



# **Single-Use Foodware and Plastic Bag Ordinances Informational Packet**

**City of Los Altos  
Development Services Department  
Sustainability Division  
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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Single-Use Foodware Ordinance Fact Sheet .....	2
Plastic Bag Ordinance Fact Sheet .....	3
Single-Use Foodware Ordinance FAQ.....	4
Examples of Compliant Foodware .....	6
Compliance Checklists .....	7



## Introduction

The city of Los Altos will be adopting two ordinances that may affect your business. The first eliminates single-use plastic foodware in food establishments and requires reusable dishware for all dine-in eating. The second ordinance eliminates the use of all single-use plastic bags and replaces them with reusable or recycled paper bags.

This packet has information about the two ordinances and what changes you can expect to make.

If you have questions about these new rules or changes, please visit [losaltosca.gov/foodware](http://losaltosca.gov/foodware) or email [sustainability@losaltosca.gov](mailto:sustainability@losaltosca.gov).



## City of Los Altos

# SINGLE-USE PLASTICS FOODWARE ORDINANCE SUMMARY

The Single-Use Plastics Foodware Ordinance aims to reduce plastic use and waste in landfills and the environment by limiting nonessential single-use plastic foodware and prioritizing reusable foodware and accessories in the city of Los Altos. The new regulations will take effect approximately six months following ordinance adoption.

## WHAT IS SINGLE-USE FOODWARE?

Single-use or disposable foodware refers to items associated with food and beverages designed for serving or transporting prepared food that are meant to be thrown away after a single use, or a limited number of uses.

Reusable Glass Saucer



## WHO WILL BE AFFECTED?

- Restaurants
- Coffee Shops
- Mobile or Temporary Food Providers
- Fast Food Chains
- Grocery Stores
- Vehicles, Carts, or Roadside Stands
- Caterers
- Delicatessens
- Cafeterias

Single-Use Plastic Packets

## NO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FOODWARE

Single-use plastic and compostable plastic (a.k.a. bioplastics, PLA, etc.) materials are not allowed. This includes but is not limited to: cups, trays, stir sticks, plates, take-out containers, straws, bowls, single-use plastic carry-out bags, and utensils.

## REUSABLES FOR DINE-IN

- Reusable foodware, made out of metal, ceramic, or glass, is required.
- Condiments **must** be served in reusable containers; no individual packets are allowed.
- Single-use compostable straws, paper napkins, and foil/paper liners are allowed.

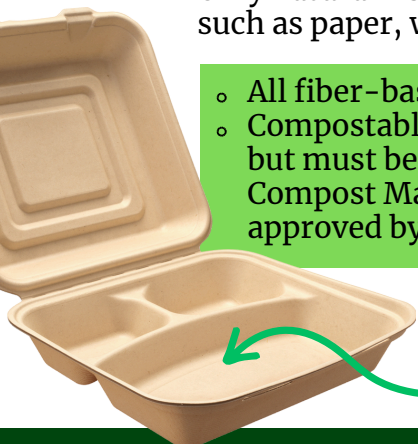
Aluminum Take-Out Food Containers



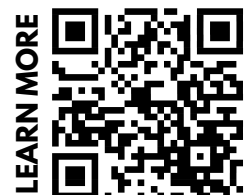
## COMPOSTABLES FOR TAKE-OUT

- Aluminum food containers and foil are allowed.
- Only natural fiber-based compostable materials are allowed such as paper, wood, sugarcane, or bamboo.

- All fiber-based items must be PFAS-free.
- Compostable plastic lining (only) is okay for above items, but must be approved by Biodegradable Products Institute, Compost Manufacturing Alliance, or another 3rd party approved by the City.



Fiber-Based, Compostable Take Out Box





## City of Los Altos

# REUSABLE BAGS ORDINANCE SUMMARY

The Reusable Bags Ordinance aims to reduce the negative impact of single-use plastic bags on landfills and the environment by eliminating their non-essential use in Los Altos businesses. This ordinance seeks to prioritize the use of reusable bags and bags made of recycled paper in the place of plastic bags that pollute waterways, harm wildlife, and contribute to carbon emissions. **The new regulations will take effect approximately six months following ordinance adoption.**



## WHAT IS A SINGLE-USE CARRYOUT BAG?

A single-use carryout bag is any non-reusable bag given to customers to carry their purchases out of a business. This includes paper bags, compostable bags, and thin and thick plastic bags.

**THIS ORDINANCE AFFECTS ALL LOS ALTOS RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS**  
Restaurants are no longer exempt from the plastic bag ban.

## NEW BAG REQUIREMENTS

Businesses can no longer offer single-use plastic carryout bags. **Bags provided to customers must be made of recycled paper or be reusable and sold at a minimum of 10¢ per bag.**

### Recycled paper bags must:

- Be made of 40% or more post-consumer materials
- Contain no old-growth fiber
- Must be completely recyclable
- Have “reusable” and “recyclable” visibly printed on the outside
- Have the name and location of the bags’ manufacturer printed on the outside of the bag
- Have the percentage of post-consumer materials that the bag is made of printed on the outside of the bag

### Reusable bags must:

- Be designed for intentional reuse
- Have sturdy handles, at least 2.25 mils (0.00225 in) thick
- Be made of fabric, cloth, or durable plastic



**THICK PLASTIC BAGS ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTED**

Previous state laws allowed the use of thick, single-use plastic bags in retail settings. The city of Los Altos will no longer allow thick, single-use plastic bags.

