



# SINGLE USE ITEM STRATEGY

---

WORKSHOP CONSULTATION SUMMARY  
October 28, 2016



# CONTENTS

---

<b>Overview</b> .....	1
<b>Workshop Summary</b> .....	2
<b>What We Heard</b> .....	3
■ Themes .....	3
■ Vision .....	4
■ Single Use Items .....	5
<b>Workshop Participants</b> .....	7

# OVERVIEW

In 2010, the Greenest City Action Plan identified several priority action items in support of the City's Zero Waste goal, including a commitment to explore new requirements that would target commonly disposed and difficult to recycle materials. The City is developing a Single Use Item Strategy that will explore opportunities to address the distribution, use and recycling of commonly disposed items designed for single use, such as disposable hot and cold beverage cups, plastic and paper carry bags, and expanded polystyrene (EPS) and other take-out food containers.



# WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Residents, businesses, non-profit organizations and other levels of government were invited to a workshop to provide expertise and input on single use item waste. The input received from this workshop will be used alongside technical research and further stakeholder consultation and public engagement to inform the development of a Single Use Item Strategy.

**Date:** October 28, 2016

**Participants:** 67

**Topics:** Single use item waste related to expanded polystyrene (EPS) and other take-out food containers, hot and cold beverage cups, paper and plastic bags.

The Single Use Item workshop was hosted as part of the broader Zero Waste 2040 Strategy workshop series. To view the Zero Waste 2040 workshop consultation summary, visit [vancouver.ca/zerowaste](http://vancouver.ca/zerowaste).

## Purpose

The purpose of the Single Use Item workshop was to:

- Inform participants of planning to reduce single use items waste
- Establish a shared understanding of the current state of single use item waste
- Develop a high level vision for reducing single use item waste
- Identify potential approaches and actions to achieve a reduction in single use item waste
- Identify the challenges and brainstorm solutions
- Invite participants to take a role in future initiatives that will help Vancouver become a zero waste community

## Approach

The workshop was designed around a “now, wow, how” planning framework blended with systems thinking methods. The approach and activities in the workshop focused on:

1. Systems Mapping: What is the current state of single use item waste generated in Vancouver?
2. Visioning: What could Vancouver look like with zero waste from single use items?
3. Action Planning: What approaches, City and/or community led, can we take to reduce waste from single use items?
4. Challenges & Solutions: What are the main challenges and solutions associated with the key approaches to achieving a reduction in single use item waste?

## INSIDE LOOK: SYSTEMS MAPPING

To spark discussion and thinking about reducing and eliminating single use item waste from landfill and incinerator, workshop participants drew a system map of key single use items: carry bags (paper and plastic), take-out containers (EPS and other) and beverage cups (hot and cold cups). The system map included the life cycle of the item, from cradle to cradle, including the sources of solid waste, the players in the system and levers for change. This activity allowed participants to better understand the current state of single use item waste before visioning and planning for a zero waste future.



# WHAT WE HEARD



At the Single Use Item Workshop, we heard healthy debate and discussion on many topics. Participants discussed the current state of single use item waste, a vision of what Vancouver could look like as a community with zero waste from single use items, brainstormed City and community-led approaches to reducing and eliminating waste from a given single use item, developed action plans for how to proceed over the short term and identified the “most important and effective” approaches. Participants were then asked to analyze key approaches identified by the City and other participants, by identifying possible challenges and recommending related solutions. Overall, six themes emerged from participant ideas, comments and input.

## **1. TAKE A COLLABORATIVE SYSTEMS-WIDE APPROACH**

Reducing single use item waste, similar to achieving zero waste, is complex. It involves change through multiple layers of stakeholders, across organizational boundaries, and is beyond the ability of any one organization to effectively address it by themselves. Addressing waste from single use items requires total systems change, and collaboration between players acting locally and effecting change globally. Participants told us that achieving zero waste from single use items needs a collaborative approach, engaging with and building on the capacity of businesses and organizations to collectively address and solve the production, use and disposal of disposable items designed for single use.

