

# Passage and Implementation of a Smoke-Free Ordinance in a Southeastern U.S. City: Lessons Learned

## STUDY OVERVIEW

### The Georgia 5-City Project

This project targets the adoption and enforcement of stricter smoke-free legislation than the 2005 Georgia Smoke-free Air Act at the city or county level. Five Georgia cities were selected to participate in this project, based on prevalence of disease and population disparities: **Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah**. Research has shown that indoor smoke-free ordinances protect citizens from the dangers of second hand smoke exposure, such as lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, and COPD.

### Savannah City Ordinance

In August of 2010, the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah passed an ordinance to eliminate smoking in all indoor public spaces and workplaces. Effective January 1, 2011, the new law expands the 2005 Georgia Smoke-free Air Act to prohibit smoking in all public places and workplaces in the City of Savannah. The ordinance does not extend to businesses that operate within the county (Chatham), but outside city limits.

Passage of the ordinance was followed by an educational campaign to educate the public about the ordinance, and to equip restaurant/bar owners with the information to implement & enforce it. Police were designated the enforcement entity in cases of formal complaints.

### Evaluation: 12 months post-implementation

The evaluation was designed to:

1. Describe overall reaction to the ordinance
2. Examine ordinance enforcement successes and challenges
3. Estimate ordinance impact on (a) customers' likelihood of patronizing a bar or restaurant; (b) smoking behavior; and (c) business outcomes—such as revenue, number and type of customers, and employee health

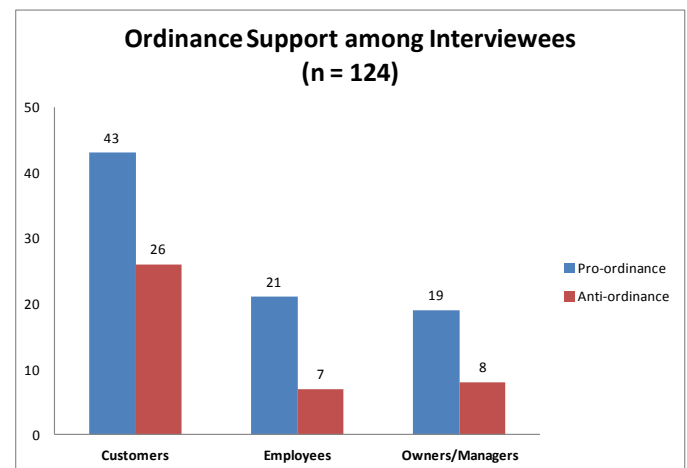
### Methodology

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with restaurant and bar owners, managers, employees, and customers during January, 2011.

A coding scheme with 48 thematic codes was inductively and deductively developed, in relation to the guiding questions and emerging themes. Once theoretical saturation was achieved, the coding scheme was tested for inter-coder agreement (80% agreement).

For the purposes of this study, **restaurants** are defined as hybrid establishments that serve both food and alcohol. Prior to passage of the smoke-free ordinance, these establishments could choose to permit indoor smoking—but only if they adhered to an age restriction (adults 18 and over) in accordance with the state law.

**140 interviews** were conducted by a team of five independent interviewers across **17 bars and 20 restaurants**.



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## FINDINGS

**59% of the sample supported the ordinance, while 29% opposed it.** However, restaurant interviewees were more likely (81%) to support the ordinance than bar interviewees (54%).

### Ordinance Enforcement

- Enforcement was a non-issue for most establishments, except for occasional customer irritations and inconveniences.
- Smokers were generally compliant and willing to step outside to smoke.

### Customers – Lessons Learned

1. Customers largely favor the smoke-free ordinance
2. Support stems from air quality improvements, health benefits, and reduced second-hand smoke exposure
3. Opposition stems from concerns about business owner and individual rights, and an association between smoking & drinking
4. Overall, customers' patronage of bars and restaurants has NOT decreased
5. Some customers are going out MORE and/or to NEW places because they are now smoke-free
6. Smokers smoke less than they used to while at bars/restaurants

### Employees—Lessons Learned

1. Employees strongly favor the smoke-free ordinance
2. Support stems from air quality improvements, reduced second-hand smoke exposure, and cleanliness
3. Opposition stems from concerns about losing business to establishments not covered by the ordinance (outside the city limits), business owner rights, and litter from outdoor smoking
4. Employees smoke less, both on-the-job and in general
5. Employees report fewer symptoms of SHS exposure

### Owners/Managers – Lessons Learned

1. Owners & managers largely favor the smoke-free ordinance
2. Support stems from air quality improvements and cleanliness
3. Opposition stems from concerns about business owner rights, business loss to establishments not covered by the ordinance, outdoor litter, and the political process' inclusiveness
4. Restaurants and half the bars reported being neutrally or positively affected by the ordinance
5. Negatively affected bars were located near the city limits and/or lacked an outdoor space

### Follow-up

Chatham County has since passed a smoke-free county ordinance, effective March, 2012. The ordinance covers the bars/restaurants that lie on the outskirts of Savannah. This will address the concern about customers taking their business to county bars/restaurants in order to smoke while drinking.

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