



REGULAR MEETING – AD HOC SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE COMMITTEE AGENDA

MAY 13, 2026, 6:00 PM
BY ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone and/or Zoom, or a recording in the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at norwalkct.gov/meetings.



Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial *9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" may also use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be included into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email Jodi Trendler at JTrendler@norwalkct.gov with the subject line "Public Comment" to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER**
- II. **ROLL CALL**
- III. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- IV. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**
 - A. **Regular Meeting: DATE**
- V. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. **Community Sustainability and Resilience Task Force and SRP Update**
 - B. **Ad Hoc Sustainability and Resilience Committee Structure Review**
 - C. **"Skip the Stuff" Ordinance Discussion**
- VI. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Sustainability Governance Options
(5-11-2026; working document)**

Prepared for discussion regarding the potential for the establishment of a permanent municipal sustainability function and the transition of the Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee into a standing Council committee.

Table 1. Options

Option	Pros	Cons / Risks	Mitigation
1) Keep current ad hoc committee only	Low cost; flexible; can study issues quickly.	Lacks formal legislative authority, permanent jurisdiction, dedicated staffing, and implementation capacity; temporary structure may limit continuity, accountability, interdepartmental coordination, and measurable long-term outcomes; risks being perceived as primarily symbolic without institutional authority or operational support.	Establishing a permanent Sustainability Office and standing Council committee would institutionalize sustainability planning, oversight, accountability, and implementation capacity across administrations while creating long-term continuity and clearer governance structures.
2) Create a Sustainability Office / Department	Centralized accountability led by professional staff with expertise across sustainability-related areas; fills knowledge and coordination gaps across departments; strengthens interdepartmental planning; improves data collection and reporting; enhances competitiveness for state and federal funding; supports long-term capital planning, flood resilience, public health, energy efficiency, and operational cost reduction.	Adds staffing and budget pressure; potential overlap with existing departmental responsibilities if roles are not clearly defined.	Start with a lean Office of Sustainability & Resilience led by a director-level position; establish clearly defined responsibilities focused on coordination, grants, implementation support, and long-term planning; scale staffing over time based on demonstrated outcomes and external funding opportunities.

Option	Pros	Cons / Risks	Mitigation
3) Convert ad hoc committee into a standing Council committee	Allows future Councils to review initiatives, development proposals, infrastructure projects, and contracts with substantial environmental or resilience implications above established fiscal or operational thresholds.	May create additional administrative review requirements or project delays if thresholds, jurisdiction, and review procedures are not clearly defined.	Adopt a clear committee charge and annual reporting structure. Establish clearly defined fiscal and environmental thresholds, standardized review criteria, and coordinated timelines to minimize duplication and delays
4) Create both a Sustainability Office and standing Council committee	Establishes a comprehensive best-practice governance model combining professional implementation capacity with formal legislative oversight; improves accountability, transparency, continuity, and long-term strategic planning; strengthens coordination across departments and public agencies; enhances grant competitiveness and data reporting; creates a structured framework for reviewing sustainability impacts associated with major initiatives, infrastructure investments, and contracts above established thresholds.	Requires disciplined coordination between administrative and legislative functions; potential for duplication or unclear responsibilities if governance roles are not clearly defined.	Establish clearly defined roles separating administrative implementation from legislative oversight; require quarterly reporting, annual performance metrics, interdepartmental coordination procedures, and defined review thresholds to ensure efficiency and accountability.
5) Create a unified Sustainability & Resilience Dept serving the City, School District,	Creates a coordinated citywide sustainability and resilience strategy across major public institutions; improves long-term planning, operational efficiency, energy	More complex governance structure requiring interagency coordination, shared funding responsibilities, and clearly defined authority among participating entities; potential	Establish a shared-services or intergovernmental partnership model with clearly defined responsibilities, governance procedures, cost-sharing

and the Redevelopment Agency, and School District	management, infrastructure coordination, and grant competitiveness; centralizes technical expertise and data collection; aligns capital planning, facilities management, transportation, land use, public health, and climate resilience initiatives; reduces duplication of effort and encourages consistent sustainability standards across agencies.	administrative complexity during implementation.	mechanisms, performance metrics, and joint reporting requirements; implement phased integration to allow coordination systems and operational roles to develop over time.
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Comparable Cities and Towns