## **2. FOSTER A ZERO WASTE CULTURE**

Vancouver is defined by its residents and their diversity, values, norms, lifestyles and ability to adapt, look forward, and be involved in shaping the city. Participants recognized the importance of cultural values, norms and lifestyles as both barriers to and opportunities for reducing and eliminating single use item waste. Participants told us that becoming a zero waste community will need communities to be more considerate of their impacts and shift away from disposable consumerism to a “lighter footprint” culture.

## **3. TRANSITION TO A STRONG CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

Transitioning to the circular economy may be one of the biggest opportunities for re-shaping how we organize production and consumption and reduce or eliminate single use item waste. The circular economy represents a new way of looking at the relationships between policy, markets, people and resources. Participants identified the need for local circular economy opportunities to address single use items, including treating single use item waste as a resource. The importance of enabling processes that design items to have longer lifespans, to be reusable and recyclable, to be kept at their highest utility, and to consider social equity, affordability, accessibility and convenience in the development and distribution of circular items and affiliated services was also identified.

## **4. FOSTER INNOVATION**

Zero waste is a philosophy, visionary goal and also an innovation. Participants recognized the need to foster disruptive innovations as a means and an end to enabling unconventional solutions to addressing single use items, including innovative policies, models, services, infrastructure, and technology. Participants told us to support innovation that makes avoiding, conserving and recovering single use items easy and convenient.

## 5. SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE & TECHNOLOGY

Participants recognized the need for public and private infrastructure and technology to support government, institutions and businesses in reducing and eliminating single use item waste and for members of the public to be able to access that infrastructure and technology.

## 6. DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE AND ENABLING POLICY & REGULATION

Governments have an important role to play in the shift towards zero waste. Participants expressed the need for government policy and regulation to be streamlined and harmonized across governments, to support the transition to zero waste and local circular economies, and to balance the protection of the environment while enhancing human health and safety.



---

## VISION

Participants were asked to envision what Vancouver could look like with zero waste from single use items. Participants provided over 40 ideas, visions and aspirations that were Vancouver specific or broader. Examples of feedback gathered throughout the visioning exercise are below.

- City-wide programs and services support the reduction of single use item waste
- People are empowered to shop differently, to consume and waste less and use reusable materials
- The public and business community are engaged and empowered to be part of product sharing
- Free, accessible and simple zero waste options replace "single use items"
- Renewable, recyclable or biodegradable materials are used in consecutive lifecycles by manufacturers
- When necessary, single use items are only composed of valuable recyclable or compostable material
- A sharing economy exists for food/drink cups and carry items with involvement from the whole city
- The Province expands Extended Producer Responsibility programs to all single use items with proper incentives to foster sustainable behavior change
- Local policies require industry players to account for their solid waste impact
- Provincial, regional and local policies enable all products to be reusable/repackaged, traced and returned to the company at the end of its life
- Local policies eliminate polystyrene and low-grade plastics
- Transparent messaging on composition of single use products and single use item waste is publicly available
- Single use items are clearly marked with the reuse (if possible) and recycling stream in which they belong
- Consumers understand how and where to dispose/recycle an item and the implications of that decision

## CURRENT STATE OF SINGLE USE ITEM WASTE IN VANCOUVER

Single use, disposable items, such as hot and cold beverage cups, paper and plastic carry bags, and take-out food packaging are commonplace in our fast-paced, on-the-go society. With the launch of the RecycleBC (formerly Multi-Material BC) residential recycling program on May 19, 2014, Vancouver’s recycling program expanded to include a few of these single use disposable items. Disposable coffee cups can be recycled through the residential collection program, while plastic bags and expanded polystyrene packaging can be recycled at depots. Some retailers have also developed take-back programs for some single use items. Nevertheless, outside of the home a significant amount of these recyclable materials are disposed as garbage or end up as litter.

