

Sustainability
Reuse Rethink Recycle

WHEREAS Mayor Caroline Simmons, in recognition of the seriousness of climate change and its effects on our society, formed the Climate Council to develop recommendations to guide the City in reducing its carbon footprint, and

WHEREAS the 31st Board of Representatives, in support of the Mayor's action and in response to the warning of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that continued emission of greenhouse gases will increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible, impacts on people and ecosystems, issued Resolution 4130 urging the Administration to pursue initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and

WHEREAS in further recognition of the climate crisis Mayor Caroline Simmons issued executive order EO_005_230417_Climate, addressing climate change and sustainability, directing the Administration and all applicable City Departments and Agencies to adopt initiatives that address climate change and sustainability, and

***WHEREAS,** the physical breakdown of plastic, disposable, flatware, stirrers, cups, liquid splash sticks, and take out containers result in microplastics that enter the environment, food chain and ultimately accumulate in the human body leading to adverse health and environmental effects; and*

Whereas, only a small portion of recyclables actually get recycled. The city of Stamford can no longer sell its recyclable and Single use items cost the tax payers of Stamford hundreds of thousands of dollars in hauling costs.

Whereas, Single use plastics, whether made of recyclable material or not, and expanded polystyrene pose a threat to Stamford's aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. By prohibiting these items, Stamford seeks to protect the environment, eliminate a major source of waste and protect the public health, safety and welfare of Stamford and its citizens.

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY
OF STAMFORD THAT:***

The purpose of this ordinance is to eliminate waste, save money, increase the health of its citizens, wildlife, land, and waterways through sustainable practices; such as the use of reusables, prohibit the use of single use plastic food service containers, silverware, plastic stirrers, liquid

Reducing waste in Stamford is the most important part of sustainability and this ordinance.

A. “Skip the stuff.” Under this provision retailers are not allowed to automatically give customers single use items such as flatware, chop sticks, splash sticks, plates, ramekins etc.

B. Retailers are not allowed to ask a customer if they want those items. The customer must ask.

C. When a customer does ask for one of those items, *we will Require it to be made from compostable/biodegradable materials that are PFAS free and BPI certified.*

****Items such as flatware, chopsticks are never recyclable in Stamford, even if they are marked as recyclable.****

D. Retailers, schools, hospitals, care facilities with “dine in” services must provide only reusable cups, bowls, dishes, trays, chop sticks, flatware and ramekins.

****Education for vendors and the city is available through Clearwater and other environmental groups.****

****Other municipalities have implemented these laws.****

This ordinance will create a sustainability fund. All fines collected will go towards sustainable efforts

The Governors call-to-action is heard through this ordinance.

“DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes is discussing the governor’s plan to address the state’s current trash crisis.

Mike Hydeck: Searching for solutions to Connecticut's trash trouble after a trash to energy plant closed in Hartford. Connecticut has been shipping more than 850 tons of garbage out of the state. Now lawmakers are looking for ways to both save money and the environment. But how to do it is a very complex problem with a lot of stakeholders. So where do we start?”

Link to article:

[Face the Facts: DEEP Commissioner Talks About Plan to Address Trash Crisis – NBC Connecticut](#)

Rethinking garbage entirely:

[CT has a trash problem. Here's how Lamont wants to solve it](#)

CASE STUDY:

Middletown Public School District



BUSINESS PROFILE

Name:

Middletown Public School District

Location:

Middletown, CT

Cafeteria dining: Yes

Take-out: No

Warewashing:

Commercial Dishwashers

The Middletown Public School System consists of ten schools; eight elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school, and enrolls around 4,500 students. Since 2022, the amount of trash generated in CT has exceeded in-state disposal capacity, and about 40% of municipal waste has been shipped out of state, which is costly and merely sends pollution elsewhere. So, there is motivation to find zero waste solutions. In Middletown, the Director of Food, Nutrition, and Wellness Services for Middletown Public Schools has for many years eagerly taken on sustainability initiatives in the cafeterias: Programs such as the separation of kitchen food scraps for composting with Blue Earth Compost, purchasing reusable cloth bags for the breakfast program, and implementing hard reusable plastic cafeteria trays.