The municipalities listed below (table 2) demonstrate that formal sustainability and resilience governance structures are becoming increasingly common among Connecticut and regional peer communities facing similar coastal, infrastructure, environmental, and economic challenges. Although each municipality has adopted a governance model tailored to its size, operational needs, and governmental structure, all have established some form of dedicated sustainability leadership, committee structure, or administrative function to coordinate long-term planning, resilience initiatives, grant management, energy efficiency, infrastructure planning, and environmental policy implementation. Collectively, these examples illustrate that sustainability governance is increasingly being treated not as a temporary or purely advisory function, but as an integrated component of modern municipal operations and long-term strategic planning. The approaches adopted by these municipalities may provide useful reference points for Norwalk as it evaluates potential frameworks to institutionalize sustainability planning, strengthen interdepartmental coordination, improve accountability, and enhance competitiveness for state and federal funding opportunities.

Table 2.

Municipality	Similarity / Relevance	Sustainability Structure
Stamford, CT	Fairfield County peer with similar coastal concerns.	Facilities & Sustainability Division with dedicated sustainability leadership.

Greenwich, CT	Coastal Fairfield County community.	Sustainability Committee connected to municipal leadership.
New Haven, CT	Connecticut coastal city addressing resilience and equity.	Office of Climate and Sustainability coordinating citywide initiatives.
Middletown, CT	Mid-sized Connecticut municipality.	Sustainability Commission supported by sustainability staff.
New Rochelle, NY	Comparable metro coastal city.	Director of Planning and Sustainability and citywide sustainability plan.

National & International Best Practices

The cities identified below (table 3) represent widely recognized examples of municipalities that have institutionalized sustainability and resilience within core government operations and long-term planning frameworks. Through dedicated sustainability offices, integrated planning departments, climate leadership positions, and coordinated policy structures, these municipalities have incorporated sustainability considerations into infrastructure investment, transportation systems, housing policy, environmental management, public health, and economic development strategies. Although differing in scale and governance structure, these examples demonstrate how cities across the United States and internationally are increasingly treating sustainability and resilience as permanent operational and strategic responsibilities rather than temporary or advisory initiatives.

Table 3.

City	Why It Matters
Boston, MA	Cabinet-level climate and sustainability leadership tied to resilience and infrastructure planning.
New York City, NY	Office of Climate & Environmental Justice integrated into capital planning.
Copenhagen, Denmark	Global model for municipal climate planning and carbon reduction.

Vancouver, Canada	Sustainability integrated into transportation, housing, and energy planning.
Portland, OR	Longstanding Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.
Curitiba, Brazil	International model for sustainable urban planning and green infrastructure.
Medellín, Colombia	Recognized for resilience planning and urban greening initiatives.
Bogotá, Colombia	Global example of sustainable transportation and public-space planning.

Alignment with Global Institutional Findings Supporting Municipal Sustainability Governance

The following institutional findings (table 4) reflect a broad consensus among leading international organizations, municipal networks, and planning institutions that formal sustainability and resilience governance structures are increasingly essential components of effective local government administration. Research and policy guidance from organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, OECD, ICLEI, C40 Cities, and the American Planning Association consistently emphasize the importance of integrated planning, cross-departmental coordination, long-term infrastructure strategy, and dedicated implementation capacity in addressing environmental, economic, public health, and resilience-related challenges. Collectively, these findings support the view that municipalities with established sustainability governance structures are often better positioned to improve operational coordination, strengthen long-term planning, pursue external funding opportunities, and respond to evolving infrastructure and resilience needs.

Table 4.