### Coffee Cup Waste:

An estimated 2.6 million coffee cups (polycoat paper cups) are disposed as garbage each week in Vancouver. The pie chart to the right represents the amount of coffee cup waste from single family homes, multi-family homes and industry.

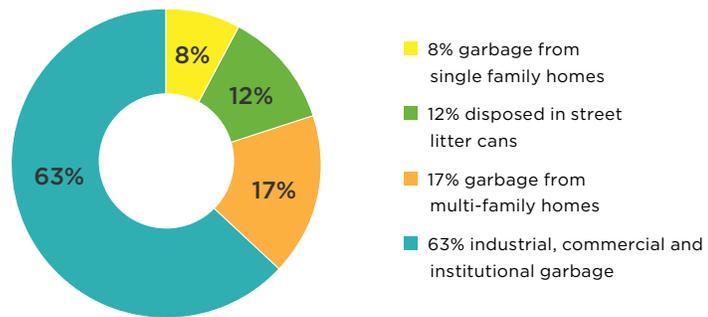


Figure 1: coffee cup waste divided by source of disposal.

### Plastic Bag Waste:

It’s estimated that over 2 million plastic shopping bags are disposed in the garbage each week in Vancouver. The pie chart to the right represents the amount of plastic bag waste from single family homes, multi-family homes and industry.

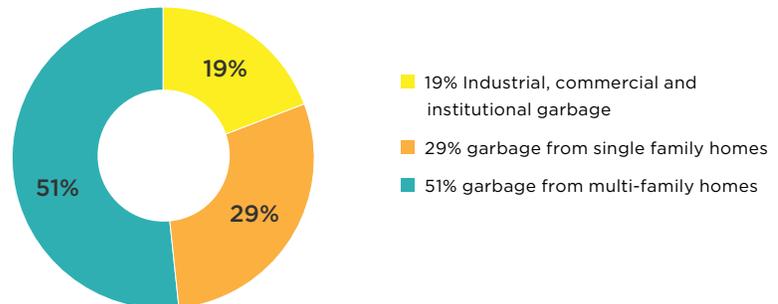


Figure 2: plastic bag waste divided by source of disposal. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### Litter from Single Use Items:

Waste from single use items can have a significant impact on our city and the surrounding marine environment as litter. In Vancouver, 44 per cent of large litter is single use items. The pie chart to the right shows what percentage of different single use items appear as litter on Vancouver streets.

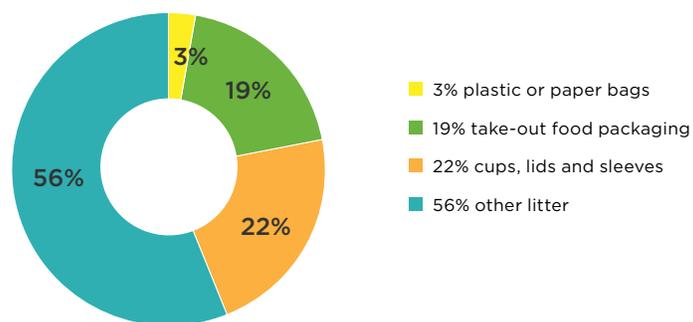


Figure 3: breakdown of litter from single-use items.

## CURRENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES TO REDUCE SINGLE USE ITEM WASTE

Many initiatives are currently underway to reduce single use item waste in Vancouver. A few examples are:

- Plastic bag and polystyrene foam recycling through RecycleBC at the City of Vancouver depot, other private depots, and some retailers
- “A Plastic Ocean” documentary about plastics in the ocean
- Joint business/academic research on compostable materials between UBC and Biodegradable Solutions
- UBC Food Service Ware Procurement Guidelines
- Additional fees for single-use containers at some restaurants, coffee shops
- Fees for shopping bags at some retailers/grocers
- Some restaurants, businesses and institutions are choosing to not use EPS and/or disposable plastic containers
- Package-free grocery and personal products store

