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## Ashes to ashes

### Businesses prepare to comply with statewide ban

December 16, 2007

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The first day of 2008 is destined to be one of revelry for some, but for others, it will signify a bit of sadness and a loss.

On that day health organizations and smoke-free advocates will realize the goal they've worked for - public places designated nonsmoking statewide - become law.

However, those who prefer the taste of nicotine between their lips, either habitually or occasionally while imbibing at a bar or restaurant with friends, might not be so keen to ring in the new year.

Last July, the Smoke Free Illinois Act was signed into law, sealing the end to smoking indoors at many locales come 2008. Under the act, smoking is prohibited in public places, including bars and restaurants, and places of employment, as well as within 15 feet of entrances to those buildings. Limited exemptions include private residences, unless used as child care or any other home-based business open to the public; retail tobacco stores; private rooms in nursing homes and designated smoking hotel rooms.

### Preparing for change

Naperville leaders have been prepping area businesses and residents on the rules of the new law through the city newsletter, the city's Web site and a business kit sent to owners. In addition, businesses can use table tents that offer a brief synopsis of the law as well as information on smoking cessation classes offered by the DuPage County Health Department through Edward Hospital.

These packets were distributed to every bar and restaurant owner in the city, according to community relations manager Nadja Lalvani. This proactive approach is meant to help arm owners of such establishments with the necessary knowledge of the new rules, she said.

"They're going to be the first line of defense in enforcing this law," Lalvani said.

That second line is where the Naperville Police Department and sworn code enforcement officials in the city's Transportation, Engineering and Development Department come in. Police Chief David Dial said there won't be any extra policemen enforcing the ordinance.

"My opinion is that this is quickly going to become a self-enforcing ordinance," Dial said. "This is going to become a nonissue in a short time. It's like with the end of smoking on airplanes. You don't see anyone lighting up a cigarette on airplanes anymore. I think the same thing will be true with this ordinance. I think, by and large, most people will comply with it."

Already Naperville is taking note of the 15-foot rule by moving existing ashtrays in the downtown business district at least that far away, said Dan Di Santo, assistant to the city manager.

### Business concerns

Indeed, business owners will have to play watchdog when it comes to the new law and make sure they're in compliance.

Then there are those who already had a somewhat smoke-free environment, who need only make some small changes.

"As far as planning on that, I don't know if I'm going to do anything special, except hanging

a nonsmoking sign Jan. 1," said Jim Bergeron, owner of downtown's Tessa's and Jimmy's Grill.

When Tessa's opened five months ago, Bergeron made it smoke-free from the get-go so as not to have to change rules on patrons so soon after opening. Already three-fourths of the tables in the indoor restaurant portion of Jimmy's Grill are nonsmoking, meaning staff already are well-aware of how to deal with a smoker who might light up in a prohibited area.

"I really think the first three to six months will be problematic, as to how the ordinances are interpreted and enforced," he said. "I'm kind of playing a wait-and-see kind of thing."

Bergeron said he hasn't heard much discussion on the part of Naperville's restaurant owners, but others are definitely talking, especially about perceived gray areas of the law. Public meetings held by the DuPage County Health Department and American Cancer Society to inform business owners and residents about the requirements of the law have brought out a litany of interested folks with many questions, such as what happens to outdoor beer gardens and whether ashtrays need to disappear at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve.

Originally, there was concern about smaller establishments losing revenue to the point where they might have to close their doors for good.

The issue of dollars was evaluated in a published report from Springfield's State Journal Register. In Springfield, which enforced a ban starting in September 2006, the newspaper performed an analysis of the city's share of sales tax revenue from bars and restaurants throughout the past five years. It found that revenue has grown since smoking was banned. In fact, the article said revenue grew twice as fast in the two quarters since the ban went into effect as it did before it.

### **Knowledge is power**

In the latter part of 2006 and early part of this year, Naperville City Council members debated whether Naperville should go smoke free, even if the state chose not to as a whole. Members of the grassroots group Smoke-Free Naperville brought petitions to meetings and provided binders full of information on the benefits of a smoke-free law. The group maintains a Web site and plans on continuing to do so.

"Beyond just being terribly excited about it and waiting for it, we've been following the city's gestures toward education and communication," said Smoke-Free Naperville president Tony Andrews. "They've done a great job already."

A major concern from the dissenting viewpoint was that Naperville would be an island unto itself should the city enact a ban, meaning smokers would possibly take their cigarettes - and dining and shopping dollars - to a surrounding suburb. With the statewide law comes an air of uniformity, meaning cities around Naperville are dealing with the same need to get information about the new law out.

In Plainfield, city leaders have been getting information from the Will County Health Department, according to Amy De Boni, community relations director with the village.

For the people who marched into council chambers a year and a half ago to share some signatures with city leaders, the changes are welcomed with open arms.

"We're really excited," Andrews said. "It goes beyond just being able to enjoy a meal at some of the finer restaurants in Naperville. It's the recognition we're going to have fewer asthma attacks, heart attacks and lower cancer rates after the beginning of the year."

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