

LONG ISLAND / NASSAU

Port Washington installs receptacles near LIRR station to collect cigarette butts for recycling

Receptacles will be emptied once a week and the contents sent to a New Jersey company that will use them to build benches, tables and other products.



Smokers can discard their cigarette butts in these receptacles in Port Washington. The receptacles will be emptied every seven days.
Photo Credit: Newsday/Dandan Zou

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Six small receptacles were installed last week near the Port Washington train station to help keep cigarette butts off the streets by recycling and reusing them.

Officials said that cigarette butts are the most littered item and that they are particularly harmful because they pollute the Manhasset Bay.

“When we do cleanups, in one hour we can pick up 5,000 pieces of litter and over half of them are cigarette butts,” said Mindy Germain, the executive director of Residents Forward, a Port Washington nonprofit. She added that rain washes the butts into the bay, which can pollute drinking water.

Germain said Friday that the cigarette butts will be collected every seven days from the receptacles and sent to TerraCycle, a Trenton, New Jersey-based company that will use them to make new products like benches and tables.

“It’s the first municipal cigarette recycling program on Long Island,” Germain said as she stood next to a receptacle at a bus stop. “Not only are we getting [cigarette butts] off the ground, but we’re actually turning them into [something new].”

The front of each receptacle displays the 866-NY-QUITS hotline and a health warning from the Surgeon General. North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth said the program addresses littering

and encourages people to quit smoking.

“We don't want to seem like we're condoning smoking,” Bosworth said.

Councilwoman Dina De Giorgio said the program checks all the boxes of being “a great pilot program” since it addresses littering on the streets, converts cigarette butts into something new and encourages people to stop smoking.

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