



## Smoke-Free Housing Advanced Strategies

# 2023-2024 Community Listening Sessions

## Executive Summary

Between December 2023 and October 2024, the Minneapolis Health Department (MHD) and Live Smoke Free (LSF) conducted five listening sessions with diverse community groups to identify potential support for citywide solutions to address secondhand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing and reduce the health disparities that result from a lack of smoke-free housing protections for people living on a limited income. Most participants reported they were regularly exposed to secondhand smoke in their home, and felt they had no course of action to change that. There was overwhelming support for a citywide smoking disclosure policy (that would apply to multi-unit housing) and strong support for a citywide smoke-free multi-unit housing policy. The results of these listening sessions will be used to gain support for future policy change to reduce disparities in access to and availability of smoke-free housing in Minneapolis.

## Purpose

A 2016 survey of more than 3,000 rental property license holders in Minneapolis found significant disparities in smoke-free housing protections for low-income renters. Seventy-one percent of market-rate housing had a smoke-free policy, compared with only 45 percent of subsidized housing. Further, surveys of property managers participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Project Based Voucher (PBV) programs in 2021 and 2022, respectively, found that nearly one-third of HCV and PBV properties that participated in the survey had no smoke-free protections. However, most property owners/managers in the HCV and PBV strongly supported smoke free housing.

Based on this data, the MHD is exploring potential city-wide policies that would reduce these disparities in the availability of smoke-free housing for people living on a limited income.

To gather community input on potential support for these initiatives, Live Smoke Free (LSF) and MHD began an iterative data gathering process to identify potential support for citywide solutions to address secondhand smoke exposure in housing and reduce the health disparities that result from a lack of smoke-free housing protections. This began with key informant interviews in the spring of 2022. Eight interviews were completed; participants included a tenant legal advocate, a real estate expert, Minneapolis City leadership staff, a public housing leader, a

Minneapolis City councilmember, a tenant's rights organizer, a rental licensing expert, and an affordable housing provider/advocate. These key informant interviews demonstrated that respondents were generally supportive of citywide policies to support smoke-free housing, noting the public health benefit; however, some expressed concerns that policies may have a disparate impact on people who smoke, citing potential for people to lose housing and/or have a lack of access to housing.

Next, in the summer of 2023, LSF and MHD conducted a brief community survey to identify whether or not Minneapolis residents think smoking should be allowed in multi-unit housing. A total of 175 surveys were collected during outreach at six community events between June and October 2023. The survey results found strong support for smoke free housing, with 89 percent of Minneapolis residents surveyed reporting that they do not believe smoking should be allowed in multi-unit housing.

To gather more in-depth information from various communities in Minneapolis, LSF and MHD conducted listening sessions with community members between December 2023 and October 2024 to identify potential support for citywide solutions to address secondhand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing and reduce the health disparities that result from a lack of smoke-free housing protections.

## Methods

Five listening sessions were held between December 2023 and October 2024. LSF and MHD partnered with community-based organizations to reach various community groups including Black/African American, East African, East Asian, Native American, and Latinx communities. Each listening session was about one-hour. Participants had to be 18 years of age or older, and a Minneapolis resident in multi-unit housing to participate in the listening session. Participants were asked a series of questions about whether they allow smoking or vaping in their unit, whether their building has a smoke-free policy, their exposure to tobacco and cannabis secondhand smoke, and their potential support for two city-wide smoke free policies: (1) a policy requiring disclosure of the property's smoking policy prior to signing a lease and (2) a policy requiring that all multi-unit rental housing have a smoke-free policy; participant demographic information was also collected. Most sessions included a meal; at one session, the community partner was able to provide participants with an incentive (gift card) for their time. Organizations received compensation for their time to recruit participants and assist with preparation and facilitation of the listening sessions.

A total of 64 people participated in the five sessions. Of those participants, 55 were Minneapolis residents. The participants in the first and second listening sessions were majority Black or African American (67%, n = 4) and (77%, n=10), respectively. The third listening session was majority American Indian or Alaska Native (75%, n = 6); the fourth listening session was majority Asian or Asian American (89%, n = 8); and the fifth listening session was majority Hispanic or Latino (96%, n = 25).

