

**REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS**

**FOR HEALTHIER WATERWAYS &**

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**ST. PETE STRAW AND EXPANDED  
POLYSTYRENE (EPS) FOAM CODES**

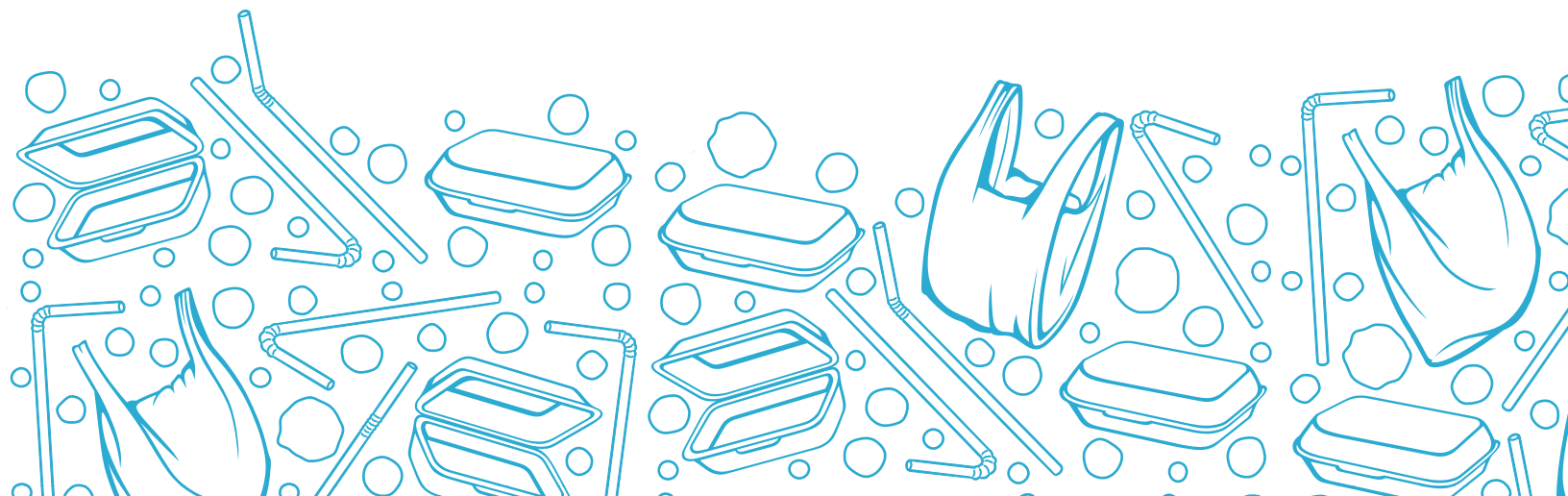


# SINGLE-USE STRAW REGULATIONS

- “Request Only” - no straw of any kind shall be distributed except upon a customer’s specific request.
  - One exemption: Drive-through food orders
- Single use plastic straws are prohibited at all food service businesses throughout the city with only the following exemptions:
  - Hospitals/medical facilities
  - Grocery stores can sell packs of single use plastic straws and are encouraged to use alternatives for take out
  - Convenience stores can sell packs of single use plastic straws and are encouraged to use alternatives for take out
  - All businesses are welcome to keep a small inventory of single use or reusable plastic straws for people with disabilities who request them
- PLA and other forms of “compostable” plastic straws are not viable alternatives. To learn more, visit the FAQ section of this document.

# EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE (EPS) & EPS PRODUCTS REGULATIONS

- Applies to food service businesses operating on City property and in the public right-of-way (such as sidewalk cafés, food trucks, pushcarts, and all City sponsored and co-sponsored events).
- Private property is not affected at this time.
- EPS means blown polystyrene and extruded foams that are thermoplastic petrochemicals.
- EPS product means food containers, cups, trays, ice chests, “clamshells” and similar.



