


FROM	NAME & TITLE	AVA RICHARDSON, SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR	BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION #23-0161R/ INVESTIGATIONAL HEARING – ANTI-LITTER CAMPAIGN		

TO

DATE:

October 18, 2023

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400



The Office of Sustainability is in receipt of City Council Resolution #23-0161R – which calls for a hearing with the Director of the Office of Sustainability, the Director of Public Works and the Zero Waste Manager of the Department of Public Works to explore strategies to prevent, reduce and divert litter and address urban dumping challenges in Baltimore City. The hearing also provides an opportunity to explore the creation of an anti-littering campaign, efforts to encourage Baltimore’s residents and visitors to be more mindful of how they dispose of their waste or other potential zero waste planning strategies.

Current City Waste Reduction Efforts

We support the aim of Resolution #23-0161R as it aligns with strategies and actions in Baltimore City’s 2019 Sustainability Plan’s Waste & Recycling chapter to - “*Launch an **anti-litter, pro-recycling campaign**. Use positive, **actionable messages**, ensuring racially and ethnically diverse materials are provided, along with additional support and **infrastructure to communities most impacted by trash and litter.**”*

Citywide, there has been progress on meeting other waste goals outlined in the 2019 Sustainability Plan - including the passage and implementation of Baltimore’s Comprehensive Bag Reduction Ordinance - 19-0401, the distribution of free recycling bins to all city households, progress towards implementing the city’s 2018 Food Waste Recovery Strategy through the Food Matters Baltimore program and siting a location for a composting facility. City agencies such as DPW, BCHD, DOF, BCIT, BCRP and DOP will continue collaborating to advance climate, waste prevention, reduction and diversion goals. Funding limitations of current city waste reduction and diversion programming highlight the need to adequately invest in any educational, outreach or engagement efforts, and tie any future litter-focused campaign to direct behavior change across the city. Simultaneously, we urge a focus on systems-level changes in the form of zero waste policies, programs, initiatives and investments. Local and state policies intended to achieve zero waste planning goals are outlined below for the council’s reference and consideration.

Sources of Litter, Debris and Trash

Litter is a public health, environmental and economic challenge that presents several potential solutions which coalesce around (1) reducing the sources of waste (2) holding manufacturers and producers responsible for stewarding post-consumer waste and (3) ongoing education,

engagement, and public outreach among Baltimore businesses, residents, consumers and tourist.

Reducing litter and dumping is central to achieving waste reduction, diversion and long-term zero waste planning goals across the city. A 2020 [litter characterization study](#) conducted by Keep America Beautiful found that an estimated 75% of litter nationally stems from fast food items such as paper cups, paper bags, or other food-related paper products and the remaining 25% of litter consists of plastic items – including plastic bottles, wrappers, utensils or other plastic food ware. Though many single-use items are utilized by consumer for minutes – disposable cups, plastic bags and bottles, can persist in our environment for decades, even centuries. Non-recyclable materials ranging from plastic bags to polystyrene containers, and beverage containers make up as much as half of the litter polluting local streets and waterways. These realities help frame solutions designed to curb litter across our city. Examples of evidence-based policies and legislation proven to reduce litter in our environment include the citywide bag ban, foam ban, bottle bans and other state policies or regional initiatives.

What Works?

In 2018, the City Council passed a ban on polystyrene containers for carryout food and drinks by a unanimous vote. The Baltimore City Public School Board has also voted to phase out Styrofoam trays from school cafeterias in favor of compostable trays. Based on waste characterization data from the family of trash wheels, an 80% reduction in the amount of foam products was documented following the polystyrene ban implementation.

In October 2021, Baltimore City passed a plastic bag ban, prohibiting the thin plastic bags from and requiring a 5-cent fee on all alternative bags provided at the point of sale. Data from the Waterfront Partnership reveal a 70% reduction in the number of plastic bags captured by trash wheels since implementing the plastic bag ban. An estimated 60 million bags have been prevented from entering our environment through the bill implementation, based on data collected through the bag surcharge system managed by BCIT. These bills work, and serve as model for effective waste prevention, behavior change and zero waste planning tools for local governments. The Office of Sustainability is willing to collaborate with the council, agencies across city government and other stakeholder to inform strategic policy approaches and programming that continue this progress.

Future Policies, Programs and Investments to Consider for Zero Waste Planning

State and local policies are a critical step in reducing the amount of single-use consumer items entering our city, and too often polluting our streets, waterways, and natural habitats.

State policies for the city to consider supporting or monitoring include:

1. Extended Producer Responsibility: EPR laws place the financial burden of managing post-consumer waste on the businesses, manufacturers and producers who profit from the production of single-use items which often become waste in our city. In July 2023, [Senate Bill 222](#) - Environment - Statewide Recycling Needs Assessment and Producer Responsibility for Packaging Materials went into effect in Maryland. The Bill established a producer responsibility advisory council, tasked with making recommendations regarding the producer responsibility program in the State for packaging materials and hiring an independent contractor to conduct statewide recycling needs assessments.

2. Post Consumer Recycled Content Programs: Requires plastic manufactures to design more recyclability in their products, encourages the use of recycled material in the manufacturing of products, and may mandate plastic producers register their products with the state and pay a registration fee. Ideally, fees generated from this type of bill will support additional waste reduction, anti-litter or similar educational efforts.
3. Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Programs (Bottle Bills): Increases the reuse and recycling of beverage containers. By providing the infrastructure for the stewardship of beverage containers, this bill supports local governments with meeting waste reduction goals and preventing post-consumer waste from entering the environment, especially our waterways. Beverage containers covered under the bill from 2022 include glass, aluminum and plastic bottles. The bill specifies a goal to achieve a 90% redemption rate in the bill, which would be about 5 billion single-use beverage containers across Maryland. Though the exact number that would benefit Baltimore City is not known, this target will have significant impacts on the city's waste management strategies that divert and prevent waste. This type of legislation holds the prospect of reducing the cost of litter and beverage containers collection, recycling and disposal currently imposed on Baltimore City taxpayers.

The Office of Sustainability strongly suggest any anti-litter campaign or similar initiative take the outlined past, current and future policy and program lessons learned into consideration. We encourage that any future efforts to address waste and litter include representatives from DPW, DOP, BCHD, BCRP, DOF or other relevant agency partners, local nonprofits, or community-based collaborators.

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
The Honorable Mark Conway
Mr. Matthew Stegman, City Council President's Office
Ms. Nikki Thompson, City Council President's Office
Ms. Marybeth Haller, BCHD
Ms. Marcia Collins, DPW
Ms. Elena DiPietro, Law Dept.
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services
Mr. Chris Ryer, DOP