Organization	Key Finding / Relevance
United Nations	Local governments play a critical role in resilience planning and sustainable urban development. ¹
World Bank	Integrated sustainability planning improves infrastructure efficiency and funding competitiveness. ²
OECD	Cross-departmental governance improves economic resilience and municipal coordination. ³

ICLEI	Dedicated sustainability structures improve implementation and interagency coordination. ⁴
C40 Cities	Formal sustainability governance helps coordinate transportation, housing, and resilience planning. ⁵
American Planning Association	Long-term sustainability planning supports stronger infrastructure and land-use outcomes. ⁶

Footnotes and Sources

1. United Nations. Sustainable Cities and Communities. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>
2. World Bank. Cities Key to Solving Climate Crisis. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/05/18/cities-key-to-solving-climate-crisis>
3. OECD. Urban Development and Cities. <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/urban-development.html>
4. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. <https://iclei.org>
5. C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group. <https://www.c40.org>
6. American Planning Association Sustainability Resources. <https://www.planning.org/sustainability/>
7. City of Stamford Facilities & Sustainability Division. <https://www.stamfordct.gov/government/operations/facilities-sustainability>
8. Town of Greenwich Sustainability Committee. <https://www.greenwichct.gov/1775/Greenwich-Sustainability-Committee>
9. City of New Haven Office of Climate and Sustainability. <https://www.newhavenct.gov/government/departments-divisions/office-of-climate-and-sustainability>
10. Middletown Sustainability Commission. <https://www.middletownct.gov/554/Middletown-Sustainability-Commission>
11. New Rochelle GreeNR Sustainability Plan. <https://www.newrochelleny.gov/349/GreeNR-Sustainability-Plan>

BUSINESS IMPACT MODEL — RESTAURANT COST SAVINGS	Year 1 (2026)	Year 2 (2027)	Year 3 (2028)	Year 4 (2029)	Year 5 (2030)	5-Yr Total
ACCESSORY USAGE BASELINE (city-wide)						
Total food service establishments	420	420	420	420	420	420
Avg. daily take-out orders per establishment	45	45	45	45	45	-
Total daily take-out orders (city-wide)	18,900	18,900	18,900	18,900	18,900	-
Annual total take-out orders (city-wide)	6,898,500	6,898,500	6,898,500	6,898,500	6,898,500	-
Accessories per order (pre-ordinance baseline)	3	3	3	3	3	-
Total accessories (city-wide, pre-ordinance)	22,075,200	22,075,200	22,075,200	22,075,200	22,075,200	-
COMPLIANCE & WASTE REDUCTION						
Compliance rate (% establishments)	65.0%	82.0%	92.0%	92.0%	92.0%	-
Compliant establishments (count)	273	344	386	386	386	-
Waste reduction per compliant order (% of accessories eliminated)	78.0%	78.0%	78.0%	78.0%	78.0%	-
Accessories eliminated (millions/year)	11,192,126	14,119,298	15,841,164	15,841,164	15,841,164	72,834,915
RESTAURANT COST SAVINGS (city-wide aggregate)						
Cost per accessory item (\$)	\$0.040	\$0.040	\$0.040	\$0.040	\$0.040	-
Gross annual savings — all establishments (\$)	\$447,685	\$564,772	\$633,647	\$633,647	\$633,647	\$2,913,398
<i>Savings per compliant establishment (avg. annual)</i>	\$1,640	\$1,642	\$1,642	\$1,642	\$1,642	-
COMPARISON: NJ RETHINK DISPOSABLE BENCHMARK						

NJ ReThink Disposable program (2023–2024): Partnership with Meals On Wheels, soup kitchens & senior centers reduced ~4 million disposables/yr (35,000+ lbs) and saved \$245,000/yr for those organizations. This model scales those savings ratios to Norwalk’s ~420 food service establishment base.

REVENUE MODEL — FINES & FEES	Year 1 (2026)	Year 2 (2027)	Year 3 (2028)	Year 4 (2029)	Year 5 (2030)	5-Yr Total
NON-COMPLIANCE & CITATION PROJECTIONS						
Total establishments	420	420	420	420	420	-
Compliance rate	65.0%	82.0%	92.0%	92.0%	92.0%	-
Non-compliant establishments	147	76	34	34	34	-
Establishments cited (warning period = Year 1: \$0 fines)	-	19	9	9	9	46
of which: first-time violations	-	13	6	6	6	31
of which: repeat violations	-	6	3	3	3	15
FINE REVENUE PROJECTIONS						
Fine revenue — first violations (\$)	-	\$650	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$1,550
Fine revenue — repeat violations (\$)	-	\$900	\$450	\$450	\$450	\$2,250
Optional business license compliance fee (\$)	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL CITY REVENUE	-	\$1,550	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$3,800

Note: Year 1 fine revenue is \$0 by design — the model assumes the full first year is a warning-only education period consistent with NYC's 12-month phased rollout. Fines begin in Year 2.

