



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
**Department of Public Works**  
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033 425.587.3800  
[www.ci.kirkland.wa.us](http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us)

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** David Ramsay, City Manager

**From:** John MacGillivray, Solid Waste Coordinator  
Ray Steiger, Interim Public Works Director

**Date:** February 18, 2010

**Subject:** Response Letter to Sustainable Kirkland

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council authorize the Mayor to sign the attached response letter to Sustainable Kirkland regarding a potential Kirkland food service product polystyrene ban.

### **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION**

Solid Waste staff met with Sustainable Kirkland on November 5, 2009 to discuss their interest in supporting plastic bag and polystyrene bans in Kirkland in 2010. At the meeting, staff advised Sustainable Kirkland to select and lend their support to one of the proposed bans and to write a letter to the City Council.

Due to our well-established Commercial Organics Program, Kirkland is programmatically well-positioned to support a polystyrene ban ordinance requiring food producing businesses to use approved compostable food service products. The commercial organics program accepts all approved compostable food service products and is provided free of charge to businesses. Relative to a plastic bag ban or tax, a polystyrene ban also offers the better opportunity to divert waste from the landfill.

### **FUTURE ACTION**

Solid Waste staff is very interested in partnering with Sustainable Kirkland but is currently unable to dedicate any significant amount of time to this project due to the added work load resulting from the pending annexation. Staff will need assistance from Sustainable Kirkland to complete many of the tasks needed to gauge overall community interest in a ban, build business community consensus, draft a balanced staff report, and make an educated recommendation to Council that's appropriate for Kirkland. Activities Sustainable Kirkland may be able to provide include researching other cities' ordinances and bans, determining and evaluating compliance enforcement mechanisms and costs, determining the costs of compostable products relative to polystyrene products, and surveying food producing businesses and schools.

Staff will contact representatives from Sustainable Kirkland to schedule a meeting and discuss how we can collaborate on this issue.

Any questions can be sent to John MacGillivray, Solid Waste Coordinator at (425) 587-3804 or via email at [jmacgillivray@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:jmacgillivray@ci.kirkland.wa.us)

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FEB 09 2009

CITY OF KIRKLAND  
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

*Creating an environmentally friendly Kirkland*

To the Honorable Kirkland City Council:

On behalf of the members of Sustainable Kirkland, I am writing to suggest that the Kirkland City Council prohibit the use of expanded polystyrene food service containers, and require food service businesses, including restaurants and grocery stores in Kirkland to transition to compostable and recyclable alternatives. We request that City of Kirkland staff develop a staff report to determine the feasibility of, and alternatives for such a proposal.

Sustainable Kirkland is part of the "Sustainable Communities ALL Over Puget Sound" (SCALLOPS) nonprofit network. SCALLOPS's goal is to advance regional sustainability by helping area sustainability groups build relationships, share resources, and assist each other to achieve grassroots change.

Similar ordinances have been successful in other cities and may serve as models for the City of Kirkland. An ordinance banning polystyrene and requiring recyclable containers at food service establishments was passed by the Seattle City Council in July, 2008 and takes effect this year. Polystyrene containers have been banned from food service businesses in Portland, Oregon since 1990 and in San Francisco since 2007.

Polystyrene is a petroleum-based plastic commonly known as Styrofoam. Impacts of polystyrene food packaging include:

- When dumped into the environment as litter, polystyrene is notorious for breaking into pieces that choke animals and clog their digestive systems.
- Polystyrene production can be very damaging to the earth's ozone layer.
- A 1986 EPA report on solid waste named the polystyrene manufacturing process as the 5th largest creator of hazardous waste, polluting the air and creating large amounts of liquid and solid waste.
- The National Bureau of Standards Center for Fire Research identified 57 chemical byproducts released during the combustion of polystyrene foam.
- Toxic chemicals leach out of these products into the food that they contain (especially when heated in a microwave). These chemicals threaten human health and reproductive systems.
- These products are made with petroleum, a non-sustainable and heavily polluting resource.

While the technology for recycling polystyrene is available, the market for recycling this material is very small and shrinking. Fortunately, environmentally friendly and *less expensive* alternatives are available. Many Kirkland restaurants, including Taco del Mar, The Original Pancake House, and Pegasus Pizza are already leading the way by using compostable containers on a daily basis.

By banning polystyrene containers at food service businesses in the City, Kirkland would continue its environmental leadership. Sustainable Kirkland members look forward to working with the City of Kirkland's Solid Waste Division staff on the proposed legislation. We are also available to help educate local businesses about alternatives to polystyrene containers.

Many thanks for your consideration.



Claire Hoffman on behalf of Sustainable Kirkland

March 3, 2010

**DRAFT**

Sustainable Kirkland  
c/o Ms. Eileen Kadesh and Mr. Doug Burgesser  
10627 NE 123rd St  
Kirkland, WA 98034

RE: Kirkland Polystyrene Ban

Dear Ms. Hoffman, et al.,

Thank you for your letter to the Kirkland City Council expressing your support for a ban on polystyrene food service products.

We agree that polystyrene packaging can have many substantial negative environmental impacts and that compostable and/or recyclable food service products are a more sustainable alternative. Kirkland's commercial organics collection program could also dovetail well with an ordinance requiring the use of compostable food service products. However, we also must carefully research, study, and weigh the environmental benefits of a polystyrene ban relative to its potential economic impacts on our business community.

We would welcome the opportunity to partner with Sustainable Kirkland and learn more about this important issue. Solid Waste staff has indicated its willingness to meet with you to discuss how this initiative may fit into their 2010 work plan and to discuss how Sustainable Kirkland's members may be of assistance in researching other similar legislation, providing education and outreach to local food service providers, and in building a community consensus surrounding a potential polystyrene ban.

Kirkland Solid Waste staff will contact you to schedule a meeting. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact John MacGillivray, Solid Waste Coordinator at (425) 587-3804 or via email at [jmacgillivray@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:jmacgillivray@ci.kirkland.wa.us).

Sincerely,  
Kirkland City Council

by Joan McBride, Mayor