

# Unpackaging Alameda



Disposable products are an environmental threat at every stage of their life cycle: it takes fossil fuels and other resources to produce and transport them, and they create pollution that imperils water sources, wildlife, and human health. They are also expensive: California municipalities spend over half a billion dollars annually to clean up waste and litter on city streets. We need a cultural shift away from single-use items. **ReThink Disposable**, an award-winning program of **Clean Water Action** and **Clean Water Fund**, promotes this shift by helping businesses dramatically reduce or eliminate single-use disposable food and beverage packaging items.

With a grant from the California Ocean Protection Council, ReThink Disposable partnered with the City of Alameda to create a model for “unpackaging a city.” Vibrant, coastal, and sustained by a nucleus of long-standing and well connected local businesses, Alameda, California was a perfect fit for a two-year pilot project that would model a durable, transformative source reduction plan to cities around the world.

## ***ReThink Disposable’s approach in Alameda had five main components:***

**1. Businesses:** *Certify food businesses that replace disposable food packaging with reusable foodware via source reduction recommendations and technical assistance.*

Eighty (80) new Alameda food businesses are ReThink Disposable certified. Of the 80 certified businesses, 21 achieved impressive source reduction results: almost 2,500,000 pieces of packaging or 27,000 pounds of waste are eliminated annually, which saves them over \$50,000 each year! Results from these 21 businesses were used to estimate total project impact from all 80 business participants.

Eighty (80) Alameda businesses are eliminating the annual use of 6,199,840 pieces of single-use foodware, preventing 2.34 tons/64,682 pounds of waste, and collectively saving \$139,231 a year.

**2. Community:** *Collaborate with local community groups and students on projects like studying street litter and raising awareness about source reduction on social media.*

The ReThink Disposable team trained 27 volunteer ambassadors, 10 student interns, and 24 litter survey volunteers who analyzed disposable food packaging found on Alameda’s Park Street before and after the program’s intervention.

**3. Government:** *Provide trainings for the city’s department foodware purchasers and introduce reusable foodware at catered city staff events.*

Train Alameda city government departmental purchasers about the ReThink Disposable project and help departments transition to reusable foodware in government facilities and events. The Alameda Fire Department Administrative building was the first municipal building to certify.

**4. Communication:** Amplify the environmental impact of our work, the stories of diverse business participants, and project toolkits to help people around the world learn from the “Unpackaging Alameda” project and participate in the reuse movement.

Share Unpackaging Alameda project achievements through videos, social media, and earned media coverage from outlets including Alameda Sun, The East Bay Times, and the SF Chronicle.

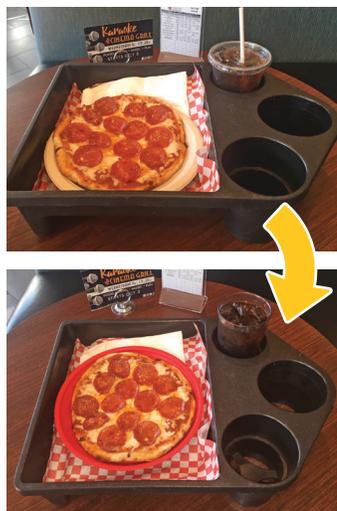
**5. Culture shift:** Foster systemic change by normalizing reuse, showing how it helps both businesses and the environment, and helping municipalities use source reduction to achieve their clean water, zero-waste and climate action goals.

## Case Studies

### AWARD-WINNING SOURCE REDUCTION

Honolulu BBQ, a ReThink Disposable certified business, won a StopWaste Business Efficiency Award for Excellence in Disposable Foodware Reduction.

As part of their ReThink Disposable certification, Honolulu BBQ reduced or eliminated 14 types of disposable foodware items while transitioning to all reusable foodware for onsite dining. As a result of certification, the restaurant prevents over 100,000 disposable foodware items, eliminates over 2,000 pounds of waste, and saves \$1,272, every year.



### UNPACKAGING A THEATRE

The Alameda Theatre and Cineplex is an iconic downtown business beloved by many on the island. The Theatre offers a menu of in-theatre dining for food and beverages from the adjoining Cinema Grill to be delivered to designated seats in the Cineplex. As a result of working with ReThink Disposable, the theatre transitioned from paper plates with paper food boats, and drinks in varying sizes of disposable plastic cups to reusable plastic platters with a liner and reusable tumblers.

These operational changes save the theatre \$9,881 annually while eliminating 603,243 pieces of disposable packaging and preventing 6,907 pounds of waste each year. Before every movie, an animated video about ReThink Disposable educates theatre-goers about source reduction.

To read more inspiring business testimonials, learn about our work across California with local governments, business owners, and community members, watch the animated short, access our educational resources, and much more, check out our website <http://www.rethinkdisposable.org>