# WHY LIMIT SINGLE-USE PLASTICS & WHY START WITH STRAWS

**311 MILLION**

tons of plastic were produced worldwide in 2014

**9 TRILLION**

pieces of microplastic in Tampa Bay

**\$11 BILLION**

to clean up plastic in the United States (2010 estimate)

- St. Pete and Pinellas County are surrounded by water. The health of Tampa Bay influences at least 1/3 of billions of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) activity through the six-county region.<sup>1</sup>
- ½ of all plastic produced is used just once and then thrown away.<sup>2</sup>
- Based on current behaviors, it is estimated that plastic in the water will outweigh fish by 2050.<sup>3</sup>
- While plastic water bottles and other harmful products are enormously overused, starting with everyday items helps to raise awareness and drive innovation for regional and national markets to look for more viable solutions.
- 500 million plastic straws are used each day in the U.S.<sup>4</sup>
- Straws and stirrers are the fifth most common plastic in ocean clean-ups.<sup>5</sup>
- When plastic ends up in our waterways, it doesn't go "away." It breaks down into smaller pieces of plastic that are consumed by marine life, animals, and humans.<sup>6</sup>
- Millions of marine animals are killed each year by marine plastic, a recent study found that many of these deaths happen off the coast of Florida.<sup>7</sup>
- There are more than 10 other Florida jurisdictions that ban or limit single-use plastic straws and that number continues to grow.<sup>8</sup>
- While other St. Pete regulations prohibit litter and require sidewalk cafes and businesses to maintain the right-of-way, continuous education and improvement are needed to more substantially change behavior and increase options for reducing single use plastics.

1) Economic Valuation of Tampa Bay, Report by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program and the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, 2014

2) Indwell, C. (2020). NDRC - Single Use Plastics 101: <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/single-use-plastics-101>

3) Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2016). The New Plastics Economy - Rethinking the Future of Plastics: <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics>

4) Florida Department of Environmental Protection (2019). Skip the Straw: <https://floridadep.gov/waste/waste/campaign/content/fact-sheets-skip-straw>

5) Ocean Conservancy (2021). Cleanup Reports: <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/annual-data-release/>

6) University of Florida, IFAS (2019): Contaminants in the Urban Environment - Microplastics: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf%5CSS%5CSS64900.pdf>

7) Oceana (2020), Choked, Strangled, Drowned: The Plastics Crises Unfolding In Our Oceans: <https://usa.oceana.org/publications/reports/choked-strangled-drowned-plastics-crisis-unfolding-our-oceans>.

8) Coral Gables, Deerfield Beach, Delray Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Ft. Myers Beach, Gainesville, Hallandale Beach, Miami Beach, Marco Island, Palm Beach, Stuart, Surfside.

# RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE FOR BUSINESSES

## HOW CAN BUSINESSES REDUCE COST?

Business district associations, the Chamber of Commerce, and fellow business owners might be helpful resources. Bulk purchasing is encouraged and, if an option, could provide cost savings for involved participants.

In the spirit of cost and waste savings, businesses could also consider asking customers if they want utensils, sauce packets, etc. rather than automatically providing them. Often, to-go orders are taken home or to locations where disposable utensils are not necessary and then discarded without use. By provided utensils and condiments only when they are requested, businesses cut costs and unnecessary waste. Many of our local businesses like to be ahead of the curve and this is a great next step.

## HOW CAN BUSINESSES LEARN MORE ABOUT VIABLE ALTERNATIVES?

The Office of Sustainability and Resilience is in the process of putting together a toolkit of plastic straw and EPS acceptable alternatives that will be available soon. Our goal is to allow interested owners and managers a hands-on experience with alternatives so they know what will work best for their business.

## WHO CAN BUSINESSES CONTACT IF THEY HAVE QUESTIONS?

City staff is available to visit businesses to help navigate these regulations. City support and education is customizable to needs and available upon request, opportunities span group presentations to one-on-one phone conversations and beyond. The team also includes other businesses and volunteer organizations who are excited to share their experiences and knowledge from transitioning away from single-use plastics. Parties interested in scheduling a visit for a specific time, please contact the Office of Sustainability and Resilience at The City of St. Petersburg.

