlington Recreation and Parks.**

The Alamance Wellness Collaborative is proud to provide a space and safe environment for these issues to be discussed, often leading to positive policy change impacting thousands of local residents.



Some of the public hearing speakers and effort leaders: Front (L to R) Kathy Colville, Marcy Green, Kacie Lynch. Back (L to R) Jared Bishop, Sean Perkins, Kelsey Warren, Sally Gordan, Glenda Linens and Katie Latta.

## Results:

Signs sporting a positive message were designed and then installed in March and April.

“After two months in effect the new ordinance has been received positively by the community. There have been a few complaints of course, but they have been few and far between. This ordinance depends on voluntary compliance and that is working. We are happy to have our parks system become a healthier place to be and more inviting for all,” said Tony Laws, Director of Burlington Recreation and Parks.

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To learn more about smoke-free policies in N.C., visit [www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov)



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