ReThink Disposable joined the schools' efforts to fight single-use disposable waste and plastic pollution by phasing out all disposable diningware in school cafeterias district-wide. All schools have an operating commercial dishwasher, giving them the ability to wash reusables in-house. The reusable foodware was purchased with funding from a CT Equipment Assistance grant, individual donors through a Sustainable CT campaign, and a utensil donation from Plastic Free Restaurants. The school is unique in its approach to reusable foodware. All disposables are being replaced with a reusable alternative, a one-to-one swap for each item. The transition is happening in several phases with the first phase of reusable plates and bowls rolled out in the fall of 2024.

Changes to serveware for less waste and more savings:

Single-use 5 Compartment Fiber Blend School Lunch Tray	→	Durable Preserve Plastic Plate
Single-use 5 Compartment Fiber Blend School Lunch Tray	→	Durable Preserve Plastic Bowl
#200 Food Tray Red Plaid	→	Eliminated
#300 Food Tray Red Plaid	→	G.E.T. EC-08-1-CL Eco-Takeouts Clear Single Entree Container
#500 Food Tray Red Plaid	→	G.E.T. EC-11-1-CL-EC Half Size Take-Out Food Container, 9" x 6.5"
Single-use Plastic Utensil, Straw & Napkin kit wrapped in plastic	→	Stainless Steel Spoon, Fork & Spork
Single-use plastic 5.5 oz Portion Container	→	G.E.T. EC-20-CL Sauce Cup 6.75 oz
Single-use plastic 5.5 oz Portion Container	→	G.E.T. Eco-Takeouts 3 oz Jade Green Customizable Sauce Container
Clear Portion 5 oz/5.5 oz lid	→	Eliminated
Ziplock Sandwich Bag	→	Eliminated

THE BOTTOM LINE

- \$91,175 total annual net cost savings when factoring in the additional cost of \$30,000 in labor each year
- Over 3.76 million disposable items reduced per year
- 15.5 tons of annual waste reduction
- 3.8 month payback period including yearly cost for dishwashing labor
- The district can see an additional \$41,866.50 in savings reducing waste-hauling pick-ups by eliminating one pick up per week for each school

Case Study Middletown Public School

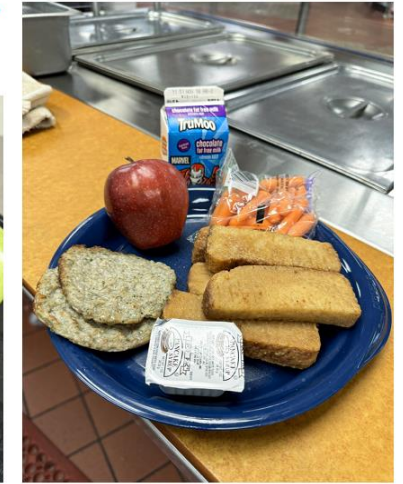
Bottom line: Saved the taxpayers \$133,041 on \$4,600 meals per week. SPS serves 13,600 per week.

