

FOOD WARE PACKAGING REDUCTION PLAN

This Plan is intended to serve as a high-level framework for the City's efforts to reduce the amount of nonreusable food service ware generated and disposed of in Mountain View. Developing this Plan was an action item identified in the City's [Zero Waste Plan](#), adopted on October 29, 2019, as part of the Food Ware Packaging Reduction Phase 1 initiative. This document is intended to be revised over time as food ware packaging reduction strategies change and staff identifies new specific initiatives to support food ware packaging reduction goals.

Goals

1. Reduce the amount of nonreusable food service ware generated and disposed of by Mountain View employees, businesses, residents, and visitors.
2. Ensure nonreusable food service ware generated in Mountain View is compatible with compost or recycling programs to divert it from landfill.
3. Reduce the amount of plastic litter in the environment, especially in storm drains and waterways.
4. Reduce contamination in the recycling and organics waste streams.
5. Reduce negative impacts on human and animal health from harmful substances commonly used in food service ware.

Ultimately, the goal of these measures is to reduce the amount of single-use food service ware generated by transitioning to reusable food service ware to the extent practicable. This will require a shift in both behavior and business practices, as well as developing supporting systems and infrastructure, which will take some time to implement. In the near term, regulating nonreusable food service ware can ensure these materials are compatible with Mountain View's recycling and compost programs and do not contain substances that pose a risk to human and environmental health.

Existing Policy

There are several existing Council-adopted policies and plans that provide a framework for the City's efforts in reducing food packaging.

1. [Polystyrene Foam Food Service Ware Ordinance](#) (adopted March 25, 2014): This ordinance added Article V to Chapter 16 of the Mountain View City Code,

prohibiting food providers in the City from dispensing prepared food to a consumer using polystyrene foam food service ware and prohibiting all vendors in Mountain View from selling polystyrene foam food service ware and polystyrene foam ice chests or coolers. The purpose of this ordinance was to reduce the amount of polystyrene foam litter in the environment to improve water quality, comply with new municipal Stormwater Permit requirements, and achieve the City's environmental sustainability objectives.

2. **Zero Waste Policy ([Council Policy K-22](#), adopted June 19, 2018):** This policy establishes a goal of diverting 80% of materials from landfill by 2020 and 90% by 2030. The Policy includes a guiding principle that the City will “reduce the proliferation of plastic food service ware and packaging in daily commerce, to the extent practicable.”
3. **[Zero Waste Plan](#) (adopted October 29, 2019):** This Plan serves as the road map to achieve the zero waste goals of Council Policy K-22. Among the 39 initiatives in this plan are two phases of food service ware reduction measures:
 - a. Food ware Packaging Reduction—Phase 1: Participate in regional efforts to align and expand food ware ordinances and share best practices. Develop a Food Ware Packaging Reduction Plan to reduce the amount of single-use, disposable food ware packaging generated in Mountain View and encourage reusable food ware items. As a first phase, consider expanding the Polystyrene Food Ware Ordinance to include clamshells, straws, cutlery, stirrers, and cold cups distributed by food service establishments (restaurants, cafeterias, food trucks, food vendors). Require that compostable fiber containers are BPI-Certified and do not contain toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. Consider requiring food service establishments to “ask first” for condiments and cutlery for delivery orders. Send enforcement letters to food service establishments that do not comply with the Food Ware Ordinance. In addition, contract with the ReThink Disposable Program to target food service establishments and businesses that use single-use food ware to assist them in making the transition to reusables. This will lay the groundwork for a second phase of the Plan, which is included as a Medium-Term Initiative.
 - b. Food Ware Packaging Reduction—Phase 2: Consider expanding the City's Food Ware Ordinance to require reusable tableware at sit-down restaurants and reusable take-out packaging (like Go Box) and dishwasher installation at food service establishments. Consider implementing a Cup Charge (similar to the Bag Charge) for disposable cups (and potential future expansion to other disposable food ware). Increase enforcement to food service establishments that do not comply with the Food Ware Ordinance, including possible administrative fines or penalties.

Planned Food Ware Packaging Reduction Initiatives

The following initiatives are planned or under consideration to implement the goals of the Zero Waste Policy and Zero Waste Plan. Solid Waste Section staff will develop more detailed work plans, supplemental resources, and outreach programs to support each initiative.

