



## Buyers want less plastic, more sellers respond

Everyone knows plastic is trashing the planet, but surprise, surprise, consumers are fighting back, and brands and their packaging companies are starting to respond.

Apple replaced plastic shopping bags at its retail stores with paper bags made mostly of recycled fiber. Lush, which sells bath soaps and other personal-care products, says 65 percent of its offerings are sold without plastic. Orders of home delivery boxes containing fresh produce with no plastic are on the increase.

Such changes are driven by consumer purchasing decisions. People concerned about environmental problems caused by plastic pollution have long favored metal water bottles, canvas carry bags, and reusable food containers. Now shoppers want more ways to avoid plastic packaging and are opting for “plastic-free” when making purchasing decisions.

**“I am slowly changing my consumer habits to shrink my footprint, and part of that is buying less and less plastic,” says Bernal Heights resident Vanna Negron, an aspiring film and visual effects editor. “Simple changes, like using bar soap rather than bottled soap, and other steps, can lead to a big difference.”**

Vanna and thousands of other San Franciscans shop at the many farmers’ markets in the city. In addition to offering top-quality produce, these open-air markets present numerous opportunities to buy food and other products with no packaging.

With COVID-19 surging in California, people are once again sheltering at home and buying online, where it’s



**Vanna Negron of Bernal Heights shops locally and is always on the lookout for items without plastic packaging.**

easy to add plastic-free purchases to checkout baskets. One such product is laundry soap strips packaged in a paper sleeve. This solution takes plastic detergent bottles out of the equation. Two companies that sell laundry strips online are Earth Breeze and Tru Earth.

What are some other steps we can all take to reduce our consumption of single-use plastic?

We are all encouraged to make reusable water bottles, tote bags, food containers, and reusable utensils part of our daily routine.

When shopping, we can choose food and other products with no packaging or items packaged in one type of material that can be easily recycled.

And we can look in our trash bins

and ask: What plastic items do we routinely use? The answer could lead to simple choices that cut our plastic consumption.

The reasons for all of us to purchase less plastic grow more numerous every day. Plastics pollute our oceans and impact wildlife. Researchers are finding microplastics in rainwater and snow. New data shows disposable cups release more microplastics into hot beverages than previously realized.

Say no to plastic, especially single-use plastics. Sending that powerful message with your consumer dollars will inspire more companies to eliminate packaging whenever possible and to use recyclable materials (aluminum, glass, and paper) when packaging is necessary.

## Quick tips for leading a greener life

Let’s make 2021 the year we all strive to reduce waste and recycle more. The key is embracing good green habits.

In the past year of COVID, working from home, and sheltering in place, many have learned to grow veggies and make things from scratch — pickles, jams, sourdough bread, even personal beauty products.

Here are some other simple ways to reuse, reduce, and recycle:

- Take a metal water bottle and canvas carry bag whenever you leave home.
- When possible, utilize other zero waste tools such as a travel mug, reusable food containers, and reusable utensils.
- Empty soda cans and shake out food containers to protect against liquids and food spoiling recycled paper.
- If you are new to curbside composting, start small and compost your coffee grounds. But don’t be shy, the green bin can handle all food scraps and yard trimmings.



# The City Can Man's secret sauce — positive attitude

**N**ame something that numbers 3,000 in San Francisco, serves commercial blocks, tourist areas, and parks, and goes mostly unnoticed until you need one. The answer is public litter bins, called "City Cans" by those who empty them.

Recology driver Frank Hansen is one of those people. Frank's job is physically and mentally demanding, and it is key to helping keep San Francisco clean.

"Every day, I go out there and get dirty and do my thing," said Frank as he tipped a full bin into his collection truck. Frank lives in Hayes Valley and likes knowing he makes a positive

**Recology drivers service 3,000 public litter cans at least once a day. In the busiest areas, where cans fill up quickly, we empty them two or three times a day.**

difference in his hometown. "That's my personality. That's what I like to do."

Frank is on the job six days a week. His route includes United Nation's Plaza, the Civic Center, and the Tenderloin. In April, Frank will mark 20 years as a Recology driver.

He must navigate San Francisco traffic, continually looking out for pedestrians and cyclists, cars pulling out from the curb, and vehicles approaching from behind. If Muni

buses and other traffic need to get by, Frank can't block them.

He must consider all these factors before ever emptying a can. Finding a spot to stop a large collection truck in San Francisco is not the easiest thing to do, especially in commercial areas. Frank does it 200 times a day, rain or shine.

"I'm thinking ahead two minutes," he said. "If there is no bus coming, I have time. If I see a bus or police or fire action, I have to immediately look for a place to pull over."

The bins mostly contain trash people discard when walking on sidewalks or waiting for buses. Think potato chip bags and disposable coffee cups and lids. But sometimes there are unpleasant surprises. Please don't leave your plastic bag of dog poo on top of a City Can for Frank to handle. Toss it in the bin.

Frank and his fellow Recology employee-owners service all the public litter cans in San Francisco at least once a day. In the busiest areas, where cans fill up quickly, we empty them two or three times a day.

If you see an overflowing City Can, please call 311 or use the 311 App and we'll respond as quickly as possible.

Recology drivers also must keep a keen eye out for potentially serious health hazards, such as used needles and broken glass. People should never put syringes or other sharp objects in litter receptacles, but, unfortunately, it happens.

Through it all, including the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and other



**Frank Hansen empties public litter cans on San Francisco sidewalks.**

viruses, Frank brings an upbeat outlook to his job.

"My family brought me up to use positive energy," he said. "I love working outdoors. I know a lot of people in the neighborhood, and I like seeing them."

Many people, even those Frank doesn't know, appreciate the work he does. While working his route recently, passersby gave Frank cheers of thanks and applause as he emptied a can and returned it to the sidewalk.

Frank smiled and waved back. Then he jumped in his truck and looked for cars, cyclists, and pedestrians, and checked his mirrors.

"You have to look out for all those things every single time," he said.

## We can help clear your clutter



### Have extra cardboard after the holidays?

Send an email to [CustomerService@RecologySF.com](mailto:CustomerService@RecologySF.com) and we'll notify your driver.



### Need large items hauled away?

SF residents can schedule a Bulky Item Recycling pickup on our website [Recology.com](http://Recology.com) or by using the Recology App.

View our newsletter online in English, Spanish, and Chinese at [Recology.com/sfnewsletter](http://Recology.com/sfnewsletter).

Vea nuestro boletín informativo en inglés, español y chino en [Recology.com/sfnewsletter](http://Recology.com/sfnewsletter).

欲線上以英文、西班牙文與中文閱讀我們的電子報，請至 [Recology.com/sfnewsletter](http://Recology.com/sfnewsletter)。



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