

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

6. Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling in Vancouver

Submitted by: Councillor Dominato and Councillor Klassen

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver is committed to reducing the impact of single-use plastics, including empty beverage containers, and ensuring recyclable materials are kept out of landfills, waterways, and oceans;
2. Recycling beverage containers helps preserve the environment by reducing demand for new raw materials for packaging and decreases the energy used to create new cans, cartons, and bottles;
3. The Provincial government's recycling regulations require a minimum recovery rate of 75% under the extended producer responsibilities, managed for the industry by Return-It / Encorp Pacific, including a requirement for continuous improvement;
4. The City of Vancouver has the fewest number of return facilities/depots per capita among urban centres in the Province of British Columbia;
5. In 2022, the City of Vancouver had the lowest return rate for deposit/return beverage containers of any city in British Columbia and the lowest in the Metro Vancouver area (approximately 51%);
6. Research indicates that beverage container recycling rates increase when return-for-refund options are convenient for residents;
7. Current City of Vancouver zoning and permitting by-laws state that new recycling depots must be located on industrial zoned lands. The permit processing timelines are also lengthy and, in many cases, onerous;
8. Lands zoned for industrial use in Vancouver have been shrinking over the course of many decades to accommodate other land uses and various encroachments. The cost of these lands has correspondingly risen;
9. Consumers/residents do not always find it convenient to travel to the city's remaining industrial zones to return empty beverage containers;
10. Depots for returning empty beverage containers are fundamentally retail in nature. They serve to collect containers and return a deposit to consumers. Depots do not actually recycle the containers in an industrial sense; and
11. Returning empty beverage containers to commercial or retail zones in the city would be much more accessible and convenient for consumers and would not represent an industrial activity in any traditionally understood sense.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to prepare amendments to the City's zoning by-laws to allow for empty beverage container return centres (including permanent buildings and repurposed shipping containers) to be located in commercial and retail zones, in addition to industrial zones, in order to improve access to empty beverage container recycling for Vancouver residents and improve the city's return rate for empty beverage containers;

FURTHER THAT staff be directed to report back to Council with the aforementioned proposed amendments to the City's zoning by-laws by the end of Q2 of 2024, so that Council can consider referring the proposed amendments to a Public Hearing.

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