

MOTION

ENERGY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

After decades of scientific research documenting the negative ecological, economic, and public health impacts of plastic and paper pollution, local and national governments are exploring regulatory policies aimed at preventing low value plastic and paper packaging from entering waterways, and striving for greater circularity across the plastics and paper supply chains.

Further underlining the pollution problem, China's recycling ban has effectively chilled the international recycling market and, potentially, the City's recycling program. The City's RecycLA Program was designed to effectively manage solid resources collection and allow the City to achieve zero waste goals. The Program's recycling objectives were tied to the purchase of recyclable materials by Chinese firms.

This recycling crisis presents an opportunity to rethink the City's approach to waste: to consider, instead of simply recycling, drastically reducing the use of materials that enter the waste or recycling stream.

One approach involves the banning of single-use disposable plastics. The European Union (EU) recently found that its goal to achieve recyclability of all plastic by 2030 was insufficient to address the marine plastic pollution problem. Instead, a new EU directive requires that member states reach a 25% reduction in plastic waste generation and an 80% reduction in consumption of cigarette filters by 2030.

Similar measures are being enacted around the globe. The City of Berkeley is proposing a ban on all single-use disposable food ware utilized by restaurants and food-service establishments. The associated ordinance would require restaurants to use silverware and reusable plates for patrons dining-in. For takeout, the ordinance would impose a 25 cent charge for each beverage and each meal served in disposables, and require that disposable containers be either compostable or recyclable.


Another method, after reducing the amount of plastic and other packaging waste, is to foster local and regional recycling markets. The City could pursue working with neighboring jurisdictions to address their shared interests in finding ongoing and reliable markets to process recyclable materials.

The review of these alternatives would allow the City to address its challenges associated with China's ban; help reduce waste truck trips and improve air quality in over-burdened neighborhoods of the City; help meet its climate emissions reductions goals; help meet its stormwater regulatory goals; help reduce litter in neighborhoods and business districts; and allow it to achieve its zero waste objectives.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Sanitation report to the Council in 60 days on the effect that China's ban on recyclable materials is having on the City's zero waste efforts; and the feasibility of pursuing alternative approaches for dealing with the challenge, including setting ambitious and achievable source reduction goals for single-use food and beverage packaging (plastic and paper); bans on highly-littered and non-essential single-use plastic products; methods for reducing smoking-related litter; ways to jump start effective reuse systems; and then the development of local and regional recycling markets.

PRESENTED BY:

  
PAUL KORETZ  
Councilmember, 5<sup>th</sup> District

  
PAUL KREKORIAN  
Councilmember, 2<sup>nd</sup> District

ORIGINA

SECONDED BY:





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