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NEWARK NEIGHBORHOOD CALLS FOR AN END TO CAMPAIGN SIGN 'LITTER'



Residents of Forest Hill say the campaign signs for the May 13 election are litter. (Courtesy of Kenneth Krol)

By [David Giambusso/The Star-Ledger](#)

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NEWARK — Signs, signs, everywhere signs.

So goes the mantra for a group of North Ward residents who have had it with campaign signs plastered across telephone poles, utility poles and trees throughout the Forest Hill section of Newark.

The signs are forbidden by city ordinance, but a quick tour of Newark will show how hopeful city leaders flout that law. Signs from South Ward Councilman Ras Baraka's campaign and those of former state assistant attorney general Shavar Jeffries, as well as a slew of city council candidates, are plastered across the city.

"It's basically litter," said Kenneth Kroll, a non-profit executive who lives in a Georgian mansion on Lake Street. "It is not following a city ordinance by the people that are

supposed to be upholding our city ordinances.”

The sign wars in Newark go back roughly to the 17th century, when the city was first settled by a small band of Puritans. Indeed, the tradition of posting notices, treatises and declarations on public walls and trees is an American tradition.

But in the age of glossy ads and brightly colored campaign posters, the denizens of Forest Hill — a neighborhood of stately mansions and large, well-kept homes — say they have had enough.

And they have the law on their side.

The ordinance forbids any promotional poster or sign on “any tree, shrub, utility pole, light pole, telephone pole, traffic control device, mail box, fire hydrant or other structure lying in or over a public easement.”

Despite multiple complaints from the Forest Hill neighborhood, the city has apparently done little to address their concerns.

“At this time this office is not aware of any citations/summons/tickets related to the posting of campaign signs awaiting adjudication by the Newark Municipal Court,” said city prosecutor Grace Spencer. “Until such time, this office has no authority to take any action.”

Marylou Bongiorno, a filmmaker and resident of the neighborhood, said she finds the lack of official action galling.

“If we can’t get accountability for something where the candidate’s face is plastered, then what can we expect from the other stuff?” she said. “If you travel a few blocks into Montclair or Nutley you’d never see this.”

A staffer for Baraka recently posted a picture of one of the “illegal” signs on Facebook with the caption “Lake Street for Baraka.”

That did not go over well.

“I’m out there digging in snow banks to take signs down and she’s writing, ‘Lake Street for Baraka,’?” Kroll said.

Frank Baraff, a Baraka spokesman, said, “We will abide by the wishes of the people in the neighborhood.”

On Friday evening, City Hall issued an ultimatum to the campaigns, giving them 24 hours to remove the signs.

“Failure to remove said signs will result in the signs being removed by the city,” wrote Neighborhood Services Director Amos Crudup to the campaigns. “All costs incurred by the city to remove the signs will be assessed to you.”

He then threatened to take legal action if the campaigns did not comply.

http://www.nj.com/essex/index.ssf/2014/03/newark_neighborhood_calls_for_an_end_to_campaign_sign_litter.html#incart_river