



## The Selling of Tobacco in the City of Portland

In most states, retailers must obtain a license in order to sell tobacco products. Oregon does not require tobacco retail licensure, so a list of tobacco retailers was created from various sources. There were 537 tobacco retailers in Portland, and a random sample of 367 retailers was selected to be assessed in this study. The stores were categorized by location, based on neighborhood association:

All Multnomah County residents deserve neighborhoods that promote their health. Since tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death, it is important to understand the tobacco environment in the county. An assessment was conducted of retail stores in Multnomah County that sold tobacco. This summary includes findings for the City of Portland. (A report on the findings for all of Multnomah County is also available.)

In Portland, two-thirds (68%) of the tobacco retailers were convenience stores, followed by grocery stores (10%). More unique stores that sold tobacco included a bait and tackle shop, craft shop, espresso shop, marijuana paraphernalia store, and tanning salon. Over a third (37%) of tobacco retailers were located within 1000 feet of a school.

Tobacco distributors pay some stores to display tobacco advertising, often dictating where the advertisements are placed. Most (68%) retailers had outside advertisements for tobacco which can be seen by shoppers as well as some youth and adults who do not shop at the store. Youth are more likely to be exposed to advertising when it is placed near products they are purchasing. Among the Portland stores in this study, 18% displayed tobacco within 12 inches of products sold to youth (toys, candy, slushy/soda machine, or ice cream). Ads were placed within three feet of the floor – where young children are likely to see them – in 10% of stores.

Central Northeast Neighbors	34
East Portland Neighborhood Office	82
Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods	37
North Portland Neighborhood Services	37
Neighbors West-Northwest	57
Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition	92
Southwest Neighborhoods Inc.	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>367</b>



A typical display of the variety of tobacco products being sold. Tobacco cessation aids are also displayed.

### Novel Nicotine Products and Youth

Youth are increasingly likely to use a variety of tobacco and nicotine products that often have added flavorings that appeal to youth. For example, electronic cigarette use among 11th graders almost tripled from 2011-2013 in Oregon.

Percentage of 11th graders in Multnomah County who have used tobacco products in the past 30 days	
Cigarettes	8%
Cigars, cigarillos, little cigars	5%
Electronic cigarettes	4%
Smokeless tobacco	3%
Hookah	9%
Source: Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, 2013	

## Partners in this Study

Multnomah County was awarded a grant from the Oregon Health Authority through a competitive RFP: Strategies for Policy and Environmental Change (SPArC)–Tobacco Free. This grant-funded study was a collaboration among the Multnomah County Health Department and five members of the Oregon Health Equity Alliance:

- Asian Health & Service Center
- Center for Intercultural Organizing
- Oregon Latino Health Coalition
- Upstream Public Health
- Urban League of Portland

Partners on this grant are concerned about preventing tobacco and nicotine use among our county's youth. The vast majority (90%) of adult smokers started using tobacco when they were under 18 years old.



Display of electronic cigarette liquid, in flavors such as *Clown Candy*, *Root Beer*, *Kettle Corn*, and *Yummy Gummy*.

Studies have shown that adolescents who are exposed to tobacco advertising and promotional activities are more likely to start smoking. Nationally, the tobacco industry spends nearly \$10 billion in advertising and promotional activities each year, and the bulk of this promotion occurs in retail stores.

Almost all Portland tobacco retailers (95%) sold cigarettes, including all convenience stores. Most retailers also sold little cigars (89%), electronic cigarettes (87%), and smokeless tobacco (86%).

The most popular types of tobacco were commonly available with flavorings. Over 90% of stores that sold the following products offered the product with flavorings: cigarettes (menthol), electronic cigarettes, little cigars, smokeless tobacco, blunt wraps, and hookah.

The tobacco industry uses in-store price promotions as a way to boost sales, and almost three-quarters (74%) of stores that sold cigarettes offered some kind of price discount. Cigarette price discounts were more common in East Portland (86% of stores) compared to other areas of the city (70%). This disparity was even greater for discounts on menthol cigarettes: 80% in East Portland and 56% in other areas of the city. Price promotions for little cigars was more common in East Portland (40%) and North Portland (21%) compared to other areas of the city (5%).

Possible law violations were observed in a number of stores. Self-service displays of tobacco products were found in 19 Portland stores where state law requires tobacco sales to be vendor-assisted. Federal law does not allow cigarettes to be sold in packs of less than 20, and Oregon law requires cigarettes to be sold in sealed packages. Some retailers break open a cigarette pack to sell single cigarettes or loosies, in violation of the law. Ten stores (3%) sold loosies, and seven of these stores were located in North or Northeast Portland. Approximately 10% of the stores selling tobacco in North or Northeast Portland sold loosies. Oregon law requires tobacco retailers to display a sign indicating that no sales to minors are allowed. Almost half (47%) of the stores in Central Northeast Portland did not display such a sign, and 12% of stores in other areas of the city did not display a sign.

## Cigars? Cigarettes?

Federal law does not allow flavorings in cigarettes except for menthol. Some youth smoke little cigars, which often contain other flavorings that can appeal to youth. Federal law also does not allow cigarettes to be sold in packs of less than 20 cigarettes, as a way to increase the price barrier to smoke tobacco. That law does not apply to little cigars, and most (83%) stores that sold little cigars allowed them to be purchased as singles. The most common price for one little cigar was 79 cents. Some store clerks said that the flavored little cigars are popular among young adults.

## Contact

Olivia Quiroz, Senior Policy Specialist  
Multnomah County Health Department  
Community Wellness and Prevention Program  
olivia.quiroz@multco.us