*The straw regulation applies to all food/drink service establishments.*

*Unsure if the EPS/Styrofoam regulation applies to you?*

*Contact the Office of Sustainability and Resilience at [Sustainability@stpete.org](mailto:Sustainability@stpete.org)  
to learn more, provide feedback or to schedule an educational session.*



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHY ARE COMPOSTABLE PLASTICS STRAWS NOT ALLOWED?

PLA, PHA, and other forms of plant-based plastics are advertised as being a biodegradable alternative to traditional plastics. Unfortunately, these claims are often half-truths. These products do not biodegrade in home composting bins, landfills or in waterways, nor can they be recycled by our local facilities. In order for them to biodegrade as advertised, they require an industrial composting facility. At this time, no such facility is located within the Tampa Bay area. For these reasons, bioplastics contribute to plastic pollution and are not acceptable alternative materials for straws.

## HOW DID THE REGULATIONS COME ABOUT?

Many citizens, organizations and businesses in St. Petersburg asked City Council to take steps to protect our city from the harmful impacts of plastic litter. Building on a voluntary campaign and public outreach, City Council approved an ordinance to reduce single-use plastic straws and expanded polystyrene (EPS aka Styrofoam) in December 2018. January to December 2019 was used as time for businesses to transition their practices and products and for City staff and volunteers to visit all affected businesses (600+) in person. The outreach was education for businesses, customers, and for the City. The information learned in 2019 influenced the updates to the current ordinance.

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY?

The term “right-of-way” includes, but is not limited to, any public street, road, highway, alley, sidewalk, river, tunnel, viaduct, bridge, or any other place, area, or real property owned by the City over which the public has a right to travel.

## HOW DOES THE CITY ENFORCE VIOLATIONS?

Since January 1, 2020, the following civil citations can be issued by the City for a violation:

- 1) The first time a business is found to be violating this ordinance they shall receive a written warning. They have 30 calendar days to correct the violation before any fines are issued.
- 2) If a second violation is reported within one year of the first violation, the business will receive a \$40 fine.
- 3) Third violations and any subsequent violation shall receive a \$80 fine.
- 4) For a continuing violation, each day a business continues to violate or fail to will be considered a separate violation of this Division.

*Learn more about EPS and Plastic regulations by viewing the [City of St. Petersburg's Code of Ordinances Chapter 11 Article IV](#)*



# INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

## HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS HELP TO REDUCE THE USE OF SINGLE USE PLASTICS?

Many citizens and communities are taking steps to minimize plastic waste in St. Pete.

Utilizing reusable beverage containers, utensils, to-go containers, and grocery bags can greatly reduce the number of single-use plastics thrown out each day in the city.

Already doing these things and looking for additional actions?

- Buy in Bulk to Reduce Packaging
- Buy Local & Support Farmers Markets
- Check out zero waste stores and refill (instead of replace) your most used products.
- Thank businesses that are taking steps in the right direction. Positive feedback is important!

## HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?

Below are some ideas for people of all ages to get involved in minimizing plastic waste:

- Refill your reusable water bottle instead of buying disposable water bottles.
- Advocate for water refill stations at your school or workplace.
- Pack sandwiches and snacks in reusable containers instead of plastic bags.
- Find fun ways to avoid single-use plastics. For example:
  - Choosing ice-cream cones instead of plastic cups and spoons.
  - Purchasing box alternatives to plastic packaging. For example:
    - Boxed water
    - Dehydrated laundry detergents that are available cardboard boxes
- Organize litter cleanups.
  - Document what you find and email pictures to [Sustainability@stpete.org](mailto:Sustainability@stpete.org).

## WHAT ARE SOME CO-BENEFITS OF REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS?

Reducing single-use plastics also help to:

- Preserve the health of our land and waterways
- Reduce pollution and litter
- Protect air quality
- Reduce the burden on landfill and disposal systems
- Reduce the amount of plastic making its way into animals, the food-chain, and our bodies
- Save money over time



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

The Office of Sustainability and Resilience

[sustainability@stpete.org](mailto:sustainability@stpete.org)

[www.stpete.org/sustainability](http://www.stpete.org/sustainability)

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