5-YEAR CONSOLIDATED IMPACT SUMMARY	Year 1 (2026)	Year 2 (2027)	Year 3 (2028)	Year 4 (2029)	Year 5 (2030)	5-Yr Total
CITY FISCAL POSITION						
Total city implementation costs (\$)	\$40,240	\$11,870	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$76,806
One-time startup costs	\$14,000	-	-	-	-	\$14,000
Recurring annual costs	\$26,240	\$11,870	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$62,806
Fine & fee revenue (\$)	-	\$1,550	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$3,800
Net fiscal impact (revenue minus cost) (\$)	(\$26,240)	(\$10,320)	(\$7,482)	(\$7,482)	(\$7,482)	(\$59,006)
ENVIRONMENTAL & BUSINESS IMPACT						
Accessories eliminated (millions/yr)	11,192,126	14,119,298	15,841,164	15,841,164	15,841,164	72,834,915
Gross restaurant savings — city-wide (\$)	\$447,685	\$564,772	\$633,647	\$633,647	\$633,647	\$2,913,398
Avg. savings per compliant restaurant (\$)	\$1,640	\$1,642	\$1,642	\$1,642	\$1,642	-
Compliant establishments (count)	273	344	386	386	386	-
Compliance rate (%)	65.0%	82.0%	92.0%	92.0%	92.0%	-
<p><i>NOTE — Cost perspective: The city's direct cost is funded by fine revenue and is modest relative to the aggregate restaurant savings it generates. The principal financial beneficiary is the business community, not the municipal budget.</i></p>						

ASSUMPTIONS & KEY INPUTS	Source / Note
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NORWALK MARKET CONTEXT

Total food service establishments in Norwalk (est.)	420	<i>norwalkct.gov restaurant ratings; ~420 licensed</i>
% establishments as small/independent (<50 seats)	72.0%	<i>Norwalk business license data est.</i>
% establishments using third-party delivery apps	58.0%	<i>National avg. per NRA 2024</i>
Avg. takeout/delivery orders per establishment/day	45	<i>Industry avg. for mid-size CT city; 74% of restaurant orders in Connecticut are not eaten on-premise</i>
Avg. accessories per order (pre-ordinance, est.)	\$3	
Avg. cost per accessory item to restaurant (\$)	4.0%	<i>Industry foodservice supply avg.</i>
Norwalk population	93,661	<i>US Census https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/norwalkctvcon</i>

ORDINANCE & COMPLIANCE ASSUMPTIONS

Expected opt-in request rate (% orders requesting accessories)	22.0%	<i>NYC/Denver experience; ~20-25% opt-in rate</i>
Year 1 compliance rate (% estab. complying by end of yr 1)	65.0%	<i>Conservative; NYC saw ~70% in warning period</i>
Year 2 compliance rate	82.0%	<i>Post-fine enforcement effect</i>
Year 3+ compliance rate (steady state)	92.0%	<i>NYC/CA benchmark; allows for turnover</i>
Annual est. turnover / new businesses entering market	8.0%	<i>~8% annual churn in Norwalk food service</i>
Reduction in accessories per compliant order (vs. baseline)	78.0%	<i>78% reduction: 3.2 → ~0.7 accessories/order</i>

