



# Plastic Reduction Plan

2024-2028

Sustainability Management  
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## Summary

In April of 2023, Syracuse University committed to reduce its use of single-use plastics by the 2027-28 academic year through a phased approach. The purpose of this report is to define single-use plastics and develop the plan to reduce usage campus wide. The scope of plastic reduction will primarily include post-consumer single use plastics.

The plan to dramatically reduce the use of single use plastics will be implemented as follows:

- Quantify the types of single use plastics.
- Identify technically feasible replacements or elimination of single use items.
- Collaborate with vendors to include language in vendor/franchise agreements to eliminate single use plastics in vending and food service agreements.
- Expand compost capabilities by ensuring that additional composting can be logistically accommodated.
- Educate campus constituents on proper disposal and communicate progress on the sustainability website.

Progress will be measured by comparing the audit and actions taken to reduce or eliminate specific items use. The goal will be to minimize the quantity of categories of plastic items used. The plastic audit will be completed in the spring 2024 semester and the implementation of the plan will occur simultaneously. Progress will be updated every fiscal year and communicated to the campus community.

# Implementation Plan

## Identify & Monitor Single Use Plastics

A single use plastic is a product that is not designed to be reused and is disposed of immediately after use. Sustainability Management will identify and create a list of single use plastics. The list will establish the scope of single use plastics and will provide a measure to show progress. The list will primarily include post-consumer plastics. The single use plastics primarily consist of the following:

- Single use utensils (forks, spoons, knives)
- Single use bottles (vending, catered events)
- Straws, stir sticks
- Beverage cups
- To-go containers (clamshells, bowls, trays)
- Single use condiments (ketchup, mustard, sauces, dips, dressings)
- Single serving items (chips, pretzels)
- Polystyrene used in shipping
- Single Use Promotional Items (Balloons)

The inventory will serve as a measure of progress. The inventory will show the item category, the current product used, and what changes will be made to eliminate, reduce the use of, or replace the product. This inventory will be updated annually and published on the Sustainability Management [website](#).

Purchase orders for goods will be placed through the University's Purchasing Department. Purchasing also administers use of University issued credit cards which will be used by certain departments to acquire new inventory. Sustainability Management will develop policies with the purchasing offices to align with the reduction plan.

## Exemptions

Plastic used in certain applications will be exempt from this policy. This includes the following:

- Laboratory products (petri dishes, vials, pipette tips, test tubes, reagent bottles, etc.)
- Health and Safety items (gloves, aprons, medical, hygiene products)
- Bulk food packaging
- Plastic film used in food preparation
- Bulk beverage containers (beverage containers greater than 3 liters)
- Accessibility accommodations (maintain stock of items to provide accommodations to individuals)

## Eliminate, Replace, Reduce

The plan involves eliminating, replacing, and reducing plastic use. Single use plastics will be eliminated by providing reusable and bulk containers. Beverage dispensers with compostable cups will replace plastic bottled items at catered events. Individual condiment packets will replace bulk dispensers. Compostable or reusable items will replace single use utensils, cups, straws, stir sticks, to-go containers, and single serving items.

Plastic bottles in vending machines will be replaced with suitable alternatives. Individuals will also be encouraged to use their own reusable cup/mug. Water bottle filling stations are currently placed around campus. Additional bottle filling stations will be installed in new construction projects so that they are convenient to the campus community.

Not all product environmental claims are regulated. Compostable items proposed as replacement products will be validated by Sustainability Management to verify that they are suitable for disposal at the compost site.

### PROGRESS COMPLETED

- Schine Dining: Single serve plastic cutlery has been replaced with compostable cutlery in all locations except Panda Express. Halal Shack has switched from single use foil takeout pans to compostable bowls and lids.
- JMA Wireless Dome: The Dome has converted concession stand containers to compostables. Items converted include stir sticks, bowls, drink carriers, straws, napkins, and food containers.