Responses to the listening session questions were aggregated and summarized by notetakers who were present during the listening sessions. The sessions were conducted in a

conversational style to allow for participant dialogue, resulting in qualitative and quantitative data that varied by session. Findings are summarized, below.

A copy of the questions asked during the listening sessions is included in the Appendix.

## Questions, Key Themes, and Response Summaries

### **Do you allow people, including yourself, to smoke inside your apartment/unit?**

#### Response Summary

- In every listening session, most or all participants did not allow smoking inside their apartment/unit.
- Many self-proclaimed smokers reported not allowing smoking inside their unit.
- Participants reported concerns for health, smell, and property damage as reasons for not allowing smoking inside.
- A few participants reported allowing smoking anywhere or in some places, such as the living room.
- One participant noted that they perceived Uunsi, a traditional Somali incense, as different than secondhand tobacco or cannabis smoke.

#### Quotes

- “It does not make a difference because my neighbors smoke and it gets into my apartment” [Listening Session 1 (LS1)]
- “[I allow smoking] only in the living room, sometimes in the kitchen” (LS3)
- “I am a smoker, but do not allow it in my house. I have young children and do not like the smell of stale smoke.” (LS3)

### **Do you allow people, including yourself, to vape inside your apartment/unit?**

#### Response Summary

- In every listening session, most participants did not allow vaping inside their unit/apartment.
- Participants reported concerns for health, including concerns about a lack of research on the long-term health effects of vaping/e-cigarettes.
- Some people viewed vaping as equivalent to smoking in their decision for not allowing its use inside their apartment.
- At least one participant reported concerns about autonomy, and that they should be allowed to do what they want in their home.

#### Quotes

- “I do not allow vaping because I do not want the people I love to be exposed [to vaping].” (LS1)
- “No – because there is not enough research about how the mist affects your health.” (LS3)
- “People should be allowed to do what they want – in their home – even if they rent.” (LS3)

### **How often do you smell tobacco smoke coming into your apartment/unit?**

### Response Summary

- Across all listening sessions, most participants reported smelling tobacco smoke every day.
- Many people who said they smelled tobacco smoke, reported it was in the hallway and/or elevators.

### Quotes

“I smell it [tobacco smoke] every day - since people are walking in and out and there's nothing you can do.” (LS1)

“Every day – my neighbors smoke and the smell comes through the vents.” (LS3)

### **How often do you smell cannabis/marijuana smoke coming into your apartment/unit?**

#### Response Summary

- Many participants reported smelling cannabis/marijuana smoke every day.
- Many people who said they smelled cannabis smoke reported it was in the hallway and/or elevators.

#### Quotes

- “I do not spend time in my apartment because of the cannabis smoke” (LS2)
- “[I smell it] Every day – I really do not mind the smell” (LS3)
- “I have my windows closed right now so I do not really smell anything” (LS3)

### **What do you do, if anything, when you smell secondhand smoke coming into your apartment?**

#### Response Summary

- Many participants reported doing nothing, due to not knowing what to do or feeling like nothing would change if they reported issues to property management.
- Respondents who did take action reported: reporting to management, spraying air freshener, opening a window or door, closing a window or door, turning on air conditioning, talking to the neighbor that smokes, sleeping in a different room, wearing a mask, blocking gaps under the door or vents, and/or turning on a fan.
- Some participants reported that they were scared to report issues, either because of fear of management or repercussions from neighbors. Others said they had reported in the past and nothing happened.

#### Quotes

- “I used to report it all the time because we were told that if we report it something would be done. Nothing is ever done.” (LS1)
- “I close my nose and mouth and open the windows. I cannot tell whether it is marijuana or other smoke. Smoke is smoke.” (LS2)
- “I have no guts to come to property manager” (LS4)

### **Do you believe you, or anyone in your household, has experienced any health problems related to secondhand smoke entering your apartment/unit?**

#### Response Summary

- There was a mixed response of yes and no from participants.

- Reported health problems related to secondhand smoke included lingering upper respiratory illness, needing an inhaler, difficulty breathing, feeling weak and confused, difficulty thinking, depression, effects that were incapacitating, headaches, emesis, asthma, dizziness, congestion, increased COVID effects, hurting, and lung disease.