CITY IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Legal / ordinance drafting cost (\$)	\$8,000	<i>CT municipal legal rate ~\$200/hr; ~40 hrs</i>
Staff outreach & education program (\$, Year 1)	\$12,000	<i>Materials, multilingual, restaurant town halls</i>
Code Enforcement incremental hours/yr (Year 1)	120	<i>Est. 120 hrs added to Code Enforcement workload</i>
Code Enforcement incremental hours/yr (Year 2+)	60	<i>Drops as compliance rises</i>
Code Enforcement loaded hourly rate (\$/hr)	\$82	<i>Norwalk Code Enforcement officer comp. est.</i>
Health Dept. inspection checklist update cost (\$)	\$2,500	<i>One-time form revision + staff training</i>
Annual monitoring & reporting staff cost (\$)	\$2,200	<i>~55 hrs/yr recycling coordinator time</i>
Technology / platform notification system (\$)	\$3,500	<i>One-time: website updates, business portal</i>
Printing & signage for businesses (\$, Year 1)	\$2,200	<i>Multilingual compliance posters / guides</i>

FINE & REVENUE ASSUMPTIONS

Fine amount — first violation (\$)	\$50	<i>NYC model lower bound; \$50–\$250 range</i>
Fine amount — repeat violation (\$)	\$150	<i>Mid-range; escalation after first offense</i>
Est. % of non-compliant estab. cited per year	25.0%	<i>Complaint-driven; ~25% of violators cited</i>
Est. % of citations that are repeat violations	30.0%	<i>~30% recidivism in first 2 years</i>
Annual business license fee increment (optional, \$)	-	<i>Set >0 if Council adds compliance fee</i>

SCENARIO SWITCH

Active scenario (1=Conservative, 2=Base, 3=Optimistic)	2	<i>Change to 1, 2, or 3 to update all sheets</i>
Scenario 1: Conservative	Compliance Y1: 55%	Waste reduction: 65%
Scenario 2: Base Case	Compliance Y1: 65%	Waste reduction: 78%
Scenario 3: Optimistic	Compliance Y1: 80%	Waste reduction: 88%

CITY IMPLEMENTATION COST MODEL	Year 1 (2026)	Year 2 (2027)	Year 3 (2028)	Year 4 (2029)	Year 5 (2030)	5-Yr Total
ONE-TIME STARTUP COSTS						
Legal & ordinance drafting	\$8,000	-	-	-	-	\$8,000
Technology / digital platform updates	\$3,500	-	-	-	-	\$3,500
Health Dept. inspection checklist update	\$2,500	-	-	-	-	\$2,500
Total One-Time Costs	\$14,000	-	-	-	-	\$14,000
RECURRING ANNUAL COSTS						
Staff outreach & education program	\$12,000	\$4,200	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$23,400
Code Enforcement incremental labor <i>(Could potentially be eliminated with App reporting)</i>	\$9,840	\$4,920	\$4,182	\$4,182	\$4,182	\$27,306
Annual monitoring & reporting (recycling coord.; <i>Time decreases with increased compliance</i>)	\$2,200	\$2,200	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$7,700
Printing, signage & compliance materials	\$2,200	\$550	\$550	\$550	\$550	\$4,400
Total Recurring Costs	\$26,240	\$11,870	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$62,806
TOTAL CITY COST SUMMARY						
TOTAL ANNUAL CITY COST	\$40,240	\$11,870	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$8,232	\$76,806

Cost per food service establishment (Year 1)

\$96 ← Year 1 per-establishment cost

Executive Summary

This briefing analyzes the national **Skip the Stuff** campaign and its relevance to the City of Norwalk, Connecticut. It examines municipalities that have adopted Skip the Stuff ordinances, the outcomes they have experienced, and — critically — how such an ordinance aligns with and extends Norwalk’s existing single-use plastic and Styrofoam regulations adopted in 2019. It also addresses enforcement challenges that have emerged under those existing ordinances and how a Skip the Stuff policy could be structured to strengthen compliance city-wide.

2	10+	40B	\$3.2M
States with statewide law	Municipalities adopted nationally	Plastic utensils discarded yearly (US)	Estimated restaurant savings (Postmates)

What Is Skip the Stuff?

Skip the Stuff is a national policy campaign coordinated by **Upstream Solutions** (formerly the National Reuse Network) that requires food service establishments to provide single-use accessories — utensils, napkins, straws, condiment packets, stirrers — only when a customer explicitly requests them. Rather than a ban, the model is a simple default change: *opt-in* instead of *automatic inclusion*.

