

*A community where all can achieve optimal health.*



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## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Johnson County Public Health Congratulates the City of Coralville for Making Parks and Trails Tobacco/Nicotine Free**

Johnson County Public Health wishes to recognize the City of Coralville, and the Coralville Parks and Recreation Commission for its commitment to creating a healthier environment for all Coralville residents and visitors. The City Council voted to make all city owned public parks, open spaces, and trails tobacco and nicotine free as of October 24, 2023. The ordinance states using any form of tobacco or vaping product in city parks or trails is not allowed at any time.

City Council members adopted this policy to protect the health of those community members who visit the parks to enjoy fresh air, play, relax, and exercise. Exposure to secondhand smoke, electronic cigarette aerosol, and tobacco/vaping product litter reduces the enjoyment of these spaces. Secondhand cigarette smoke harms everyone and there is no safe level or exposure to secondhand smoke, even in outdoor environments. Coralville Park and Recreation Commissioner Mackensie Graham said, "From a public policy perspective, we anticipate the impacts of this ordinance will include reducing secondhand smoke in city owned or operated parks and decreasing tobacco/vape-related litter which poses a hazard to children, pets, wildlife, and the environment. Overall, this ordinance was a natural fit with Parks & Recreation's continued commitment to cultivating accessible, safe spaces and fostering an active, healthy community!"

In Iowa, 5,100 adults die each year from their own smoking, and \$1.49 billion in annual healthcare costs in Iowa are directly caused by smoking. The percentage of Iowa high school students who use electronic cigarettes is 16.4%. This is higher than the current national average at 14.1%. Among Iowa high school youth, 4.1% reported currently smoking cigarettes. This is also higher than the national average of 2%. Tobacco/nicotine-free policies provide the opportunity to change community norms around tobacco and vaping use and help to reduce youth use.

Johnson County Public Health will assist the City of Coralville in communicating about the new tobacco/nicotine-free policy to increase community awareness of the new ordinance and provide free signage. "We are pleased to add Coralville to the growing list of Iowa communities with tobacco/nicotine-free park policies," said Susan Vileta, Health Educator, JCPH. Currently, over 900 parks in Iowa prohibit tobacco use.

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