#### Quotes

- “It [secondhand smoke] effects my grandson's asthma when he comes over” (LS1)
- “I have had a lingering upper respiratory illness” (LS1)
- “I had a neighbor who moved out. Before she moved into the building she was not on inhalers. While living in the building she ended up on inhalers. She no longer had to use them when she moved out.” (LS1)

### **Does your landlord, property manager, or homeowners’ association allow smoking in individual apartments/units inside your building?**

#### Response Summary

- Most participants said no, smoking is not allowed in their building, and some were unsure.
- Many participants reported that their building does not allow smoking, but it is not followed or enforced.
- One participant reported that smoking is allowed except for in the common area.

#### Quotes

- “I am a smoker – but I hope I can find an apartment building that does not allow smoking in the future. I have never smoked inside. It is common to be a smoker and not like the smell of cigarettes when they do not smoke in their home.” (LS1)
- “There is no safe space outside to smoke...I prefer to smoke inside.” (LS3)
- “They put a sign [saying smoking is not allowed], but most smokers don’t pay attention” (LS4)

### **Would you support a citywide policy or ordinance requiring owners of multi-unit buildings and common interest communities (such as condominiums) to tell potential residents what the smoking policy is for the building prior to signing a lease or purchasing a unit? (also called disclosure).**

#### Response Summary

- Approximately 98% of participants supported a disclosure policy ordinance.
- Approximately 2% of participants opposed a disclosure policy or ordinance.
- Participants felt sharing the smoking policy prior to signing a lease or purchasing a unit was important information that residents have a right to know. They believed it would provide information about what to expect from the cleanliness of the space and air in the building.

#### Quotes

- “When you move into a place - you should know the rules, so you know what to expect. It is important information to know in advance.” (LS1)

- “When I moved into my place the walls were yellow [from thirdhand smoke], and they drip when I take a shower.” (LS3)

### **Would you support a citywide policy or ordinance requiring all multi-unit buildings to be smoke free? (e.g. not allow smoking anywhere inside the building)**

#### Response Summary

- Approximately 87% of participants supported a smoke-free multi-unit building ordinance.
- Approximately 11% of participants opposed a smoke-free multi-unit building ordinance and 2% of participants were neutral.
- Reasons for support included health and safety, preventing secondhand smoke exposure, and that people could smoke outside or away from the building.
- Reasons for opposition included autonomy to do what you want in your home, cold weather, concerns about elderly people’s ability to go outside to smoke, perceived stress relief from smoking, not having a safe place to smoke outside, too many rules and restrictions, and wanting to make smoke-free buildings truly smoke-free while keeping separate smoking buildings.
- Multiple participants wanted a designated smoking area outside that is clean and safe to be included in implementation of this type of policy.

#### Quotes: Support

- “We wish we could find buildings that are truly smoke free.” (LS2)
- “Support – because there are other families living there. Think about the other residents” (LS3)
- “Support – because I do not smoke, and I do not want secondhand smoke in my lungs” (LS3)
- “Support, I don’t want them to smoke in building but if they smoke outside by the trees, it’s okay” (LS4)

#### Quotes: Oppose

- “People should be able to do what they want to do in their apartment.” (LS1)
- “I would like to have some buildings that are smoke free and some where smoking is allowed because it is difficult to police it.” (LS1)
- “Let people live where they choose and make smoke free buildings truly smoke free.” (LS1)

#### Quotes: Special Considerations

- “There should be a designated area [for smoking outside].” (LS3)
- “If the area [outside] was cleaner – I would go outside to smoke.” (LS3)
- “We have elders [in our building] and getting outside is a barrier.” (LS3)
- “Not good idea [to smoke] inside, designate a place outside where people can go” (LS4)

### **Do you have any other comments?**

#### Response Summary

- Participants discussed the fire hazard of discarded cigarettes, both inside and outside.

