



**CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Polystyrene and Single-Use Plastic Ban

1. Motion providing direction to staff to prepare an ordinance prohibiting the use of polystyrene and single-use plastic products in all City facilities, City-managed concessions, City-sponsored events, and City-permitted events that serve prepared food.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Action Item

Approved for January 12, 2021 **calendar**

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

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RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that the City Council approve a motion to provide direction to staff to prepare an ordinance prohibiting the use of polystyrene and single-use plastic products in all City facilities.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The City of Glendale strives to be a leader in protecting the environment through sustainable practices. In August 2020, City Council directed staff to research the feasibility of a polystyrene and single-use plastic ban within City facilities. City Council had also previously directed staff to research a single use plastic ban City wide. Plastic pollution, including polystyrene and single-use plastics, has raised environmental and health concerns related to water pollution, the welfare of marine life, human health, and aesthetics. This regulation will reduce single-use waste; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reduce the distribution of disposable single-use plastic; reduce polystyrene use and litter in the City; keep plastic waste from landfills; and reduce litter threats to natural ecosystems and ocean wildlife to protect the health of the Glendale community and promote environmentally sustainable practices in the City.

Single-Use Plastics

Single-use plastics are not just a problem in Glendale but across the globe. Locally, single-use plastics are a major source of litter and may contaminate recycling programs as confusion abounds around which forms of plastics are acceptable to discard in recycling bins. Through urban runoff channels, plastic waste in the City of Glendale accrues in local marine environments, which directly threatens marine life and their natural habitats. These plastic products take several hundred years to decompose. This fact, coupled with the increased usage of disposable plastic products over the years, means ocean pollution is growing at an alarming rate. The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish by weight.

Straws, stirrers, take-out containers, and lids are among the top 10 most common items found on the beach, according to the 2018 Ocean Conservancy. Additionally, Heal the Bay's Marine Debris database shows the number of straws collected during their beach cleanups has increased over 43 percent since 2014. These small items are not only ending up in surrounding marine environments, but also in the streets, in storm drains, on the beach, and in the ocean, which is causing aesthetic and litter problems in the City.

Bioplastics

Some disposable food service ware is made with plant-based polymers known as bioplastics. Unlike petroleum-based plastics, bioplastics are made from renewable resources such as corn, sugar, and soy protein and are often labeled "compostable." Bioplastics are not recyclable like petroleum-based plastics; however, they are capable of decomposing in some industrial compost facilities (but not in the natural environment.) There is currently no facility in the Southern California region that can compost them.

Because bioplastics look and feel very similar to petroleum-based plastics, it can be difficult for consumers and sorters to distinguish them from recyclable plastics. However, because they are not recyclable like petroleum-based plastics, bioplastics are viewed as contaminants by recycling processors. Bioplastics that end up in recycling and composting bins are separated and sent to landfills.

Marine Degradable Ware

Marine-degradable disposal food service ware refers to products designed to biodegrade under the marine environmental conditions of aerobic marine waters or anaerobic marine sediments. This specification excludes products predominantly made with either petroleum-based or biologically based plastics. Some examples of marine-degradable material include, but are not limited to, paper, fiber, bagasse (fibrous matter that remains after sugarcane or sorghum stalks are processed), wheat straw, seaweed, wood, and food (pasta and licorice straws). Disposable food service ware made from this type of material can be disposed of in organics bins in City facilities and composted whether or not food residue is present. By requiring marine-degradable disposal food service ware, the City would create a more uniform stream of material that could be repurposed into compost, would reduce contamination of the recycled waste stream, and would reduce the amount of foodservice ware going to the landfill.

Recycling of Plastics

The following information was gathered from a report conducted by the UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation titled, “Plastic Waste in Los Angeles County.”

Recycling of single-use plastics, especially food service ware plastic, is difficult. One of the main reasons why recycling can be burdensome is the Resin Identification Codes. These codes are imprinted on plastic products to indicate the type of materials they are composed of. This code system helps waste collectors and facilities identify if they can effectively process the recovered materials. The problem is that most, if not all recycling facilities, cannot process all plastic waste. Code #5 plastics (yogurt cups, ice cream containers) can only be processed effectively in facilities with certain types of equipment, and Codes #3 (cosmetic packaging, device packaging), #4 (trash bags, newspaper), #6 (Styrofoam), and #7 (mixed plastics) are generally landfilled. Single-use plastic food service ware, among other items, is especially challenging for Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF’s) to process and recover for recycling because of contamination. Due to these challenges, single-use plastic food service ware is generally not recycled in Los Angeles County. The limitations of recycling make it insufficient to be the sole means of addressing the impacts of plastic production and waste.