RESULTS

		PACKAGING IMPACTS			COST IMPACTS	
Disposable Product Replaced or Minimized	Recommendation Implemented	Percent Disposable Reduction	Annual Quantity of Disposable Product Reduced	Annual Waste Reduction (lbs.)	Payback Period (months)	Annual NET* Cost Savings After Payback Period (\$)
5 Compartment Fiber Blend School Lunch Tray	Replace with Preserve Every Day Plate Midnight Blue	100%	27,000	2,392	10.2	\$6,367
5 Compartment Fiber Blend School Lunch Tray	Replace with Preserve Every Day Bowl Midnight Blue					
#200 Food Tray Red Plaid	Eliminated	100%	162,000	2,684	0	\$7,768
#300 Food Tray Red Plaid	G.E.T. Eco-Takeouts Clear Single Entree Container	100%	81,000	1,991	7.6	\$6,804
#500 Food Tray Red Plaid	G.E.T. Half Size Take-Out Food Container, 9" x 6.5"	100%	333,000	10,596	2.0	\$34,965
Utensil Straw 8x10 Napkin Kit	Replace with Stainless Steel Spoon, Fork and Spork	100%	2,016,000**	6,303	2.8	\$20,832
5.5 oz Portion Container	Replace with G.E.T. Sauce Cup 6.75 oz	100%	450,000	4,640	4.3	\$19,710
5.5 oz Portion Container	Replace with G.E.T. Eco-Takeouts 3 oz Jade Green Sauce Container					
Clear Portion 5 oz/5.5 oz lid	Eliminated	100%	450,000	1,753	0	\$12,330
Ziplock Sandwich Bag	Eliminated	100%	207,000	1,250	0	\$12,399
		TOTALS:	3,726,000 pieces	31,609 lbs.	3.8 months	\$121,175

*Net Cost Savings considers any upfront and ongoing costs associated with the purchase and care of reusable items and capital improvements needed to carry out ReThink Disposable's recommendations. Net cost savings are based on avoided disposable foodware purchases.

Middletown Public Schools are setting an example in Connecticut. Switching to reusables saves money and protects our land and water from single-use foodware pollution.



"Connecticut, and all of New England, is facing a trash crisis. Disposal capacity is dwindling, forcing more waste to be shipped further away, increasing both financial and environmental costs. Communities are trying to implement strategies to minimize the amount of trash going to landfills and incinerators. This partnership with ReThink Disposable has helped Middletown take steps to reduce waste from our schools, reduce costs and create more sustainable systems in our school cafeterias."

Kim O'Rourke, Middletown Recycling & Sustainability Coordinator

"Here in Middletown Public Schools, one of our goals in switching to reusable utensils and servingware is to utilize the funds that would have gone to disposable items and instead reinvest them into the quality of our food. It was estimated that in this switch we will be saving around \$100,000 per school year; with this savings we will focus on buying locally grown foods from small farmers and growers throughout the state of Connecticut with a specific focus in supporting farmers and growers of color. These funds will greatly improve our quality of food and bring more variety to our students during mealtimes."

Randall Mel, Jr., Director of Food, Nutrition and Wellness Services for Middletown Public Schools

Case Study Middletown Public School

Case Study: Retailer From single use to reusable

CASE STUDY: House of Bread



BUSINESS PROFILE

Name:
House of Bread
Location:
Hartford, CT
On-site dining: Yes
Take-out: No
Warewashing:
Commercial Dishwasher