- Participants wanted better enforcement of smoke-free policies and there was interest in local advocacy.
- Some participants had no problems with people smoking inside their apartment, while some self-proclaimed smokers felt strongly that having a smoke-free policy for individual units and common areas was important.
- There were concerns that a smoke-free policy for all multi-unit rental housing could lead to more limitations on personal freedoms, particularly if a policy included restrictions on allowing people to sage as a spiritual practice. (MHD and LSF recommend that any smoke-free policy specify that restrictions on indoor use apply to commercial tobacco products and do not apply to traditional/sacred tobacco use. Model policy language is available from the Public Health Law Center)
- Participants thought that having a smoke-free policy would be good because it would provide a supportive environment for people who want to stop smoking.
- Some participants noted it is very hard to quit smoking and did not see use of commercial tobacco products as a “big deal.”
- It was suggested that instead of having all multi-unit housing be smoke free, it would be preferred for buildings to have designated sections where smoking is or is not allowed.

#### Quotes

- “I feel like enough has already been taken from us.” (LS1)
- “I feel like people who do smoke are being treated like they are evil. A lot of people have been smoking for a long time, and it is really difficult to quit.” (LS2)
- “Tobacco is not a big deal compared to other drugs” (LS4)
- “I support smoke free homes even though I am a smoker.” (LS3)
- “Could we help connect residents to their council member to advocate for policy?” (LS2)
- The facilitator for one listening session said most participants cannot afford commercial tobacco products; that participants would have to choose between using these products and eating. (LS5)

#### Conclusions

The majority of participants reported regular exposure to secondhand smoke in their home, whether tobacco or cannabis/marijuana smoke, with many reporting they smelled tobacco smoke and/or cannabis/marijuana smoke in their unit daily. Approximately 98 percent of all participants said they would support a citywide policy or ordinance requiring owners of multi-unit buildings and common interest communities to tell potential residents what the smoking policy is for the building prior to signing a lease or purchasing a unit. Overwhelmingly, participants felt it was important to be given information on a building’s smoking policy prior to moving in. Approximately 87 percent of all participants supported a citywide policy or ordinance requiring all multi-unit buildings to be smoke-free (no smoking indoors). Participants reported health, safety, and smell as reasons for supporting the policy. Concerns included cold weather, safety, and excessive restrictions on residents.

#### Key Findings

Partnering with community-based organizations to hold listening sessions was an effective way to reach diverse community groups and assess support for smoke-free housing policies from populations most impacted by the policy. Most participants were regularly exposed to secondhand smoke, and felt they had no course of action to change that. There was overwhelming support for a citywide disclosure policy, with little to no opposition. There was also strong support for a citywide smoke-free multi-unit housing policy, with potential barriers presented that should be considered in the implementation of this policy.

## Next Steps

The results of these listening sessions will be shared back with participants, City of Minneapolis staff and policy makers, and other stakeholders to gain support for future policy change to reduce disparities in access to and availability of smoke-free housing.

## Thank You

The Minneapolis Health Department and Live Smoke Free would like to thank Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES), Lao Assistance Center, Little Earth Residents Association, NorthPoint Health and Wellness, and Wellshare International for the partnership in implementing the listening sessions.

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## Appendix

# Participant Demographics Survey

The Minneapolis Health Department (MHD) and Live Smoke Free (LSF) are doing community listening sessions with adults who live in multi-unit buildings in the city. We want to learn about smoking in apartments/units and what you think about secondhand smoke and smoke-free policies.

Any information you provide will be **completely anonymous** and will be used to inform the city about ways to promote smoke-free air in multi-unit housing. When the project is completed, a report will be available at [www.mnsmokefreehousing.org](http://www.mnsmokefreehousing.org).

For purposes of these listening sessions, the word “tobacco” does *not* include the sacred and traditional use of tobacco by Indigenous people.

Please answer the demographic questions below to help us understand more about you.

1. Are there adults over 65 living in your apartment/unit?

Yes

No

2. Are there children under the age of 18 living in your apartment/unit?

Yes

No

3. What ZIP code do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

6. Which of the following do you consider yourself? (Check all that apply.)

Asian or Asian American (Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, Samoan, Indian, Japanese, Chamorro, and Other Asians)

Black or African American

White or European

American Indian or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino

Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. In the last month, which of the following have you **smoked or vaped**? Check all that apply.

