



Support Recycling Foodservice Packaging and Oppose Local Bans or Mandates

POSITION: Hospitality Minnesota supports effective recycling programs for foodservice packaging and opposes local bans or mandates. Collaborative work between stakeholders and interested parties and the success of paper and plastic recycling programs around the country have created an opportunity for increased foodservice packaging recycling. Mandates and bans on foodservice packaging are not the most environmentally or economically responsible approach to managing foodservice packaging disposal. Mandates that arbitrarily single-out restaurants while exempting other commercial and residential users that contribute significantly more waste are particularly problematic from both a fairness and effectiveness perspective.

BACKGROUND:

- Minneapolis, St. Paul and St. Louis Park have implemented local ordinances that require all foodservice packaging to be reusable, returnable, recyclable or compostable. The ordinances include a ban on expanded polystyrene foam (Styrofoam) packaging.
- Unfortunately, composting is not the panacea it's promoted as because compostable or "biodegradable" commercial products do *not* actually biodegrade unless they are processed at specialized industrial facilities, and in the U.S. the vast majority of composting facilities are not currently able to accept these products. Additional concerns have been raised about the use of PFAS or "forever chemicals" in supposedly "eco-friendly" products in the U.S., and more research is needed.
- Polystyrene, both rigid and expanded, is being recycled in other communities and could also be recycled here. Most cups for hot or cold beverages or soup are made from poly coated paper. That material is recyclable and should not be prohibited.
- Resistance to expanded recycling in the metro area by recycling vendors will add costs and reduce options for local restaurants and their customers.
- Most residential recycling programs accept plastic types one through seven in "single-sort" programs. Hospitality businesses should have the same options.

For all of these reasons, expanding effective and comprehensive recycling programs is vastly superior to narrow and arbitrary local mandates in terms of effectiveness, sustainability and economic policy.

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