

# Baltimore sues Coke, Pepsi and other producers of plastic, citing pollution concerns

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Baltimore City filed suit on June 20 against several companies that produce plastics, arguing they should foot the bill for cleaning up plastic pollution on city streets and in the city's bodies of water.

The suit was filed against large, [multinational companies](#) such as Coca Cola, Pepsi and Frito Lay, which use [plastic packaging](#) for sodas, chips and snacks.

But the suit also was filed against several companies that manufacture plastics in Maryland, such as W.R. Grace & Co., Mercury Plastics MD, Adell Plastics Inc. and Polymershapes Baltimore.

The suit, filed in Baltimore City Circuit Court, is part of a broader effort by the city's "Affirmative Litigation Division" to take [legal action](#) against corporations the city views as responsible for pollution and other harms, said city solicitor Ebony Thompson in a statement.

"We have brought suit against those responsible for PCB and PFAS chemical contamination and cigarette filter pollution, among others," Thompson wrote. "So far, we have brought in over \$8 million from our environmental claims, and intend to bring in more to address the damage caused by companies that put profits before people."

The president of Adell Plastics, which has a production facility in Baltimore County's Lansdowne, said in a statement Thursday to the Baltimore Sun that he was surprised to learn his company was included in the suit.

"As I understand it, the city is interested in going after producers of [single-use](#) plastics, as well tamping down the spread of microplastics in our food and water supply. Adell's products are not related to those issues," said company president Michael Dellheim in an email.

According to its website, the company manufactures a "broad range of proprietary thermoplastic compounds with an emphasis on nylon, polypropylene, polyester (both PET and PBT), polycarbonate, and silicone concentrates."

The city's law department declined to comment on the inclusion of Adell in the litigation.

A W.R. Grace spokesman declined to comment on the litigation. The other defendants in the city's lawsuit did not respond late Thursday to requests for comment.

The city's suit is part of an emerging trend of plastics litigation by nonprofits, states and municipalities. In November, New York Attorney General Letitia James filed suit against PepsiCo, arguing its single-use [plastic products](#) harm the public and the environment.

Baltimore's suit cited plastic products, including single-use plastic bottles and packaging, as a substantial source of litter in Baltimore City, forcing the city to spend millions per year on cleanup services and litter prevention campaigns.

One recent report indicated that only a small fraction—about 2.2%—of the plastic products collected are in fact recycled in Baltimore, according to the lawsuit. The remainder ends up in landfills or it is burned at the incinerator in South Baltimore.

Plastics make up about 18% of the disposed waste the city must manage, according to its Solid Waste Management Plan.

While plastic products frequently are labeled as recyclable, they often contain components that are not recyclable, according to the litigation. For instance, while a plastic bottle may be recyclable, the bottle cap and sleeve are often manufactured with non-recyclable plastics.

"Such plastics are generally not eligible to be recycled, and if they are, each product is unlikely recyclable for more than one cycle before it must be discarded," read the suit.

The products also degrade into smaller microplastics, polluting land and bodies of water, including the [city](#)'s sources of drinking water and its harbor, read the suit.

Microplastic pollution is now considered ubiquitous, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The contaminants have even been found in human livers, kidneys and placentas, according to the United Nations Environment Program.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature has found that carcinogenic chemicals found in plastic can leach into tap water, causing health harms, including developmental, reproductive, neurological and immune disorders.

In a statement Thursday, Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott called the litigation against plastic producers a "proactive step" to address pollution harms.

"When bad corporate actors have harmed our City's land and water, they must be held accountable—and that's what this [suit](#) is designed to do," Scott wrote.

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