Tobacco

Cannabis/marijuana

Cigarettes

Cigars

Vapes/e-cigarettes

Cigarillos

Pipes (including water pipes)

Hookahs

Bidis

I haven't used any of these in the last month

8. Do you have any other comments?

## Facilitated Listening Session Questions

These questions will be asked during the listening session. If you prefer to answer any/all of these questions in writing, please fill in your answers below.

**Your Smoking/Vaping Rules for Your Apartment/Unit:**

1. Do **you** allow people, including yourself, to **smoke** (cigarettes, marijuana/cannabis joints, cigars, cigarillos, water or regular pipes, hookahs and bidis) inside your apartment/unit (not including decks, porches, patios, or garages)?  
I **do not allow** smoking anywhere inside my apartment/unit  
I **allow smoking anywhere** inside my apartment/unit  
I **allow smoking in some places** inside my apartment/unit
2. Do **you** allow people, including yourself, to **vape** e-cigarettes inside your apartment/unit (not including decks, porches, patios, or garages)?  
I **do not** allow vaping anywhere inside my apartment/unit  
I **allow vaping anywhere** inside my apartment/unit  
I **allow vaping in some places** inside my apartment/unit

**Your Exposure to Secondhand Tobacco Smoke:**

3. How often do you smell **tobacco** smoke coming into your apartment/unit? (From another apartment/unit or outside.)  
Every day  
A few times a week  
A few times a month  
A few times a year  
Never  
I am not sure
4. How often do you smell **cannabis/marijuana** smoke coming into your apartment/unit? (From another apartment/unit or outside.)  
Every day  
A few times a week  
A few times a month  
A few times a year  
Never  
I am not sure

5. What do you do, if anything, when you smell secondhand smoke coming into your apartment?

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6. Do you believe you, or anyone in your household, has experienced any health problems related to secondhand smoke entering your apartment/unit?

Yes

If yes, what were the health problems? \_\_\_\_\_

No

7. Does your landlord, property manager, or homeowners association allow smoking in individual apartments/units inside your building?

Yes, smoking is allowed

No, smoking is not allowed

Unsure

**(If no, go to question 18, if yes or unsure, go to question 21)**

8. Were you living in your building when it went smoke free?

Yes, I was living here when my building went smoke free

No, my building was already smoke free when I moved in

Unsure

**Your Experience with The Smoke-Free Policy:**

9. Have you or anyone living in your apartment/unit changed **smoking** habits since the building went smoke free? Check all that apply.

Yes, **started** smoking

Yes, **quit** smoking

Yes, **tried to quit** smoking

Yes, **cut back** on smoking

Yes, quit smoking and **switched to vaping**

No, **no changes** in current smoking behavior

No one living in my apartment/unit smokes

This does not apply to me or anyone living in my apartment/unit

10. If you wanted to stop vaping or using tobacco products, where would you look for support?"

Peer support

Clinic

Provider

Statewide Quitline

Community Health Worker

Church/Religious Institution

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you or anyone living in your apartment/unit changed **vaping** habits since the building went smoke free? Check all that apply.

Yes, **started** vaping

Yes, **quit** vaping

Yes, **tried to quit** vaping

Yes, **cut back** on vaping

No, **no changes** in current vaping behavior

No one living in my apartment/unit vapes

This does not apply to me or anyone living in my apartment/unit

#### **Your Thoughts about Smoke-Free Apartments/Units:**

12. Would you support a smoke-free (no-smoking) policy that prohibits smoking in all individual apartments/units within your building?

Support

Neutral

Oppose

Why did you respond the way you did to the previous question?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Your Thoughts about Citywide Smoke-Free Housing Policies**

13. Would you support a citywide policy or ordinance requiring owners of multi-unit buildings and common interest communities (such as condominiums) to tell potential residents what the smoking policy is for the building prior to signing a lease or purchasing a unit?

Support  
Neutral  
Oppose

Why did you respond the way you did to the previous question?

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14. Would you support a citywide policy or ordinance requiring all multi-unit buildings to be smoke free? (e.g. not allow smoking anywhere inside the building)
- Support  
Neutral  
Oppose

Why did you respond the way you did to the previous question?

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15. Do you have any other comments?