

Plastic-Free Living:
Change Initiative Plan to Ban Single-Use Plastics in the City of Detroit

Kayla Halmaghi

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Introduction

With the new Plastic-Free Living proposal, the city of Detroit, Michigan is taking accountability for our impact on the environment around us and making a positive impact on our future by banning single use plastics in the form of plastic bags, straws and serving utensils. The city government administration will create and execute a plan to achieve this ambitious goal by 2026. We will work in close partnership with local businesses, schools, and the city's 650,000 residents.

This kind of plan is unprecedented in our state. The change management initiative summary will explain how this is attainable and why this is necessary for our current and future residents. We will also address how to overcome resistance and ensure this plan is successfully launched and set up for long term success. The summary will cover the high-level concepts and approaches for the change management plan. Please refer to the attached Appendix for more details about the change management process.

Change Initiative Plan Summary

Scope of Change

Plastic is a material that is used in many everyday products. It contributes to global plastic production doubling in the last 20 years, going from 200 million metric tons to over 400 million metric tons with approximately 85% of all plastic ending up in landfills (UNEP). This is problematic for humans, animals, and the environment due to pollution and toxicity. Plastic can take anywhere from 20 to 500 years to decompose (United Nations). Additionally, the production of plastic contributes to climate change. According to the United Nations, "the production of plastic is one of the most energy-intensive manufacturing processes in the world. The material is made from fossil fuels such as crude oil, which are transformed via heat and other additives into a polymer. In 2019, plastics generated 1.8 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions – 3.4 percent of the global total" (UNEP).

Society has a harmful dependance upon plastic and the time to change this is now. The Plastic-Free Living ban will launch in the city of Detroit on the 1st of January, 2026, with planning and

research already underway. Together with our city's businesses, schools, residents, and visitors, we will gradually transition to the full ban in 2026. This will require a significant amount of change and collaboration from a wide variety of stakeholders.

The change initiative plan is designed based on the Three Horizons model (Sharpe et al. 2016). This model allows us to look at the plan through three horizons that are different yet connected. Horizon one represents the current state of business as usual in Detroit. The city does not currently have any restrictions on plastic materials, which leads to pollution, toxicity, and greenhouse gas emissions. If we continue with business as usual, we will not achieve our long-term sustainability framework goals, which are explained in the Appendix. Horizon three is the emerging future. This represents our aspirations to be a plastic-free city, in alignment with our sustainability action framework. There may be some aspects of horizon one that prove to work well and will remain in horizon three. Horizon two is about identifying disruptive innovation and opportunities that can take the city from our current state to our ideal future state. Horizon two has the potential to cause the most disruption and resistance due to the new and different ways of doing things that emerge in this phase. Please see the Appendix for a detailed chart of the Three Horizons model for the Plastic-Free Living project.

Overcoming Resistance through Collaboration

Moving from our current state of business in horizon one, managing the ups and downs of horizon two, and reaching the future vision of Detroit in horizon three will require extensive collaboration. Achieving large scale change involves ample research, planning, and input from many stakeholders. To accomplish this, the city of Detroit is focusing on the Collaborative Networks model for the Plastic-Free Living initiative.

“Concepts, methods and tools developed in the area of Collaborative Networks can facilitate the engagement and interplay of the multiple stakeholders which are participants needed in any effort towards sustainability” (Camarinha-Matos et al. 2016). The link between Collaborative Networks and sustainability science provides a focus on three pillars. They are environmental, economical, and social. Viewing the Three Horizons journey through this lens will help us to

engage with stakeholders in an effective way so they are aligned and engaged with the change management plan.

The main stakeholders of the Plastic-Free Living initiative are:

- Detroit city government
- Residents
- Businesses
- Schools

The city of Detroit government will engage with all the stakeholders along the change management journey to ensure they are supported and have the resources and understanding to be ready for the ban to go into effect in January 2026. The first step is to invite the public to planning meetings to hear more about the initiative and share their feedback.

The UK's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs banned certain single-use plastics in October of 2023. They held open public discussions to collect feedback on the subject and the support was overwhelmingly positive, with 95% in favor of the proposal. The group consisted of residents and businesses. This is a positive indication that people have a desire to create a more environmentally sustainable place to live (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs).

