CITY OF BEND

City Hall
710 NW Wall Street
Bend, OR 97703

MEMORANDUM

To: Environment and Climate Committee
From: Cassie Lacy, Senior Management Analyst
Date: November 2, 2026
Re: Reuseable Foodware Policy Options

Reuseable Foodware Policy Options

A working group of Environment and Climate Committee (ECC) members has been gathering information about different policy initiatives the City may consider to encourage the use of reuseable foodware in on-premises and takeout dining, as well as special events. The ECC received presentations from nonprofit groups The Story of Stuff and Upstream in their May and June 2026 meetings, respectively. As a result of these presentations and subsequent research of the working group members, the following seven policy initiatives are under consideration for the ECC to recommend to the City Council that the City pursue.

The Materials and Waste Working Group met on October 19, 2027 is for members to discuss and evaluate these potential policy options and develop a recommendation for which options the ECC should forward to the City Council. At the ECC meeting on November 12, the Working Group will share the main takeaways from their October meeting and get additional feedback from the full committee regarding level of interest in pursuing the various policy initiatives.

The seven policy initiatives include:

1. **Reuse for onsite or on-premises dining**

This policy requires food service establishments that provide onsite dining areas to serve food and beverages in reuseable foodware, rather than disposable. In areas where these policies have been adopted, "on-premises dining" is defined by the presence of tables, seats, or dining areas, including non-seated picnic areas. Food service establishments are required to ask patrons if food is "for here" or "to-go," and serve the dishes on reuseable dishware when patrons are dining in.

Many food service establishments that provide onsite dining, such as full-service restaurants, already serve food in reuseable containers and have dishwashing facilities on site. This policy would not substantially change operations for such establishments. Establishments that offer on-premises dining, but often use more disposable items, include fast food, fast-casual, food truck lots, and others. Each of these food service types would likely experience different kinds of impacts to their operations, and a policy that regulates on-premises dining would need

careful consideration and engagement from these different establishment types to determine appropriate compliance pathways and timelines.

Several dozen jurisdictions (cities and counties) have enacted policies that require reusables only for on-premises dining, particularly in California. These policies vary in some of their details, including whether fast food restaurants and/or food truck lots are exempt or not.

A new initiative in Bend, led by the Environmental Center, is launching this fall to provide reuseable dishware for food truck lots and some other establishments that do not have the infrastructure to keep and wash reuseable dishes, and could potentially be scaled in the future if the City were to pursue this policy. As part of this initiative, the Environmental Center is also coordinating a central dish hub and dishwashing service, which could be used by establishments subject to a policy like this that do not have dishwashing capabilities.

2. Customer-Provided Reusables Must be Accepted by Foodservice Operator

This policy requires food service establishments to accept customer-provided reuseable cups and food containers for takeout orders when the containers are safe and suitable for use. This would allow customers to bring in their own cups or take-home containers and ask the restaurant to fill them, rather than using the restaurant-provided disposable take-out containers. Restaurants are generally allowed to refuse a cup or container if it is not the right size, cracked or broken, or appears unsanitary.

Between 10 and 25 jurisdictions, primarily in California, currently have policies like this in place.

3. Accessories Only Available Upon Request, aka “Skip the Stuff”

This policy requires restaurants and delivery services to provide disposable accessories, like silverware, only when the customer specifically requests them, to reduce the amount of accessories that go to waste. It shifts the default practice to not providing these accessories. Some policies also prohibit the bundling of the accessories, and require restaurants only provide the needed accessory. Online ordering systems and third-party delivery platforms must provided customer selection options to indicate whether or not they need accessories.

Many jurisdictions have “Skip the Stuff” policies, including three statewide laws (California, Washington, and New Jersey), and over 60 city governments, including the City of Portland. Because of this significant precedent, including a city in Oregon, this policy is considered one of the most feasible to adopt.

4. Returnable Reuseable Option for To-Go food

This policy requires restaurants to offer an option to take to-go food in a reuseable container that could be returned at a later date. The restaurant would wash and maintain the reuseable to-go containers in-house. This policy has a potential significant impact on existing businesses, and it would require businesses to obtain and maintain an additional dishware type, which

could potentially be costly for the restaurant. Some communities have programs where many restaurants use the same reuseable to-go container, and patrons are allowed to return the to-go container at any participating location. These community-wide programs can reduce the cost burden to the individual restaurants by allowing them to offer the to-go containers through a communal system, rather than purchasing containers specific to their restaurant. The aforementioned reusable foodware initiative by the Environmental Center is also providing such a returnable reusable option, and could also potentially be scaled in the future if the City were to pursue this policy.

No cities in the United States are known to have a policy that requires a returnable reuseable option for to-go food, so potential challenges are less understood for this policy.

5. Disposable Cup and Container Charge

This policy initiative would impose a charge on disposable cups and containers, which could be assessed either per individual container or as a single charge per transaction. This type of policy could function as a standalone measure or be implemented in conjunction with a requirement for returnable, reusable to-go containers. Pairing the charge with a returnable, reusable container policy is generally seen as preferable, as it provides customers with an option to avoid paying extra for a disposable container, helping to mitigate equity concerns. As a standalone policy, the charge would serve as a signal and modest disincentive, with the goal of reminding and encouraging customers to bring reusable containers when possible. Revenue from the cup and container charge would be retained by the business and could be used to offset the costs of providing a reusable alternative.

6. Reuseable Foodware Required at Special Events

This policy would either require that special events offer as an option or solely offer reuseable foodware, rather than disposable foodware. Special events typically do not have dishwashing capabilities, so food is typically served in to-go containers and would require a reuseable to-go container and dishwashing service that events could use, such as those that will be offered through the Environmental Center initiative.

7. Reusable Foodware Required at City Facilities and Events

This policy would be internal to the City of Bend organization and require that foodware served at City of Bend facilities and at City events use reuseable dishware and silverware. This would mostly affect public City Council and Committee meetings, and any large internal staff meetings where food is served.