

Zero Waste Events Planning Guide



Are You Planning an Event or Activity? Put sustainability into action by looking for ways to reduce waste. This flyer provides information on how to create a zero waste event. The goal is to reduce waste to the greatest extent possible.

Where to Start

- Event planning is key to creating a successful zero waste event. Identify areas where you can reduce or eliminate waste and then set goals for yourself.
- Be creative and have fun.
- Develop strategies you can use long-term.
- Communicate your goals to organizers and participants.
- Success is a team effort.

Food at Your Event

- Forecast the head count to avoid food waste. Use RSVPs or registration to assist in forecasting.
- Use finger foods and serve food buffet-style.
- Use washable tableware, cups, flatware and linens, or compostable dishware.
- Provide incentives for attendees to bring reusable items (mugs, utensils, etc.).
- Seek caterers that can maximize the use of local, seasonal, and organic food and use only recyclable packaging and as little as possible.



Collecting Recyclables at the Event

- Place several recycling containers strategically at the event.
- Clearly mark containers with large, reusable signs and place small, reusable signs on each table.
- Determine where and how materials will be recycled (i.e., if food waste is collected, where will it be composted, and how will you get it there).
- Develop plans for collecting bottles, cans, food waste, and recyclable paper.
- Buy in bulk, to cut down on packaging and cost.

Event Advertising Tips

- Use electronic media (website, email, electronic newsletters) for publicizing the event.
- Offer electronic registration or confirmation.
- Use flyers sparsely and strategically; for example, where people congregate (like food lines).
- Design signs that are timeless so that you can reuse them at your next event or use recyclable signs.



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Decorations & Handouts

- Avoid mass distribution of handouts (printed material). Instead, consider making the printed material or presentation available electronically.
- Print double-sided.
- Avoid lamination unless you can reuse the publication next time.
- Keep decorations to a minimum.
- Use real plates, napkins and tablecloths. They will add class to your event and be a great decoration element.
- Use decorations that can be recycled or reused.
- Provide and later collect reusable name badges.



Awards & Gifts

- Consider the environmental impact of prizes and their packaging.
- Give resource or energy efficient products.
- Give items that are usable, such as cloth bags, native plant seeds and potted plants.
- Select products made from recycled materials.



Dispose of Waste After the Event

- Assign volunteers to be in charge of collecting waste after the event.
- Donate leftover food to a local shelter or food bank.
- Put food scraps and food-soiled paper in your curbside organics bin, or take to a local composter.



What a success! Michael Mucha, Public Works Director, and Steve Hall, City Manager, show the minimal amount of garbage that was generated by over 350 participants at a zero waste event.

Celebrate and Share Your Success

- Bring a scale so you can weigh your recyclables and garbage; it will help “tell your story.”
- Take photographs at the event that demonstrate results.
- Create a report to document your success.
- Communicate your results with participants.
- Share the results at your next zero waste function.



For More Information

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Creating opportunities to eliminate waste.