However, we should not underestimate that there will be challenges and resistance on the journey to plastic-free living. Businesses and schools are the main stakeholders impacted, as they will be forced to change the type of products that they use. If they are currently offering the type of plastic products that will be banned in January 2026, they need find new products that are compliant with the ban. Otherwise, they will be subject to fines. It is important that the new products are sustainable, affordable, and meet the quality and safety needs of the stakeholders. Resistance to this change may happen if people don't understand why they are doing it or if they don't know how to carry out the change.

In the Harvard Business Review article, *How to Deal with Resistance to Change*, the author states that "the real problem is not technical change but the human changes that often accompany

technical innovations” (Lawrence). Within this article, they cited a study conducted by psychologists Lester Coch and John R.P. French Jr. about the importance of participation in change management.

One group in the study was called the no participation group. They were informed of the change after the planning and decisions were complete. They had no awareness of or input in the change initiative process. The other groups were active participants in the change initiative process. Their feedback was considered, and they were aware the change was coming. When the study was concluded, there were drastic differences in the outcomes of the groups. The first group that had no participation showed immediate resistance. “Marked expressions of aggression against management occurred, such as conflict with the methods engineer, hostility toward the supervisor, deliberate restriction of production, and lack of cooperation with the supervisor. There were 17% quits in the first 40 days” (Lawrence).

In the other active participation groups, there was a small dip in productivity as they adjusted to the change initially, but they recovered rapidly to normal levels and there was no hostility towards management for the change management decision. In summary, “it can be fairly stated that they concluded that resistance to methods changes could be overcome by getting the people involved in the change to participate in making it” (Lawrence).

This exercise shows the importance of active participation from stakeholders and making sure they are informed throughout the process. In relation to the Plastic-Free Living plan, the city aims to ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to be active participants in the process and they feel prepared for the ban going into effect in January 2026.

Implementing and Sustaining Change

The city of Detroit government will provide a multi-step approach for businesses and schools to follow as they transition away from plastic bags, straws and serving utensils. The multi-step approach is aimed at making the Plastic-Free Living implementation successful and sustainable long-term. The multi-step approach initiatives are:

- Monthly Public Discussions at the City Hall
 - The city government will share updates, collect feedback, and provide resources.
- Local Advertising and Social Media Campaign Around the City
 - Provide education to raise awareness and excitement about the initiative.
 - Use this campaign to highlight other sustainable initiatives happening in the city.
- Plastic-Free Living Toolkit
 - A toolkit will be provided to businesses, schools, and residents to help them understand why this change initiative is necessary, how they can transition to plastic-free living, and how they can sustain the change.

Conclusion

The intention of the Change Initiative Plan Summary is to provide a high-level overview of the Plastic-Free Living proposal in the city of Detroit. The attached Appendix provides the details of each step in the process as we move from our current way of doing things to the emerging future of a more sustainable Detroit. This proposal is an unprecedented step forward on our journey to take accountability for our impact on the environment around us and make a positive impact for current and future generations. Please read the Appendix for more details on the change initiative plan.

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APPENDIX: Plastic-Free Living Change Initiative Plan in the City of Detroit

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 - City of Detroit Sustainability Agenda Action Framework
- ▶ **Change Initiative Plan Details**
 - Three Horizons Model
 - Stakeholder Engagement through Collaborative Networks
- ▶ **Change Initiative Plan Timeline**

INTRODUCTION

The **Plastic-Free Living** proposal will ban single use plastics in the form of plastic bags, straws and serving utensils in the city of Detroit.

The policy will go into full effect on the **1st of January, 2026**. Achieving this initiative will require close collaboration with local businesses, schools, and the city's 650,000 residents.

