

Reducing Single Use Plastics in the Edgewater Community

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Justification/ motivation

Most disposable plastics do not biodegrade. Instead, they break down into microplastics, which end up in our soil and water. Even though many plastics are recyclable, only 9% of plastic in the United States is recycled.

22 million pounds of plastic enter the Great Lakes each year (Briscoe). People have become reliant on single use plastics because of their convenience in the short-term, without knowing the long term environmental impacts of single use plastics.



Overview / project scope

- Our project is committed to decreasing single-use plastic use in the Edgewater community.
- We have created fliers with statistics and infographics on single use plastics, as well as information about local restaurants that have phased out single use plastics.
- Each group member has presented the fliers to restaurants in Edgewater, and has spoken to the manager and owner about that restaurant's current policies
- Our main focus has been on plastic cutlery, plates, cups, and takeout containers.



DITCH SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Let's shift the narrative surrounding plastic utensils and takeout containers.

- 22 million pounds of plastic enter the Great Lakes each year. An estimated 1/3 of that plastic is food-related.
- Most plastics break down into microplastics, which end up in our water and soil and are harmful to humans and wildlife.

CONSIDER ONLY GIVING PLASTIC CUTLERY TO CUSTOMERS UPON REQUEST

Reducing single-use plastics...

- Increases customer loyalty
- Shows that your restaurant cares for the environment
- Saves your restaurant money



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Method

- 1.) Collect data on current plastic use.
- 2.) Hang-up our informative flyer if allowed.
- 3.) Work with managers to create alternatives to their plastic use.
- 4.) Follow up with restaurants to check their progress.



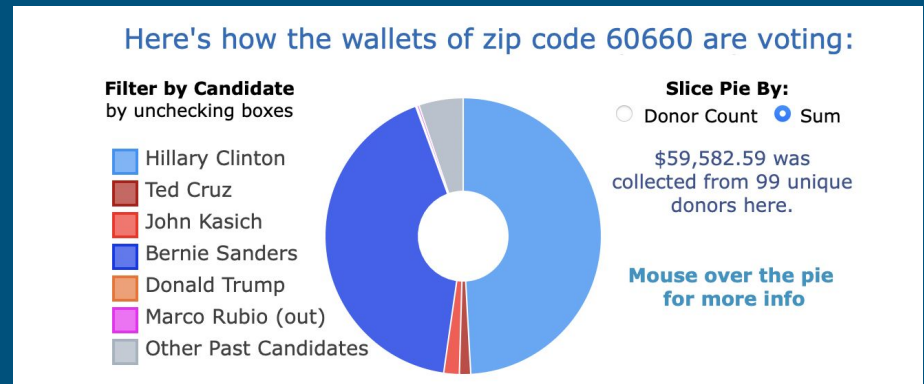
Results

Restaurants	Interest in Reducing Plastic?	Future Possibility
Beard and Belly	Already using eco-friendly alternatives	
Uncommon Ground	Already using eco-friendly alternatives	
Lyfe Kitchen	Already using eco-friendly alternatives	
Friends Ramen	For the most part provides eco-friendly alternatives but offers plastic utensils as well	In the future they could possibly stop offering plastic utensils all together
Flacos Tacos	Yes and currently only have reusable margarita glasses	They are willing to consider switching to reusable cups and utensils.
Edge of Sweetness	Yes and have reusable dine-in dishware.	They are willing to switch to compostable straws if financially feasible.

Results

Restaurants	Interest in Reducing Plastic?	Future Possibility
Metropolis Coffee	Yes, have been considering getting rid of plastic cups	Will continue to do cost-benefit analysis to switching cups
Rewired Pizza Cafe	Already using eco-friendly alternatives	
Bettie Lou's	Yes	Considering switching to a renewable takeout cup
Little Corner Cafe	Yes	

Discussion



- Restaurants in Edgewater tend to have a positive response to sustainability initiatives
- Many restaurants already have their own version of sustainability initiatives
- SUP initiatives are mutually beneficial
- The Edgewater community (and Chicago overall) is more left-leaning, meaning they are more likely to be receptive to environmental initiatives
- This project could be done on a larger scale

Discussion cont.

- Learned how single use plastics are harmful for the environment.
- Find alternative ways to reduce SUP in restaurants.
- Advocate towards small/local businesses.
- Removing SUP is only one step to reducing pollution.



Edgewater

References

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