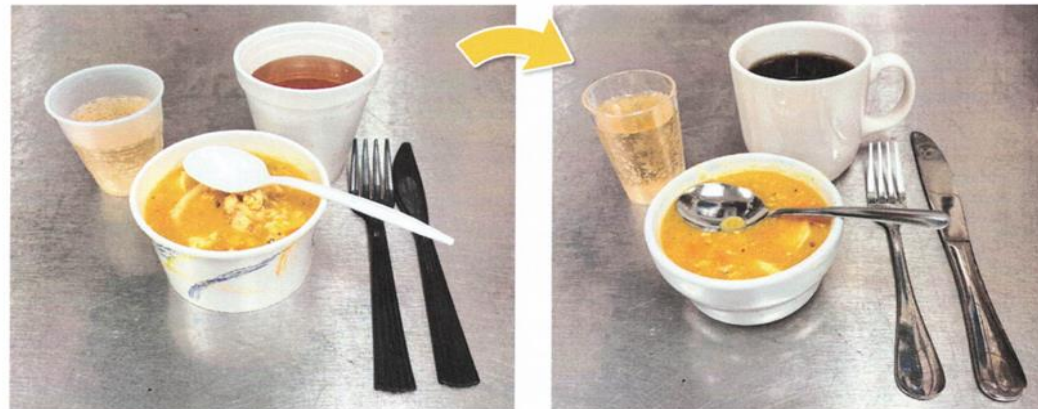


The House of Bread Soup Kitchen is in the center of Connecticut's Capitol City. One in eight Connecticut residents are food insecure, and one in six children struggle with access to food. With day-old donuts and coffee, two inspirational nuns, Sr. Maureen and Sr. Theresa, vowed to help the hungry and homeless in Hartford's North End. The House of Bread's doors opened to 17 guests at 227 High Street on February 4, 1980. Today the House of Bread volunteers serve over 250 daily meals to food-insecure residents. The facility had some reusable serveware and a functioning commercial dishwasher but primarily relied on donations of disposable cups, bowls, and utensils.

Changes to serveware for less waste and more savings:

Single-use plastic cold cup	→	5oz durable plastic cup
Single-use expanded polystyrene hot cup	→	8oz ceramic mug
Single-use plastic spoon	→	Stainless steel spoon
Single-use plastic fork	→	Stainless steel fork
Single-use plastic knife	→	Stainless steel butter knife
Single-use paper soup container with lid	→	8oz ceramic bowl

BEFORE and AFTER: ReThink Disposable helped the House of Bread make the transition to 100% reusable serveware for all meals.



THE BOTTOM LINE

- \$1,643.70 total annual net cost savings for items purchased by the House of Bread; this does not include donated serveware
- Additional savings can be seen through reduced waste-hauling fees
- 123,500 disposable items reduced per year
- 845 pounds of annual waste reduction
- Switching to reusables gives the food-insecure residents who dine at the House of Bread a more elevated dining experience, contributing to the community feeling when dining together

Bottom line
Reusable saved the
retailer and city
money while
reducing waste

RESULTS

RESULTS		PACKAGING IMPACTS			COST IMPACTS	
Disposable Product Replaced or Reused	Recommendation Implemented	Percent Disposable Reduction	Annual Quantity of Disposable Product Reduced	Annual Waste Reduction (lbs.)	Payback Period (months)	Annual NET* Cost Savings After Payback Period (\$)
Disposable plastic cold cup	Replace with durable plastic cup	100%	20,000	59	N/A	\$201
Disposable insulated cup	Replace with ceramic mug	100%	9,000	185	N/A	\$454
Disposable plastic spoon	Replace with stainless steel spoon	100%	30,000	169	N/A	\$205
Sunset plastic fork	Replace with stainless steel fork	100%	50,000	283	N/A	336
Sunset plastic knife	Replace with stainless steel butter knife	100%	12,000	77	N/A	\$81
Sunset paper soup container w/ lid	Replace with ceramic soup bowl	100%	2,500	72	N/A	\$366
*Net Cost Savings considers any upfront and ongoing costs associated with the purchase and care of reusable items and capital improvements needed to carry out ReThink Disposable's recommendations. Net cost savings are based on the following assumptions:		TOTALS:	123,500 pieces	845 lbs.	N/A	\$1,643

*Net Cost Savings considers any upfront and ongoing costs associated with the purchase and care of reusable items and capital improvements needed to carry out ReThink Disposable's recommendations. Net cost savings are based on avoided disposable foodware purchases.

“The House of Bread is always looking for ways to improve how we can best help our clients AND how we can help Mother Nature! Our next step toward improving our environmental impact was to eliminate the plastic utensils, bowls, and cups that we use and replace them with reusable, washable items. As a New England Zero Waste Organizer, Amber was instrumental in making this happen and was simply a joy to work with.”