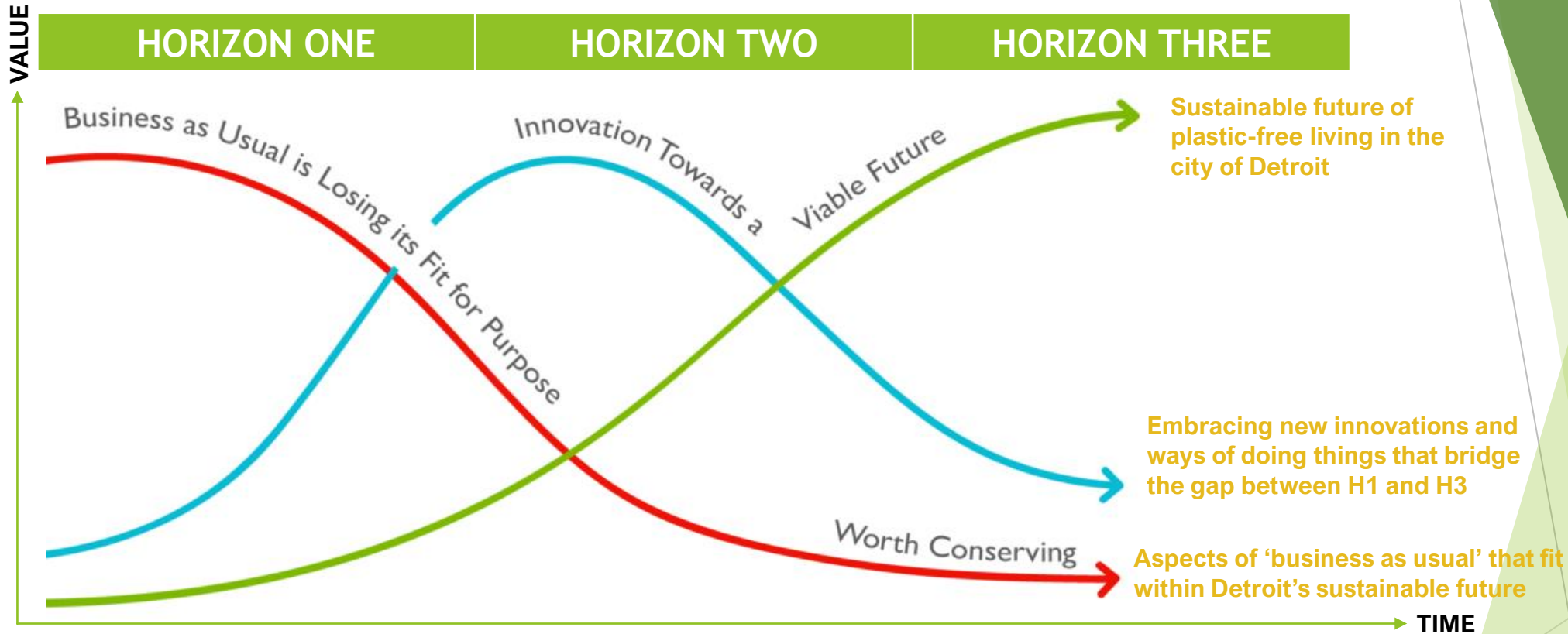
The Appendix covers the details of the change initiative plan.

INTRODUCTION: SUSTAINABILITY ACTION AGENDA

The **Plastic-Free Living** change initiative plan is designed to work in parallel with the city's existing sustainability action agenda framework listed below. The new and ambitious single-use plastic plan compliments Detroit's broader sustainability actions, with the overall aim of making the city a happier, healthier, and wealthier place for **ALL** residents.



CHANGE INITIATIVE PLAN: THREE HORIZONS MODELS



KEY FACTORS & CONSIDERATIONS

- | H1 | H2 | H3 |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Desire for a more sustainable environment by banning harmful single-use plastics.• Currently no limitations on plastics. This does not align with the city's overall sustainable action agenda. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using new materials in place of plastic.• Find vendors/suppliers that provide sustainable products in compliance with the plastic ban.• Educate the public about the initiative and collect feedback. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ban on plastic bags, straws and serving utensils. Non-compliance = monetary fines.• Plastic-free living that creates a more sustainable environment for future and current generations.• Protect residents, wildlife, and natural resources. |

CHANGE INITIATIVE PLAN:

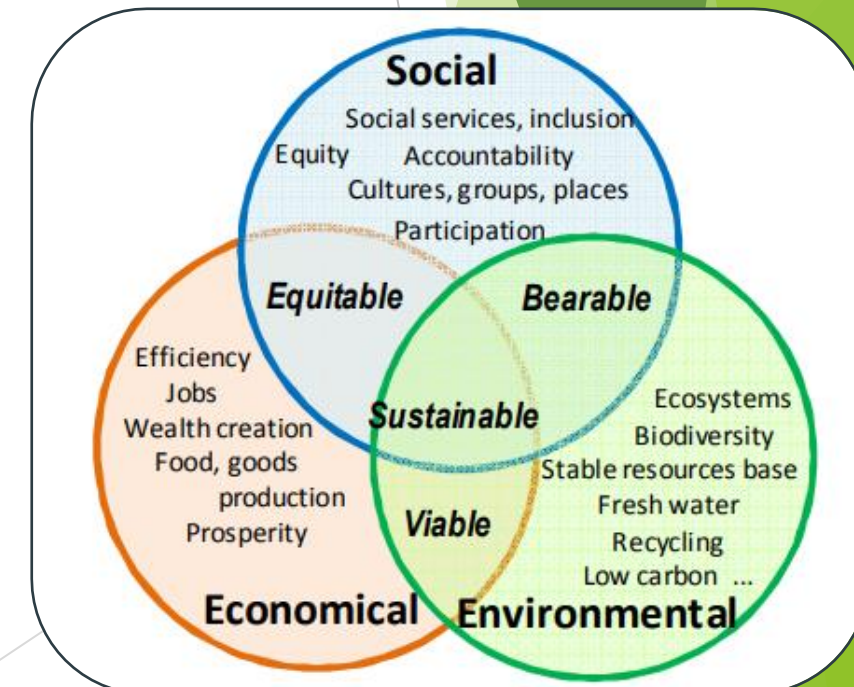
COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