Third-party delivery platforms (DoorDash, Uber Eats, GrubHub) are typically required to add an accessories menu at checkout, so customers actively select items they need. Platforms including Postmates have already adopted this model voluntarily, reporting savings of 122 million packs of plastic cutlery and an estimated \$3.2 million in cost reductions for restaurants.

Adopted Jurisdictions — National Overview

Jurisdiction	Year	Level	Key provisions & notes
California (AB 1276)	2022	Statewide	Utensils, straws, condiments upon request; enforcement delegated to local health/environmental agencies
Washington State	2022	Statewide	Single-use accessories available on request only for all takeout and delivery orders
Denver, CO	2021	Municipal	Opt-in model integrated with third-party delivery platforms; among earliest large-city adopters
Washington, D.C.	2021	Municipal	Covers utensils, straws, napkins for dine-in and takeout; request-only default

Chicago, IL	2022	Municipal	Single-use foodware ordinance covering restaurants and third-party delivery apps city-wide
Jurisdiction	Year	Level	Key provisions & notes
New York City, NY	2023	Municipal	Signed Feb 2023 (Intro 559-A); 12-month warning period; fines of \$50–\$250 active since July 2024
Alhambra, CA	2021	Municipal	First in LA County; unanimous adoption; California Restaurant Association submitted letter of support
Los Angeles, CA	2021	Municipal	Extended existing straws-on-request ordinance to all disposable foodware accessories
Westfield, NJ	2024	Municipal	Unanimous adoption; pre-survey of 25 downtown restaurants showed strong business support
Hoboken, NJ	2024	Municipal	Effective Sept 1, 2024; part of Climate Action Plan / Zero-Waste Initiative
Montclair, NJ	2025	Municipal	Effective March 1, 2025; covers in-person, phone, and online orders; includes non-plastic items

Note: Connecticut lawmakers considered a statewide Skip the Stuff legislation (House Bill 5524, 2026) that would have banned polystyrene containers by July 1, 2028 and require foodware accessories upon request, but has been tabled as of 4/2026. Norwalk's early adoption would position the city as a leader ahead of any statewide mandate.

Norwalk's Existing Single-Use Plastic Ordinances

In September 2019, the Norwalk Common Council unanimously passed two ordinances — effective April 22, 2020 — that already place Norwalk ahead of many Connecticut municipalities on single-use plastics regulation. Understanding these existing frameworks is essential to evaluating how a Skip the Stuff ordinance would integrate, extend, and strengthen them.

Plastic Straws & Stirrers Ordinance

Chapter 37, Article III — Adopted 9/24/2019

- Prohibits food/beverage establishments from providing single-use plastic or bioplastic straws **unless requested by the consumer**
- Outright ban on all single-use plastic and bioplastic **stirrers** (no request option)
- Disability accommodation: establishments must provide a plastic straw upon request to those with medical need
- Applies to all food/beverage establishments including restaurants, bars, coffee shops, food trucks, delivery services, and caterers
- Enforced by the Code Enforcement Officer; penalty up to **\$250 per violation**

Polystyrene (Styrofoam) Ordinance

Chapter 37, Article II — Adopted 9/10/2019

- Prohibits retail establishments from serving or distributing prepared food in polystyrene containers (cups, bowls, plates, trays, clamshells)
- Bans sale of polystyrene loose-fill packaging (packing peanuts)
- Food packagers prohibited from packaging meat, eggs, bakery items in polystyrene
- City contractors prohibited from using polystyrene in City facilities or on City-funded projects
- Exemptions: pre-packaged/sealed food received from outside, raw meat from butcher cases, encased coolers/ice chests
- Enforced by Code Enforcement Office; penalty up to **\$250 per violation**

Alignment: Skip the Stuff & Norwalk's Existing Ordinances

A Skip the Stuff ordinance is not a replacement for Norwalk's 2019 regulations — it is a complementary and reinforcing layer. The table below maps the alignment across all three ordinances.