Tom Porell Co-Director, House of Bread



Tom Porell with Zero Waste Specialist Amber Schmidt

CASE STUDY: Cedar Lake Triathlon



EVENT PROFILE

Name:

Cedar Lake Triathlon

Location:

Cedar Lake, Chester, CT

Water Stations: 3

ReThink Volunteer: 1

YMCA Staff: 4



The Valley Shore YMCA holds the Cedar Lake Triathlon series each summer in Chester, Connecticut. Their mission is to share sportsmanship, a healthy lifestyle, achievement of personal goals and develop a stronger racing community. There is a 500-yard swim, 10-mile bike ride, and 3-mile run. The triathlon series benefits the Valley Shore YMCA Race4Chase Youth Triathlon program to introduce young athletes to the sport of Triathlon in memory of Chase Michael Anthony Kowalski who lost his life with classmates at Sandy Hook in 2012. At each triathlon, the YMCA provided plastic bottled water and disposable cups. ReThink Disposable helped make the switch to reusable silicone water bottles and reusable cups. With purple return stations and signage, our New England Zero Waste Organizer collected the used bottles and cups for sanitization and use at the following events. ReThink Disposable helped make 3 of the 5 series zero-waste!

Changes to serveware for less waste and more savings:

Single-use disposable paper cup	→	Durable plastic cup
Plastic bottled water	→	Reusable silicone water bottle

The Cedar Lake Triathlon eliminated all disposable items provided to racers.



ReThink Disposable branded reusable cups.



Reusables used in one event.



Coolers with reusable silicone water bottles.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- 100% savings eliminating the purchasing of all disposable cups and bottles
- Around 600 disposable items reduced during the three zero-waste events

Bottom line: Approx. 600 disposable items reduced to zero waste 100% savings

LESSONS LEARNED

We started the first zero-waste triathlon series with 47 silicone water bottles and 249 reusable plastic cups. During that event, we lost 4 water bottles and 8 cups. ReThink Disposable ordered 100 more reusable cups in anticipation of a larger turnout for the next triathlon. During the second of the zero-waste series, we lost 7 water bottles and 10 cups. At the final triathlon, another 3 water bottles and 13 cups were not returned.

- 14 water bottles or 30% were not returned
- 31 cups or 9% were not returned

Announcements were made at the beginning of each event requesting participants return cups and bottles to the designated purple bins for reuse. No deposit was required to use the reusable items, and some loss was expected. The race was capped at 100 participants but did not include the additional number of family and friends who attended. The event was held at a public beach at Cedar Lake, therefore the water stations including the reusable silicone water bottles were accessible to anyone at the lake. Our New England Zero Waste Organizer attended all the events and surveyed the routes, ensuring no items were accidentally littered. A review was conducted of all trash and recycling bins, and no reusables were found. This report will determine that the loss of reusables was due to participants or attendees taking items with them. To encourage returns, we could consider numbering the silicone water bottles and holding a raffle. We could also offer participants the chance to purchase bottles they want to keep.

“Rethink Disposable’s innovative bottles and process seamlessly provide our triathletes with hydration on the go while eliminating the wasteful paper cups originally provided. Our participants were extremely impressed with the functionality and simplistic process, all while providing them with the peace of mind of being environmentally conscious.”

Josh MacNive
Health & Wellness Director
Valley Shore YMCA

We have worked with the Director of Operations and the CFO of Stamford Public Schools (SPS)
To make sure the city has a smooth transition

This ordinance will ensure that the healthy meals we provide are served on non-toxic,
reusable food ware — promoting a healthier future for our children while instilling a
lifelong habit of sustainability.



Stamford Public Schools

Comparing current single use items used, to equivalent item that is reusable.

Current Plastics

Type and Use	Case Size	Unit Cost	Additional Unit Cost	Annual Usage Each	Annual Cost
28oz Versa Container (used for classroom & outside meals)	150	\$0.385	108,000	\$41,630.40	
9" Sandwich Container	250	\$0.200		36,000	\$7,184.16
32oz Hinged Container (Catering)	200	\$0.286		28,800	\$8,244.00
Spork/Straw Kit (Utensil)	1000	\$0.036		2,800,000	\$100,268.00
9oz cup (smoothie/parfait)	1000	\$0.108		125,000	\$13,508.75
					total \$170,835.31

Stamford Public Schools

Comparing current items used to equivalent item that is reusable.