**LEARN MORE**





## Single-Use Foodware Ordinance FAQ

The City of Los Altos is committed to reducing plastic pollution and promoting a more sustainable future. As part of this effort, we're proposing an ordinance to regulate single-use plastic foodware at food facilities for both dine-in and take-out. This FAQ aims to answer some common questions about the ordinance.

### **Why is the City drafting a single-use foodware ordinance?**

There has been increasing concern in the community over the impact of disposable foodware, especially items made from plastic. Disposable foodware, including containers, cups, lids, utensils and straws, is a major contributor to street litter, ocean pollution, marine and other wildlife endangerment, and climate change. Many plastic disposable foodware items are used for just a few minutes before becoming waste, which lasts for hundreds or even thousands of years.

### **What types of foodware are affected by the ordinance?**

Single-use foodware that is designed to be discarded after a single or limited number of uses. These are commonly used to serve/distribute prepared food, including, but not limited to, cups, plates, to-go containers, cutlery (forks, knives, spoons, straws), and stir sticks.

### **Who will need to comply?**

Food facilities in Los Altos -- Any vendor, business, organization, entity, group, or individual, including a licensed retail food establishment that provides prepared food for public consumption. This includes restaurants, caterers, cafeterias, coffee shops, grocery stores, delicatessens, mobile or temporary food providers, or vehicles or carts.

### **How is dine-in defined for the purposes of the ordinance?**

Dine-in is when patrons consume prepared meals and beverages on-site. Patrons are typically seated at tables or counters provided by the establishment, and the food and beverages are intended for immediate consumption.

### **Where can I buy acceptable items?**

The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) has a list of all BPI-approved companies and their products. You can find this list here: <https://www.bpiworld.org/CertifiedCompostable>  
Additionally, ask your distributor, vendor, restaurant supply shop, or on-line store what BPI fiber-based compostable foodware products (or aluminum alternatives) are available.

Visit [losaltosca.gov/foodware](https://losaltosca.gov/foodware) for a disposable and reusable foodware purchasing guide managed by the County of San Mateo. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list, and new compostable products are emerging in the marketplace at a rapid pace.

## Single-Use Foodware Ordinance FAQ Continued

### **Why aren't PLA or other biodegradable plastics allowed under the Single-use Plastics Foodware Ordinance?**

While PLA and other biodegradable plastics may break down under certain conditions. If not disposed of properly, they can still contribute to pollution and may not degrade as expected in natural environments. Therefore, to prioritize truly sustainable options, our focus is on fiber-based packaging materials.

### **How can food facilities ensure compliance with the Single-use Foodware Ordinance?**

Restaurants can ensure compliance by educating staff about the transition to sustainable alternatives, updating their new inventory of packaging materials, and clearly communicating the changes to customers.

### **Does AB 1276 (Upon Request) still apply?**

Yes, staff should continue to provide Single-Use Foodware Accessories by request only.

The City will host two informational sessions in June to inform the community on the proposed ordinance requirements and solicit feedback. Please check the website [losaltosca.gov/foodware](https://losaltosca.gov/foodware) for details.

### **What is the timeline of this Ordinance?**

The final ordinance will be brought to the City Council for a first and second reading. If adopted, businesses will have 6 months to comply (from adoption) with the requirements of the ordinance. This is to provide food facilities time to use up their existing non-conforming inventory of disposable foodware and to provide time to develop an education and enforcement program.

# EXAMPLES OF COMPLIANT FOODWARE

## To-Go

## Dine-In



PrimeWare® Molded Fiber Bowls



World Centric® NoTree® Paper Cup



Reusable Takeaway Containers



Handi-Foil™ 3 Compartment Foil Pan with Board Lid



Recyclable Glass Containers



Dubl Life® Recycled Paper Shopping Bags



Bambu® Disposable Bamboo Cutlery



Stainless Steel Dishware



Reusable Trays



Reusable Metal Cutlery



Wooden Dishware



Ceramic Dishware



Reusable Condiment Containers

Detailed List of Approved Foodware



This is not a comprehensive list of all acceptable foodware. Scan the QR code for other compliant foodware options.



# COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

This checklist is an optional tool that can help determine what changes your business may need to make in order to be compliant with new regulations.

Compare the materials of your current dine-in foodware inventory with the materials listed below. Checking a red box underneath a material with an X next to its name (e.g. “Single-Use X”) means that item is no longer accepted. Checking a green box underneath a material with a check next to its name (e.g. “Reusable ✓”) means that item is in compliance.

## Dine-In

	Single-Use X	Reusable ✓
<u>Baskets</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Bowls</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Condiment Containers</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Cups/Mugs</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Dishware</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Sauce Cups</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Trays</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Utensils</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>