The Tea on ByBlocks and Eco Bricks Transcript

Welcome to Spilling the Tea on Sustainability! I'm your host, Adriana Bachmann, Eco Communicator and Green Lifestyle Blogger at Earth Momma Trainee.

Every week we discuss the latest sustainability news, trends, and discoveries; tackling myths and misinformation as they come our way. So grab your favorite drink and get cozy, because we're about to spill some tea!

According to the Arizona Daily Star, Tucson residents could soon see their trash used in local construction projects as part of a pilot program through City Councilman Steve Kozachik's office. Kozachik is collecting plastic products that can't be recycled in the city's blue bins, and plans to turn that plastic into construction-grade blocks for local projects.

The councilman will be partnering with the start-up company **ByFusion**, which creates blocks from unrecyclable plastics. Think plastic bags, candy wrappers, bubble wrap, and more.

ByFusion places these plastics into a patented machine that uses steam and compression to churn out 22-pound blocks that fit together with interlocking pegs called ByBlocks.

If you've spent any time on TikTok recently and found yourself on EcoTok, you'll have likely been scrolling through your For You Page and seen countless videos of people cutting up plastic and stuffing it into water bottles to make Eco Bricks.

ByBlocks are essentially Eco Bricks, except they're not made at home and don't have the potential to blow up in your face. Literally.

The point of ByBlocks and Eco Bricks is to provide a way to dispose of non-recyclable plastics and keep them out of landfills. They can be used as building materials for all kinds of projects, giving plastic that can't be recycled a way to be reused. Some people use Eco Bricks to build their own structures, while others give them away on The Brik Market, an eco brick drop-off and exchange.

The biggest difference between creating Eco Bricks at home and collecting plastics for a company like ByFusion is the types of plastics that can be recycled. If you choose to make an Eco Brick, you are limited to soft plastics like films, bags, and wrappers. If you take part in a collection scheme like Kozachik's, you are able to collect additional plastics like utensils, straws, plastic plates, food trays, empty pill bottles, and more.

Another difference is the time commitment. Many people who choose to create homemade Eco Bricks agree that it can be a long and tedious process, taking weeks or months to create a single brick. But if you have an entire city collecting their non-recyclable plastics at home and dropping them off at a central location, it's a lot easier and a lot quicker to reach the one ton of plastic waste that it takes to create one ton of ByBlocks.

At this point, many of you are probably thinking - is this too good to be true?

Well, it depends on who you ask. Some Tucson experts believe that nonrecyclable plastics only make up a small percentage of the city's waste, and programs like Kozachik's won't make a dent in the city's overall waste diversion goal.

Others believe that communities working with companies like ByFusion will help significantly divert contamination from their Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs), and serve as a great mitigation strategy to keep plastic waste out of landfills.

What do I think?

On the one hand, ByBlocks and Eco Bricks can reduce plastic waste that's going to landfills; they can be used as building material, address plastic waste production at the individual level, and most importantly enlighten people about their own plastic consumption.

Hopefully leading people to reduce their plastic consumption in the long run.

But it also fails to address the root cause of our ever growing plastic waste problem, which is companies producing plastic and leaving the disposal up to their consumers.

There are some local governments that are working to address this, but my drink's getting cold and that's a conversation for another day.

Thank you for listening, I hope you enjoyed the tea. Until next time!