

## Talking Points and Pivots (Counterpoints)

### TOP-LEVEL TALKING POINTS

The Disposable-Free Dining ordinance seeks to empower and encourage businesses and customers to dramatically reduce single-use disposable foodware. Businesses share many concerns with customers about disposables, and yet over 2/3 of businesses surveyed use either a mix of consumables and disposables or all disposables for their food service. The proposed ordinance will promote reuse of durable foodware and create a fair and level playing field and share the cost of improved disposables with consumers.

**Disposable foodware is the largest component of street litter, which is costly to manage.** Cities and business districts spend millions each year to for litter pickup, street cleaning, and litter disposal. Berkeley is currently considering a \$2.5M fee increase to pay for its clean stormwater program. Last year alone, the Telegraph Business Improvement District's ambassadors picked up over 22 tons of litter.

**Street litter ends up in our waterways and ocean, contaminating our water and food supply.**

**This Ordinance will be good for business and good for customers.**

Most businesses will end up saving money -- average has been estimated to range between \$5,000 to tens of thousands of dollars -- and improving customer experience. Rethink Disposable has worked with dozens of food service businesses of all sizes across the bay helping them switch to reusable foodware. Every one of them has saved thousands of dollars even after accounting for additional labor and initial investments, some have saved tens of thousands. And the dining experience is greatly improved.

**Most disposable foodware has no value in recycling markets.**

We have to pay to have it taken away to uncertain destinations, where it's may end up dumped or burned in Asia. Plastic cups and containers weigh very little, are bulky and often contaminated with food or beverages, are very costly to sort, and have very low value. With China's recent ban on plastic scrap imports the market has completely fallen apart and recyclers now have to pay to get rid of this stuff. Berkeley is currently paying \$35 per ton to export this material to new markets in Southeast Asia. This creates a

perverse incentive for it to be disposed of in problematic ways, like burning it in cement kilns or cherry picking the more valuable items and dumping the rest.

**Single-use disposable foodware is bad for human health.** (PFAS, phthalates, bioaccumulation, etc.)

**Many businesses in Berkeley already implement these practices. They know the customer base wants it. It reflects Berkeley's environmental values.**

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**PUSHBACK POINTS (to practice pivots back to talking points)**

**Why Don't you just focus on more clean up?**

Reply: Every year, more plastic waste is created. More enters the streets and oceans. Only a fraction of it gets recycled. Even less is being recycled because most of it has no value. The problem has far exceeded our ability to clean it up. Even our existing insufficient cleanup strategies are extremely costly to taxpayers.

**Ordinance will be too costly / burdensome on small businesses.**

Reply: Most businesses will actually save money by making these changes. Clean Water Action's Rethink Disposables program helps businesses make these changes, and they have consistently seen cost savings by moving to reusables. (Fact sheet) Also, the businesses get to keep the \$0.25 charge for each cup and container.

**Ordinance will increase the cost of food, and therefore punish poor people. Raise the already high cost of living in Berkeley.**

Reply: Dining in or bringing your own reusables for takeout is free. There are real costs to taxpayers and the environment associated with disposable foodware, and the charge helps to offset those costs. The Charge is designed to help remind people to bring their own reusable cup or container, and to help businesses offset the high cost of disposable foodware. With revenue from the charges, business will also be able to lower prices for dine-in and bring-your-own customers.

**Many businesses won't have space on site to accommodate dishwashing.**

Reply: Experience in the field shows that it is not as difficult as business owners expect, and that it pays for itself very quickly. Every food businesses that prepares food on-site already has to have dishwashing and sanitizing capacity. If they truly can not do it for space reasons they can apply for an exemption.

**Won't this make people sick? Is it safe?**

Reply: People have been bringing reusable cups and containers for refill for many years without any reports of health impacts. The state health code allows businesses to refill customers' containers. Local businesses will receive guidance from the local health department on how to ensure they refill cups and containers safely.