The following table represent current disposal options for food service ware at the City of Glendale recycling center.

| | Recycle Bin | Green Waste/Organics | Landfill Bin |
|--|---|---|---|
| Plastics resin codes 1 & 2 large & clean |  |  |  |
| Plastic resin codes #3 - #5 large & clean or dirty (bowls, trays, cups and plates) |  |  |  |
| Plastics resin codes #1- #5 small |  |  |  |
| Plastic resin code # 6 polystyrene |  |  |  |
| Plastic resin code # 7 bioplastics |  |  |  |
| Marine degradable |  |  |  |

The recycling of small items such as straws, utensils, lids, stirrers, and lid plugs are also not economically viable at the municipal level. Items that are sent to the recycling facility are sorted on a conveyor belt and baled before being shipped to buyers. Small, lightweight items easily fall off the conveyor belt or become stuck in confined spaces within the equipment. The operational and labor costs of bundling these items exceed the value of

the items and therefore they are typically sent to the landfill rather than recycled. Additionally, the recycling market has recently experienced a huge disruption. China, traditionally the largest importer of U.S. recyclable material, began enforcing stricter requirements for importing solid waste. Since January 1, 2018, China has prohibited 24 types of solid waste materials, including household waste plastics such as food service ware. This has significantly impacted the recycling industry in the U.S., making recycling of many waste streams, including plastics and mixed paper, uneconomical.

Policy Recommendation

In an effort to take a first step in addressing the global environmental impacts related to disposable products, staff recommends the City Council consider adoption of an ordinance which requires that all disposable food service ware utilized within City facilities including; City-managed concessions, City-sponsored events, and City-permitted events that serve prepared food must be marine-degradable to reduce or eliminate the amount of disposable food service ware sent to the landfill and the amount of plastic pollution in the ocean. Disposable food service ware made from bioplastics would also be prohibited. It is recommended that beverage cups and lids be excluded from the definition of disposable food service ware because a suitable marine-degradable alternative does not exist at this time. However, beverage cups and lids may not be made of polystyrene.

What Other Cities Have Done

Currently, over 100 municipalities within the State of California have either restricted or prohibited the use of polystyrene and single-use plastics within their communities at large. Of these cities, more than 28 municipalities also prohibited the distribution of polystyrene straws, utensils, and lids at food establishments within their ordinances. Some examples include the following:

In 2016, the City of Pasadena approved a Styrofoam ban that prohibited the distribution of Styrofoam food containers within City limits. The City of Culver City adopted an ordinance to regulate the sale and distribution of polystyrene disposable food service ware in 2017. This ordinance also prohibits the distribution and sale of polystyrene straws, utensils, and lids, as well as a “Cutlery Upon Request” policy. In 2018, the City of Santa Monica adopted a revision to their existing ordinance to prohibit the distribution of non-marine degradable disposable food ware. In 2018, the City of Long Beach approved a Styrofoam ban that prohibited the distribution of Styrofoam food containers within City limits. In 2019, Burbank officials took the first steps to free the City of polystyrene and other single-use plastic materials. They plan to hire a consultant to develop the ban. At this time, they do not prohibit the use of polystyrene and single-use plastic items.

Other cities have recently taken additional measures to reduce the environmental impact of plastic straws and utensils. In 2017, both the City of Davis and the City of San Luis Obispo adopted a “Straw Upon Request” ordinance impacting only dine-in customers. In 2018, the City of Malibu adopted an ordinance to prohibit the sale and distribution of plastic straws, utensils, and stirrers within its City limits.