									Based on ordering 20,400 or 1.5x daily meals served (13,600)
	Disposable Used	Alternative Reusable							
	28oz Versa Container (used for classroom & outside meals)	Preserve 9"x6" Clamshell	48	\$1.450					\$29,580.00
Not necessarily needed, or need that many	9" Sandwich Container	Preserve 9"x6" Clamshell can be used for 9" sandwich	48	\$1.450					\$29,580.00
	32oz Hinged Container (Catering)	Preserve 9"x9" Clamshell	48	\$2.500					\$51,000.00
The utensils can be donated for free if the school is using plastic	Spork/Straw Kit (Utensil)	LibertyWare Fork	Bulk order price:	\$0.600					\$12,240.00
		LibertyWare Spoon	Bulk order price:	\$0.530					\$10,812.00
	9oz cup (smoothie/parfait)	Reusable Clear 8oz cup	225+	\$0.620					\$12,648.00
		Reusable Clear 8oz cup lid	700+	\$0.250					\$5,100.00
								Total	\$150,960.00
								Total Minus Donated Utensils	\$127,908.00

Conservative estimate of savings
\$42,927 first year plus hauling cost savings

Disposable
Items used
in the SPS
system.
Imagine
how much
waste we
could
eliminate
and how
much
money we
could save!

We serve over 2 million meals per year



Clearwater has already pledged the flatware as a donation to SPS. They have also pledged educational services. They are working with SPS at our request to evaluate and make recommendations

To eliminate loss rates, ReThink Disposable works to educate students with sorting stations. We have seen a very low, if any at all, loss when implementing a sorting station that has a utensil bin at the beginning. What we know is that reusable programs work best alongside compost, recycling, and liquid bin sorting stations etc. A successful sorting station would look like:

- 1.share table
- 2.utensil collection bin
- 3.liquid pour off bucket
- 4.Recycling
- 5.trash
- 6.compost
- 7.return of reusable trays

There are reusable alternatives to each of the items mentioned below. Each school is different so a site visit would be best to help tailor recommended practices to the school(s)

Please let me know if if you would like to set up a call with the school administration.

Clearwater

**Informational Meeting Regarding the Single-Use Plastics Ordinance
Westport Connecticut**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uhLbdNdVRE&feature=youtu.be>



[Link to video below](#)

[Is Recycling Worth It Anymore? The Truth Is Complicated.](#)

A. Ban black plastic, plastic that is not recyclable and discourage plastic that is unlikely to be recycled. example 3,4,6,7 I believe the board already banned 6

Allow plastics #1,2,and 5 ONLY when there is no suitable replacement for an item. Example a soup container

*The black plastic items that you find everywhere contain toxic **brominated flame retardants**, otherwise known as BFRs. And these BFRs are not your BFFs as they've been linked to cancer, nervous system problems, endocrine disruption and reproductive and development issues. They have no place in our society.



Connecticut is facing a serious waste management challenge: the state has run out of landfill space for its garbage. As a result, Governor Lamont has called on lawmakers to act.

Currently, the City of Stamford and the State of Connecticut spend a significant amount of money hauling recyclables, yet most of those items never actually get recycled. This inefficient system places a financial burden on the city and the state while failing to achieve meaningful environmental benefits.

By contrast, composting presents a valuable opportunity. Compostable materials not only reduce landfill waste but can also generate revenue and contribute to the overall well-being of our city and state. By encouraging compostables in this ordinance we hope to see a future where residents separate their compostables for collection, Stamford and Connecticut improve waste management practices, reduce costs, and promote environmental health.

We hope this ordinance will inspire the city and state to rethink their hauling practices—focusing recycling efforts on high-probability items while continuing to expand compost.

Thank you for supporting this important issue. In tandem with this ordinance, we are working on a resolution to the State legislature to adopt these practices and hopefully many others.