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Aliso Viejo reviews smoking in apartments, condos

By [CLAUDIA KOERNER](#)

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ALISO VIEJO – City Council members asked Wednesday for more information on how limiting smoking in apartments, condos and townhomes might work.

City staff will also work to arrange a meeting between residents calling for the limits and representatives from the Apartment Association of Orange County as well as local homeowners associations. With the added information and any consensus developed in the meeting, the council will return to the issue in January.

Resident Jodie Feinberg started Residents for Smoke-Free Living and presented information on smoking in multifamily homes to the council.

"What we want to see is that everyone who is a nonsmoker in this community has the option of smoke-free housing," she said.

That could mean banning smoking in certain units within a complex, common areas or balconies and patios. The group is also asking that second-hand smoke be named a public nuisance. Calabasas and Glendale have already enacted ordinances that limit some smoking in multifamily units. [In Laguna Woods earlier this year, smoking was banned on patios and balconies.](#)

Resident Stacy Alynn said second-hand smoke in her complex has triggered asthma attacks. Though smoking is banned in the common pool area, smoke drifts over from neighboring units, she said.

"So many times, I've been forced to leave when I'm swimming because of the cigarette smoke that's coming from patios and balconies," Alynn said.

The smoke is making it hard for her to enjoy an amenity she's paying for, she added, but apartment management officials said they couldn't do anything.

When she lived in an Aliso Viejo townhouse, Sue Andicochea would smell a neighbor's smoking through shared vents. Even when the windows were closed, she said the smoking was unbearable. She talked with the neighbor and her homeowners' association. Eventually, she sold her home and moved.

"Nobody was willing to make any changes," she said.

Carrie Caudill of Sequoia Equities said her company owns Alicante in Aliso Viejo, a complex that offers smoke-free living. The company is in the process of converting 17 other complexes and 15 others are already converted.

"It's an amenity," she said. "People will relocate for it, and they'll pay more for it."

Caudill's company has approached the issue not by banning smoking outright, but by banning smoking at certain locations and offering alternatives.

"Our process was very easy, very doable," she said. "We did not get resident push back."

Council members asked for more information on how smoking regulations for multifamily homes worked in other California cities. Questions included how enforcement would work and how much it would cost.

Mayor Pro Tem Don Garcia said he hopes the city can work with residents and apartment managers to find a common sense solution. He added he's typically cautious about government involvement in social issues.

"This is one thing, it may be time," he said.

Contact the writer: ckoerner@ocregister.com or 949-454-7309

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