

Long Beach and Surrounding Cities Crack Down on Plastic

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In recent years, Long Beach and several cities have taken steps to reduce plastic pollution. These cities have implemented plastic reduction policies, these policies especially affect businesses. These changes range from banning plastic straws and utensils to requiring businesses to offer compostable or reusable alternatives. These changes have caused quite a bit of commotion throughout the community.

But while the goal is to help the environment, the impact of these policies is being felt in many different ways.

“It’s a Good Idea, But It’s Not Always Easy”

At Great Tiger Ramen, a cozy ramen restaurant located near Long Beach Airport, employees say that the ban on plastic containers, straws and bags, etc... has led them to need to adjust how they serve customers for example the heat from the cardboard containers causes them to become soggy and start to leak the food that was put inside. This makes customers more agitated as they can not take their food home without it leaking into their belongings.

“We used to hand out plastic to-go containers without a second thought,” says a manager at the restaurant. “Now, we have to use compostable items, which are more expensive and not always as durable. It's great for the planet, but it adds to our costs.”

For small chain businesses like theirs, every cent counts. And while customers generally support the idea behind the policies, they don’t always love the experience.

“We love that they offer to-go containers but these more compostable boxes get soggy so easily,” says Ariana Sanchez who is a customer. This is an inconvenience to the customers as they would have to eat their food before the box gets ruined this means that they would either throw the food away or just not take food home.

Long Beach resident Claudia Barra, who lives in the Eastside area, says she supports the ban in theory but finds it frustrating in practice.

“I bring my own reusable bags and bottles, but sometimes I just want to grab a drink and not worry about my straw melting before I finish my drink,” she says. “Still, I understand why we need to do something and why we need to take action.”

As Long Beach and surrounding cities continue to implement and enforce these plastic reduction policies, the community is slowly adjusting. When it comes to changes that might be considered “minor” it can actually tend to leave a bigger impact than expected for example the use of paper straws will lead to people taking more than one as the straw might melt before they finish their

drink this means that the business will go through more straws than usual increasing their costs. While there's no perfect solution and definitely no perfect straw, it is clear that the conversation around sustainability is becoming more mainstream. Businesses are having to find new ways to operate, and residents are learning to adapt to all these new changes. While some may complain, others may celebrate, but one thing's for sure: the change is happening.