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Seattle Is Banning Plastic Straws Next Summer, but Some Businesses Are Doing It Now

by [Chetanya Robinson](#) • Sep 8, 2017 at 12:36 pm



This is where our straws end up KAI SCHREIBER/FLICKE

A couple weeks ago Charles Mudede [wrote](#) about how Seattle will ban plastic straws and utensils from all restaurants, cafes, bars, and the rest of the service industry next July. But lots of businesses aren't waiting until then. As of yesterday, all restaurants and cafes at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, all of Columbia Hospitality's hotel properties, and Century Link Field, as well as 200 other restaurants, have already phased out the plastic straws for paper ones.

It's part of the **Strawless In Seattle** (of course) movement, which comes out of the national **Lonely Whale Foundation**. The organization started its campaign in Seattle this week, but plans to expand to cities across the country and world, with the goal of preventing 500 million plastic straws from ending up in the ocean, the number of straws the U.S. uses every day, according to the Lonely Whale Foundation.

Other sobering facts about plastic straws and utensils: By 2050, all the plastic in the ocean will weigh more than the fish. And when plastic breaks down into small pieces (**microplastics**), animals swallow the pieces and toxic chemicals the plastics bring with them, which can kill them, as well as introduce them higher up the food chain where they end up in the stomachs of bigger animals like orcas (or humans).

It turns out most compostable straws aren't much better than plastic once they get into the ocean, according to the Lonely Whale Foundation (they're fine if they can compost in a facility somewhere, but not if they end up straight in the water) —hence the switch to paper ones.

Seattle was chosen first for Lonely Whale Foundation's campaign partly because it already has a good record when it comes to phasing out plastic waste, **according to Adrian Grenier**, who co-founded the organization (he also stars in the show *Entourage*).

Businesses were supposed to stop using disposable plastic items starting in 2008, and in 2012, the city banned plastic bags. But until now, the city hasn't enforced the ban on straws, utensils, and other items because alternatives often weren't available. That all changes in July 2018, when the city will stop making an exception for plastic straws and utensils.