Next Steps

While this staff report focuses primarily on the prohibition of polystyrene and single-use plastic products in all City facilities, City-managed concessions, City-sponsored events, and City-permitted events that serve prepared food, it is recommended that staff provide alternative options for the effective date of the ordinance based on the current economic climate due to COVID-19, if still relevant. Staff will also provide options for phased-in programs with City Facilities being the first to adhere to the ordinance proposed by City Council. If food or beverage providers are contractually obligated to purchase polystyrene food service ware, they will be exempt from the provisions of this section for a period of six months following the operative date.

Staff recommend returning to City Council with an additional report on prohibition of single use plastics within Glendale's City limits once the COVID-19 pandemic is under control and food and beverage providers are able to return to more customary service operations. Such an expansion of an ordinance would extend to food and beverage providers within Glendale's City limits by prohibiting the distribution of non-marine degradable food service ware including plates, bowls, trays, containers, straws, utensils, stirrers, and lid plugs. The ordinance could further require that all marine-degradable disposable straws and utensils be provided to customers only upon request

Staff will undertake an extensive outreach and information campaign directed at the affected food and beverage providers. The outreach program will focus on determining the impact barriers to compliance including cost, availability of alternatives, exemptions, phased in start dates, and determine assistance needs so food and beverage providers may successfully comply with any proposed ordinance.

Food and beverage providers include but are not limited to: (1) a grocery store, supermarket, restaurant, drive-thru, cafe, coffee shop, snack shop, public food market, farmers market, convenience store, or similar fixed place where prepared food is available for sale on the premises or for takeaway consumption, and (2) any mobile store, food vendor, caterer, food truck, vending machine or similar mobile outlet and individuals serving prepared food in Glendale as part of their services.

FISCAL IMPACT

For City facilities, City managed concessions, City-sponsored events, and City-permitted events that will have to purchase alternatives to polystyrene and single-use plastic food service items, currently the purchase of these items is not tracked centrally, it is an assumption there will be a minimal cost adjustment based on the volume of product purchased. Furthermore, straws and utensils will only be provided upon request.

Table below outlines the cost of plastic vs. environmentally preferable replacements.

| Item | Case of | Price | Per item cost | % (+/-) |
|------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| Clamshells | | | | |
| Natural Fiber Clamshell | 300 | \$ 89.72 | \$ 0.30 | 30% |
| Bagasse Clamshell | 50 | \$ 12.49 | \$ 0.25 | 9% |
| Styrofoam Clamshell | 150 | \$ 34.34 | \$ 0.23 | |
| Polystyrene Clamshell | 125 | \$ 33.03 | \$ 0.26 | 13% |
| Utensils | | | | |
| Birch Wood | 1000 | \$ 37.99 | \$ 0.04 | 0% |
| Bamboo Utensils | 1000 | \$ 76.98 | \$ 0.08 | 100% |
| Polystyrene utensils | 1000 | \$ 35.99 | \$ 0.04 | |
| Straws | | | | |
| Pasta Straws | 600 | \$ 22.40 | \$ 0.04 | 1233% |
| Paper Straws | 4000 | \$ 105.98 | \$ 0.03 | 900% |
| Bagasse Straws | 200 | \$ 16.99 | \$ 0.08 | 2566% |
| Plastic Unwrapped | 5000 | \$ 12.99 | \$ 0.003 | |
| Plastic Wrapped | 12000 | \$ 34.99 | \$ 0.003 | |
| Baseline cost | | | | |
| Green comparison cost | | | | |

ALTERNATIVES

The City Council has the following alternatives to consider with respect to this agenda item:

1. The City Council can provide direction to prepare an ordinance which prohibits the use of polystyrene and single-use plastic products in all City facilities, City-managed concessions, City-sponsored events, and City-permitted events that serve prepared food.
2. The City Council can provide direction to prepare an ordinance which prohibits the use of polystyrene and single-use plastic products in all City facilities, City-managed concessions, City-sponsored events, and City-permitted events that serve prepared food, and direct staff to bring back a staff report that considers prohibiting food and beverage providers within Glendale's City limits from distributing non-marine degradable food service ware.
3. The City Council may consider any other alternative not presented by staff.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

N/A

EXHIBITS

1. City of Santa Monica Ordinance
2. City of Hermosa Beach SUP Ban/Alternatives Brochure
3. UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation Report- "Plastic Waste in Los Angeles County"
4. Definitions