*Figure 1: Compostable items used at the JMA Wireless Dome.*

## **FUTURE INITIATIVES**

- Polystyrene: Cold Styrofoam is often used in shipping boxes for sensitive laboratory equipment. These products will likely not have a suitable replacement. Polystyrene boxes are currently collected from certain laboratories and recycled. Sustainability Management’s goal is to expand recycling and standard collection of these materials.
- Market Reusable Mugs: Food Services currently offers “Mug Club” benefits. Students will receive a free fill-up with the purchase of a “Mug Club” mug, a 20% discount on refills, and free fill-ups on Fridays. Sustainability Management will work with Food Services to improve “Mug Club” advertising to all students to encourage the use of reusable mugs/cups.

## **Contracts**

Include contract clauses that require elimination and reduction of plastics in franchise/concession agreements. Work closely with suppliers (i.e. PepsiCo, American Food and Vending) to source eco-friendly alternatives and negotiate packaging choices that align with sustainability goals. This includes packaging for single serving items available in vending machines, dining centers, cafes, and shops. These clauses will be established based on negotiations between specific purchasing departments and vendors.

## **Compost**

Monitor and expand compost capabilities and logistics. Add additional compost locations in food court style dining. Confirm that replacement products proposed meet compostable requirements.



*Figure 2: A truck full of compost being weighed at the composting site.*

Ensure that the necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place to support the reduction of single-use plastics (i.e. recycling and composting receptacles on campus). Work with local compost site to ensure the alternative options being considered are acceptable. Syracuse University uses the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA) Amboy compost site.

### **PROGRESS COMPLETED**

- JMA Wireless Dome Composting Intern: Sustainability Management worked with the Dome to hire a student intern to collect compostable items after football games and recruit volunteers. Over 830 pounds of compostable items were collected and sent to OCRRA's composting site during the 2023 football season.

## **Education/Communication**

Sustainability Management will post relevant information on the Sustainability Management [website](#), social media accounts, and through its list serves. Information about proper disposal techniques and how to get involved will be available. It is Sustainability Management's goal to spread awareness and educate the Syracuse University community about sustainable practices and positively influence public behavior. A dashboard showing progress will be created to show progress on plastic reduction. The dashboard will be based on the fiscal year and will show the reduction goals and achievements.

### **PROGRESS COMPLETED**

- Peer-to-Peer: In 2023, Sustainability Management established a peer-to-peer education program to spread awareness about sustainable practices, initiatives, and programs on campus. Students host events to educate peers about various topics, including the importance of recycling and composting.

### **FUTURE INITIATIVES**

- Peer-to-Peer Faculty/Staff Program: Establish a peer-to-peer education program for faculty and staff. Sustainability Management will meet with a group of staff and faculty and educate them on sustainability related topics. Staff and faculty will continue to spread awareness amongst their colleagues through educational events and sessions.
- Training Sessions: Conduct training sessions for staff and faculty to explain the correct disposal methods of new compostable and eco-friendly items.

## 2027-28 Single Use Plastics Phased Approach

Single use plastic items are widely used across campus and this commitment will take a concerted effort. Data collection will be crucial to assess progress and effectiveness of the plan. Education and collaboration will be key in phasing out the use of these products and effectively implementing new practices.

A phase out schedule has been developed and it is shown in figure 3 below. The plastic phase out effort started in 2023. The percentages indicated in the table below are based on reductions of types of single use plastic items per category.

Category	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Single use utensils (forks, spoons, knives)	100%				
Single use bottles (vending, catered events)			50%	100%	
Straws, stir sticks		100%			
Beverage cups			50%		
To-go containers (clamshells, bowls, trays)		50%	100%		
Single use condiments (ketchup, mustard, sauces, dips, dressings)		50%	100%		
Single serving items (chips, pretzels)				50%	
Polystyrene used in shipping		Collected and Recycled			
Single Use Promotional Items(Balloons, etc.)			50%	100%	

*Figure 3: Single Use Plastic Phaseout Matrix*

Sustainability Management will measure progress by quantifying the categories of plastic items used. Using the strategies and recommendations listed in this report, the University will work to drastically reduce the use of single use plastics by the 2027-28 academic year.