

# NO SMOKING In Houston's Parks

Presentation to Houston City Council  
Quality of Life Committee  
Council Member Ellen Cohen, Chair

Joe Turner, Director  
Houston Parks and Recreation Department



A CAPRA Accredited Agency

# Why Prohibit Smoking in Parks?

- ▶ For a welcoming, family–friendly environment
- ▶ For a safer, healthier park experience
- ▶ For a cleaner, more beautiful outdoor space
  - Reduce litter
  - Cigarette butts take 15 years to decompose
  - Discarded cigarettes are the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of preventable outdoor fires

# U.S. Cities with Smoke-Free Parks

- ▶ 967 U.S. cities have Smoke-Free Parks
- ▶ 7 of 10 largest U.S. cities have Smoke-Free Parks
  - New York, NY
  - Los Angeles, CA
  - Chicago, IL
  - Philadelphia, PA
  - San Diego, CA
  - San Antonio, TX
  - San Jose, CA

# Texas Cities with Smoke-Free Parks

## ➤ 36 Texas Cities have Smoke-Free Parks

- Abilene
- Anna
- Austin
- Bellaire
- Benbrook
- Conroe
- Coppell
- Corsicana
- Eagle Pass
- Farmers Branch
- Flower Mound
- Galveston
- Greenville
- Haltom City
- Kaufman
- Kerrville
- Kilgore
- Laredo
- Lindale
- Lufkin
- McAllen
- McKinney
- North Richland Hills
- Paris
- Pearland
- Portland
- Prosper
- Richardson
- Richland Hills
- Rosenberg
- San Antonio
- San Marcos
- Stafford
- Sugar Land
- Sunnyvale
- Tyler

# Authority to Prohibit Smoking

- ▶ Chapter 21, Article IX, Section 21-243
- ▶ Gives the authority to “an owner, operator, or other person in control of an establishment, facility or outdoor area” to declare it nonsmoking

# Authority to Prohibit Smoking

- ▶ Chapter 32 Governs Parks and Recreation Department
- ▶ Section 32-5 (a): Authority of the director
- ▶ Gives director authority to set rules and regulations
- ▶ ... “promote the healthful and generalized use of the parks”

# Public Notice – Posting of Signs

- ▶ Chapter 21 Section 21–244
- ▶ No–Smoking signs must be posted
- ▶ Temporary signs will be placed at all parks
- ▶ Rules signs will be changed gradually

# Enforcement – Section 21–245

- ▶ Smokers will first be asked to stop
  - By other park users, park staff, Park Rangers, HPD
- ▶ Houston Police Department
- ▶ Health Department Officer
- ▶ Fire Marshall
- ▶ Park Rangers are not currently equipped to issue tickets



# Violations & Penalties

- ▶ Section 21-247
- ▶ First, ask to extinguish
- ▶ Citation/Ticket – Misdemeanor
- ▶ Fine not to exceed \$2,000

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## Q & A