1. Nonreusable Food Service Ware Ordinance (ZWP Phase 1)
 - a. Require nonreusable food service ware (e.g., cups, plates, clamshells) to be compostable, natural fiber-based, and certified free of intentionally added perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), or made entirely of aluminum.
 - b. Require nonreusable food service ware accessories and standard condiments to be provided only upon consumer request or at single-serve accessory dispensers or bulk condiment dispensers.
 - c. Require third-party take-out food delivery services to provide an option for consumers to opt-in request each nonreusable food service ware accessory item.
 - d. Prohibit the use of plastic or compostable plastic for certain food service ware accessories: straws, stirrers, toothpicks, and food picks.
2. Technical Assistance to Transition to Reusables (ZWP Phase 1)
 - a. Contract with an organization specializing in technical assistance to help food service providers transition to reusable food service ware for dine-in.
3. Reusable Food Service Ware Ordinance (ZWP Phase 2)
 - a. Require use of reusable food service ware and accessories for dine-in.
 - b. Require food providers to have dishwashing capacity to accommodate sanitation of reusable food service ware.
 - c. Require vendors to accept consumer-provided reusable cups in accordance with relevant California Health and Safety Code regulations.
 - d. Consider a fee for nonreusable beverage cups or other nonreusable food service ware items.

- e. Require events to make reusable beverage cups available to at least 10% of attendees.
 - f. Require food service businesses to utilize a reusable container return system for take-out orders within one year of the City determining it is both financially and geographically feasible.
4. Reusable Take-Out Food ware Pilot (ZWP Phase 2)
- a. Explore a pilot program with a reusable container or cup return system to partner with multiple restaurants.

Supporting Initiatives

The Zero Waste Plan also contains multiple measures that, while not focused specifically on reducing the use of food ware packaging, provide supporting infrastructure and resources to advance these efforts. This includes programs to expand compost collection to all multi-family and commercial properties and provide expanded technical assistance to multi-family residences, businesses, and schools. These programs and policies will ensure that residents, students, and employees in Mountain View have access to the proper collection and disposal infrastructure to keep food ware items out of the trash, and provide outreach and education to the community about how to properly dispose of compostable food ware and other organic materials by participating in the City's compost collection program. Additionally, the Zero Waste Plan contains action items related to advocacy at the State and Federal levels to address packaging more broadly, especially in areas that are more difficult to regulate locally.

Food Ware Packaging Reduction Steps

The overall approach to phasing of Food Ware Packaging Reduction measures is to begin with voluntary measures while developing the infrastructure to support mandatory restrictions. This is designed to allow adequate time for businesses to adapt, encourage early adoption of future mandatory measures, and ease the transition away from single-use food ware items.

1. **Reduce use of disposable food ware through on-request measures and voluntary transition to reusables. (ZWP Phase 1)**
 - Require food service ware accessories to be provided only upon consumer request.

- Require third-party take-out delivery platforms to provide option for consumers to opt-in request each accessory item with orders.
 - Technical assistance program for restaurants to transition to reusables.
2. **Transition to compostable disposable or aluminum food ware that can be diverted from landfill. (ZWP Phase 1)**
- Mandatory Organic Waste Reduction Ordinance will require access to compost service for all residences and businesses that generate organic waste.
 - Nonreusable Food Ware Ordinance requires compostable, natural fiber-based and certified PFAS-free or aluminum food ware.
3. **Require use of reusables for dine-in and events. (ZWP Phase 2)**
- Reusable Food Ware Ordinance measures:
 - Require use of reusables for dine-in.
 - Require food service businesses to have adequate dishwashing capacity for reusable food ware.
 - Require use of reusable cups at events for a minimum percentage of attendees.
4. **Incentivize use of reusables for take-out. (ZWP Phase 2)**
- Require businesses to accept consumer-provided cups in accordance with relevant California Health and Safety Code provisions.
 - Explore implementing a charge for disposable beverage cups and/or other disposable food ware items.
 - Explore pilot program for reusable beverage cup/take-out container return systems with multiple restaurants.
5. **Mandate reuse option for take-out. (ZWP Phase 2)**
- Reusable Food Ware Ordinance provision requiring participation in a reusable container return system (effective one year after the City determines it is financially and geographically viable).