As stated in the plan summary, “concepts, methods and tools developed in the area of **Collaborative Networks can facilitate the engagement and interplay of the multiple stakeholders** which are participants needed in any effort towards sustainability” (SOURCE).

On the next page, we will look at the main stakeholders of the plan through the three pillars of Collaborative Networks: **Social, Economical, and Environmental**. The Venn diagram below shows how the three pillars converge in Collaborative Networks. Each pillar has an independent function and also works in parallel with the other pillars. The pillars provide balance and accountability for the various initiatives and stakeholders involved in the plan.

The main stakeholders of the plan are:

- ▶ Detroit city government
- ▶ Residents
- ▶ Businesses
- ▶ Schools



CHANGE INITIATIVE PLAN:

COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

How can the stakeholders take part in the change initiative plan through the three pillars of Collaborative Networks?

Three Pillars of Collaborative Networks				
Main Stakeholders	Social	Economical	Environmental	
Detroit City Government	- City government representatives need to be trained and knowledgeable about the new initiative. - Open public discussions will be held to share information and collect feedback. - Social media marketing will be used to spread awareness and info.	- Non-compliance with the new ban will result in fines starting 1/1/2026. - While total is the objective, the fines will result in increased money for the city. This money will be put towards marketing and education on the initiative.	- The plastic ban policy aims to create a more sustainable environment for current and future generations, as well as protect wildlife and natural resources. - This will make the city a more desirable and livable place.	
Residents	- Participate in open public discussions to learn about the initiative and share feedback. - Stay informed and engage with the city through social media.	The initiative has minimal economic impact on residents and it will contribute to a more sustainable environment for current and future generations in the community.	The Plastic-Free Living initiative empowers residents to take accountability for their impact on the environment, and creates a better community to live in.	
Businesses	- Participate in open public discussions to learn about the initiative and share feedback. - Integrate this initiative into their marketing strategy to meet the growing consumer demand for sustainable businesses.	- Businesses need to offer products that are compliant with the ban, which may cost more. - Ensuring businesses understand the positive social and environmental benefits of the plastic ban is essential to the change transition.	Becoming more environmentally sustainable can future proof businesses and lead to increased innovation and cost savings. It also aligns the business with increasing consumer demand for sustainable businesses.	
Schools	- Participate in open public discussions to learn about the initiative and share feedback. - Leverage this initiative as a learning opportunity for students to understand the importance of sustainability.	- Schools need to offer products that are compliant with the ban, which may cost more. - Ensuring schools understand the positive social and environmental benefits of the plastic ban is essential to the change transition.	Banning plastics in schools can reduce waste and foster sustainable practices that students carry throughout their lives.	

CHANGE INITIATIVE PLAN TIMELINE

May 2024

June 2024 – December 2025

1st of January 2026

Launch Plastic Free Living Change Initiative Plan in City Council Meeting.

Advertising and social media campaigns will run on a bi-weekly basis. The ads and social media posts will include:

- Invitation to attend public discussions
- Education on why and how to live plastic free
- Highlight other sustainable initiatives in the city

Plastic-Free Living policy goes into full effect.

Monthly public discussions at the City Hall meetings, open to anyone. This is the public's opportunity to learn about the initiative and share feedback.

Plastic-Free Living Toolkits will be handed out to businesses, schools and residents to help them prepare for the plastic-free ban in 2026. The toolkit will outline the policy and consequences for non-compliance. It will also provide support and resources for those who need support.