

Breatheasy Rome

PRESS RELEASE: August 13, 2018

Breatheasy Rome is a group of concerned citizens including the healthcare community in Floyd County, specifically the Rome Floyd Cancer Initiative, the Northwest Georgia Regional Cancer Coalition, the Floyd County Health Department, Floyd Medical Center, Harbin Clinic, Redmond Regional Medical Center, Rome Radiology, and Southeastern Pathology, with support from the American Lung Association, The American Cancer Society, the American Nonsmokers Rights Foundation, and the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Breatheasy Rome has sought to update Rome's smoke-free ordinance modeled after policy which is used nationwide by the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society, in addition to other local organizations and governments with adjustments specific to Rome, Georgia. Beyond the Georgia Smokefree Air Act enacted in 2005, smoking ordinances have been passed in other cities including Savannah (2010), Augusta (2018) and Canton (2018) Georgia. These laws aim to reduce citizen's exposure to second-hand smoke and vapor, and their associated risks. Tobacco use, particularly smoking, is the leading cause of death in the United States. Eliminating smoking in public will reduce the number of tobacco-related illnesses and deaths, which number more than 11,000 each year in Georgia alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), second-hand smoke is estimated to kill over 41,000 Americans per year. Second-hand smoke is a mixture of the smoke/vapor exhaled from the lungs of smokers, and the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, cigar, pipe or vaping device. This mixture contains more than 4,000 substances, more than 40 of which are known to cause cancer in humans and animals. Exposure to second-hand smoke/vapor can contribute to or cause severe health problems in both smokers and non-smokers, including cancer, emphysema, heart disease, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), stroke and asthma. Second-hand smoke exposure during pregnancy has been associated with low birth weight, early delivery, learning/behavioral deficiencies in children, and SIDS. Second-hand smoke is also one of the most common asthma triggers and can lead to more frequent and more severe asthma attacks in children. Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of second-hand smoke and vapor as their brains are still forming and the introduction of nicotine causes the brain's nicotine receptors to increase in number, thus increasing the need of more and more nicotine leading to addiction. This ordinance provides cleaner and safer environments for us to live, work, and play.

The mayor and city commission have a duty in promulgating effective laws to protect the health, safety and welfare of its citizens as well as visitors to the city. It is the intention of the Smokefree Air Ordinance to prohibit smoking in public places and the workplace, including particular prohibitions which will help protect children and nonsmoking adults from the health hazards presented by exposure to second-hand smoke, to guarantee the right of nonsmokers to breathe smokefree air, and to recognize that the need to breathe smokefree air shall have priority over the desire to smoke.

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. The goal of Rome's Smokefree Air Ordinance is to protect workers and the public from involuntary exposure to second-hand smoke. Much of the ordinance is already in effect under The Georgia Smokefree Air Act as well as local smoking and sidewalk café ordinances. If passed, smoking would continue to be prohibited within 25 feet outside entrances, operable windows and ventilation systems of enclosed areas

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where smoking is prohibited and within 25 feet of outdoor seating or serving areas of restaurants, bars and entertainment facilities. Smoking would be prohibited in shopping malls, parking structures, outdoor events, playgrounds, and service lines – including drive-through banking and fast food restaurants. (This protects those who must work in the windows of these establishments.) Smoking would also be prohibited in the Central Business District (Downtown Rome from Riverside Parkway to the Oostanula River to the South Broad Bridge to Second Street).

Smoking is allowed in private residences unless used as a childcare, adult daycare, or health facility. It is allowed in private vehicles except on school properties or in service lines. It is also allowed in *existing* retail tobacco stores and *existing* retail vaping stores. Cigars, pipes, e-cigarettes, vaping devices, JUULs and hookah pipes have the same restrictions as cigarettes under this ordinance.

This ordinance also has fines and penalties attached, both for smokers and businesses which allow smoking to take place. For smokers, the fine is \$50 for a first violation and up to \$250 for additional violations. For the businesses, the fine is \$100 for the first violation, up to \$500 for subsequent violations. If a business continues to allow smoking in their facility, they will risk suspension or revocation of any permit or license issued to the person/business for the premises on which the violation occurred.

Following passage of the Ordinance, a Citizens Guide will be published and distributed in the City of Rome with full details, as well as an Enforcement Guide for Businesses. The Georgia Department of Public Health and the Rome Floyd Cancer Initiative will help to distribute the Georgia Tobacco Quitline information and materials for those individuals wishing to stop smoking. There will be a grace period until January 1, 2019 during which warnings will be issued, the Ordinance will be publicized, and educational materials will be distributed.

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