## POTENTIAL APPROACHES TO REDUCE SINGLE USE ITEM WASTE

The following approaches were identified by participants and the City as potential ways to reduce and ultimately eliminate single use item waste:

- Disposal bans
- Distribution bans
- Bans on non-recyclable materials in single use items
- Financial incentives/disincentives
- Reusable dishware for retailers with in-store seating
- Corporate/consumer social marketing and education
- Corporate education and training
- In-store take-back recycling programs
- Recycled content and or/recyclability
- Deposit program, voluntary or required
- Improved item labeling and recycling instructions
- City-wide reusable dishware sharing program
- Improved single use item collection and recycling services for Industry, Commercial and Institutional sector

## KEY CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

### Challenges

Participants identified a number of challenges associated with the implementation of potential approaches. These challenges highlight areas that need to be considered for successful implementation of actions. Despite the wide range of approaches analyzed by the groups, there was consistency with the challenges identified; the only exception being the three challenges almost exclusively related to educational approaches.

- The system is very complex with many different factors that need to be identified and considered
- Resistance from public and industry
- Enforcement costs and effectiveness
- High costs for program delivery
- Feasibility of alternative products and systems
- Larger scale factors make local action difficult (e.g. Provincial, Federal, and international levels)
- Lack of awareness / low profile issue
- Confusion
- Higher level of effort required / people and businesses are used to just disposing of things
- Education Specific Challenges:
  - Lack of consistent, strong message
  - Scope is not clearly defined
  - Messaging has to meet diverse needs

### Opportunities

Participants identified a number of solutions to the challenges listed above, again, to be considered for successful implementation of actions.

- Improve public and industry knowledge (education, labeling, certification)
- Staged approach with incentives
- Innovative program models
- Work with major players at various scales to ensure success
- Consistent training/educational materials
- Innovative program funding model
- Target wide audiences
- Be consistent and fair
- Involve players across the entire chain from producer to disposal
- Leadership

## NEXT STEPS

In the year ahead, the City will continue to explore opportunities to reduce waste from items designed for single use, such as disposable hot and cold beverage cups, plastic and paper carry bags, and expanded polystyrene (EPS) and other take-out containers. The City plans to review lessons learned, best practices and opportunities from other municipalities around the world who have also looked at ways to effectively deal with single use, difficult to recycle items.

Though we can learn from other cities, creating an effective strategy to address single use item waste in Vancouver will require comprehensive input from local businesses, organizations, other levels of government and residents. To get involved with the City's Single Use Item Strategy stakeholder consultation or public engagement activities, visit [vancouver.ca/zerowaste](http://vancouver.ca/zerowaste).

---

# WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Over 60 organizations and people participated in the Single Use Item Workshop. Here is a list of organizations who had a representative present at the workshop. There were also other members of the public in attendance.

500 Foods Corporation	Fuud	Recycle Smart Solutions
Adaptation to Climate Change Team (Act) SFU	heroX	Recycling Council of British Columbia
Ara Mental Health	Hua Foundation	Restaurants Canada
BC Bottle and Recycling Depot	Home on the Range Organics	Retail Council of Canada
BC Housing	Left Coast Naturals	RISE Kombucha
BC Place Stadium	London Drugs Ltd.	Self Employed
BSI Biodegradable Solutions	Lunapads International	Simon Fraser University
Buy Low Foods & Associated Grocers	Metro Vancouver	SPEC
Cascades Recovery Inc.	Mountain Equipment Co-Op	Tetra Tech
ChopSwap	Mount Pleasant Business Improvement Association	The Binnars Project
CleanStart	Recycle BC	The Handle Handle
Deloitte Canada	Nadatodo Communications Inc.	Tourism Vancouver
Emterra	Open Door Group	Union Gospel Mission
Encorp Pacific Canada	Panago Pizza	University of British Columbia
Ethical Bean	Plastic Oceans Foundation	University of British Columbia - Botanical Garden
Foam Only	Potluck Café Society	Vancouver Coastal Health
Fraser Health Authority	Product Care	