Dimension	Norwalk Straws Ord.	Norwalk Styrofoam Ord.	Skip the Stuff (proposed)
Opt-in / request-only model	+ Straws on request	- Not applicable	■ Extends to all utensils, napkins, condiments
Single-use plastic reduction	+ Straws & stirrers	+ Polystyrene containers	■ Fills gap: utensils, napkins, condiment packets
Delivery platform coverage	+ Applies to delivery services	- Not addressed	■ Explicitly covers apps: DoorDash, Uber Eats, GrubHub
ADA / disability accommodation	+ Straws available on request	- Not addressed	■ Must be explicitly included in ordinance language
Penalty structure	+ Up to \$250/violation	+ Up to \$250/violation	■ Typically \$50–\$250/violation (NYC model)
Enforcement body	+ Code Enforcement Officer	+ Code Enforcement Officer	■ Same — or consider shared Health Dept. role
Business cost savings	+ Reduced straw purchasing	+ Reduced container costs	■ Reduces all accessory purchasing costs
Environmental alignment	+ Reduces plastic pollution	+ Reduces Styrofoam waste	■ Reduces all single-use accessory waste

Enforcement Challenges: Lessons from Norwalk's Existing Ordinances

Norwalk's 2019 ordinances are structurally sound but face implementation gaps that are common across comparable municipalities. Understanding these challenges is critical to designing a Skip the Stuff ordinance that avoids repeating them.

Known challenges with the 2019 ordinances

- * **Complaint-driven enforcement model.** The Code Enforcement Officer responds to complaints rather than proactively inspecting food establishments. This means violations may go undetected unless a patron or competitor reports them.
- * **Lack of integration with Health Department inspections.** Restaurant inspections are conducted by the Health Department, but Styrofoam and straw compliance is not formally part of the inspection checklist, creating a structural gap.
- * **Bioplastic confusion.** The ordinance bans bioplastic / compostable straws (corn-based) along with petroleum plastic, but many businesses substituted bioplastic straws believing they were compliant. No industrial composting is available in Norwalk, making compostable items functionally equivalent to trash.
- * **Delivery platform gap.** The straw ordinance covers delivery services in scope, but there is no mechanism to monitor third-party platforms (DoorDash, Uber Eats) that may pack accessories without restaurant knowledge.
- * **No structured warning or education period.** Unlike NYC's 12-month warning phase, Norwalk's ordinances went into effect with immediate penalty authority but no documented outreach to the estimated 400+ food service establishments in the city.

How Skip the Stuff can address these gaps

- * **Integrate compliance into Health inspections.** A new ordinance should designate the Health Department as co-enforcer alongside Code Enforcement — mirroring NYC's multi-agency model — and add a standard accessory-compliance checklist to annual restaurant inspections.
- * **Require platform-level opt-in display.** Explicitly mandate that all third-party delivery apps operating in Norwalk display an accessory opt-in menu, shifting compliance responsibility to the platform and reducing reliance on individual restaurant monitoring.
- * **Mandate a 6–12 month education period before fines.** A formal warning phase with written notices to all food service license holders, multilingual materials, and a city-hosted FAQ gives businesses time to update systems before penalties apply.
- * **Align definitions across ordinances.** Consolidate definitions of 'single-use accessory' and 'covered establishment' across the 2019 ordinances and any new Skip the Stuff ordinance to eliminate compliance confusion and simplify enforcement.
- * **Use the business license renewal cycle.** Pair compliance acknowledgment with annual business license renewals so all food service establishments confirm awareness of all three ordinances simultaneously.

Pros, Cons & Council Considerations

<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extends Norwalk’s existing plastic-reduction framework at minimal additional cost - Strong business support nationally — reduces purchasing costs for disposables - Fills the accessory gap not covered by the 2019 ordinances (utensils, napkins, condiment packets) - Aligns with pending CT statewide legislation (HB 5524) - Delivery platform integration already built by DoorDash, Uber Eats, and GrubHub - 88% of global respondents favor curbing single-use plastics (Ipsos, 2022) - Estimated 40% reduction in accessory use when opt-in model is applied (skiptheplasticnorwalk.org) 	<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adds regulatory burden to restaurants already navigating Styrofoam and straw compliance - Enforcement infrastructure gaps from 2019 ordinances must be addressed simultaneously - Customers relying on accessibility accommodations need clear, easy pathways to request items - Small restaurants may face POS/workflow costs to implement ask-first protocols - Limited local impact data — ordinances in comparable NJ towns (Westfield, Montclair) are less than 2 years old - Risk of public confusion if ordinance definitions are not harmonized with 2019 language 	<p>Council action items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define scope: takeout only, or also third-party delivery and catering? - Assign enforcement: Code Enforcement + Health Dept. co-enforcement recommended - Mandate 6–12 month warning period with formal business outreach before fines begin - Explicitly include AD accommodation language — mirrors Norwalk’s existing straw disability provision - Commission a pre-adoption restaurant survey (as Westfield, NJ did) to build business coalition - Request Upstream Solutions ‘model ordinance language as drafting baseline - Monitor Connecticut HB 5524 —local adoption now preempts state preemption and builds legislative record
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Recommended Enforcement Structure for Norwalk

Phase	Timeline	Action	Responsible party
1 — Adoption	Month 0	Pass ordinance; publish in all city languages; notify all food service license holders in writing	Common Council; City Clerk
2 — Education	Months 1–6	Distribute compliance guides; hold restaurant town halls; add compliance FAQ to city website and norwalkct.gov/1902	Code Enforcement; Health Dept.; City sustainability staff
3 — Warning	Months 7–12	Begin inspections with warning notices only; no fines; document non-compliance patterns; add to Health inspection checklist	Code Enforcement Officer; Health inspectors

4 — Enforcement	Month 13+	Issue fines (\$50–\$250/violation) for confirmed non-compliance; allow appeal process; escalate repeat violators	Code Enforcement Officer; designee
Phase	Timeline	Action	Responsible party
5 — Review	Year 2	Report compliance rates to Council; compare waste metrics to pre-adoption baseline; evaluate expanding ordinance scope	Recycling coordinator; Council

Bottom Line for Council

Norwalk is already a leader in Connecticut on single-use plastic regulation. The 2019 Styrofoam and straw ordinances establish the legal and institutional foundation for a Skip the Stuff ordinance — and critically, they reveal the enforcement gaps a new ordinance must be designed to close.

A well-crafted Skip the Stuff ordinance, with a phased enforcement timeline, clear ADA protections, Health Department co-enforcement, and delivery platform coverage, would: (1) fill the accessory gap left by the 2019 ordinances; (2) address known compliance weaknesses; and (3) position Norwalk ahead of pending Connecticut statewide legislation.

Recommended next step: Direct staff to commission a pre-adoption survey of Norwalk food service establishments and request model ordinance language from Upstream Solutions (upstreamsolutions.org/skipthestufftoolkit) for Council drafting review.

Sources & References

- Upstream Solutions — Skip the Stuff Toolkit: upstreamsolutions.org/skipthestufftoolkit
- City of Norwalk, CT — Plastic Straw & Styrofoam Ordinances: norwalkct.gov/1902
- City of Norwalk, CT — Chapter 37, Article II (Polystyrene) & Article III (Straws): ecode360.com/34844752
- FoodPrint — 'Skip the Stuff Laws Aim to Get Rid of Takeout Trash' (Feb 2023): foodprint.org/blog/skip-the-stuff-laws
- Clean Water Action — Skip the Stuff Ordinances in New Jersey: cleanwater.org/skip-stuff-ordinances-new-jersey
- NYC Department of Sanitation — Skip the Stuff Act (Intro 559-A), signed Feb 2023; enforcement active July 2024
- Montclair Local — 'Skip the Stuff Ordinance Takes Effect March 1' (Dec 2024): montclairlocal.news
- Town of Westfield, NJ — Skip the Stuff Ordinance adopted June 26, 2024: westfieldnj.gov/2083
- Skip the Plastic Norwalk — skiptheplasticnorwalk.org
- Connecticut Public — 'CT Considers Styrofoam Ban and Limits for Single-Use Plastics' (March 2026): ctpublic.org
- Ipsos — 'Attitudes Towards Single-Use Plastics' (2022)