



# Philly Unwrapped

A project to reduce single-use packaging and waste in Greater Philadelphia's Food Sector

## Our Why

The purpose of Philly Unwrapped is to empower local food businesses to embrace sustainable packaging by providing accessible resources, fostering equitable engagement, and championing community-driven policy and funding initiatives. Our ultimate goal is to promote reuse and circularity, educating businesses on the long-term economic and environmental benefits of sustainable practices. We aim to advocate for local policy solutions that incentivize sustainability rather than punish businesses, ensuring a supportive environment for those transitioning to more sustainable packaging. Additionally, we seek to leverage federal funding through the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) and [Inflation Reduction Act](#) to support the businesses that need it most to adopt these practices. By combining education, advocacy, and financial support, Philly Unwrapped is dedicated to creating a resilient, sustainable future for Philadelphia's food sector.

According to the United Nations, 36% of all plastics produced are a result of food and beverage packaging, with as much as 85% of plastics ending up as litter in our streets, landfills, incinerators, and waterways<sup>1</sup>. The overconsumption of single-use plastic is a growing environmental and public health crisis that touches nearly every aspect of our lives.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unep.org/interactives/beat-plastic-pollution/>



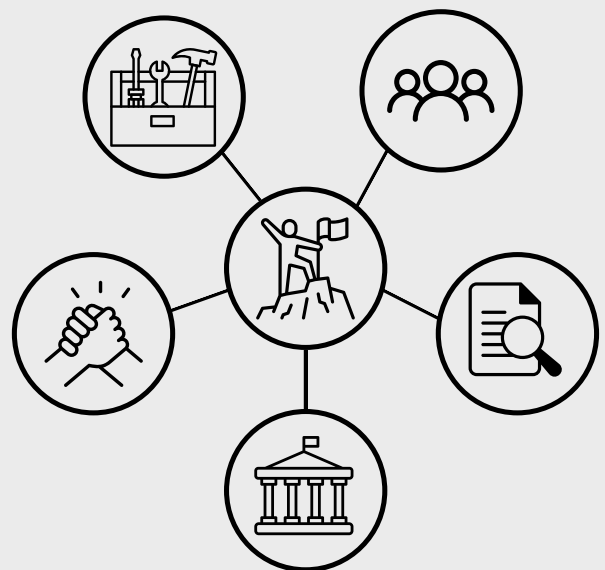
# Project Overview

For many small businesses, disposable materials have become ubiquitous in daily operations and an increasingly burdensome weight on profit margins. We are at a pivotal point where the business community is looking for ways to respond to the mounting threats of climate change by adopting more sustainable practices. State and local governments have passed legislation banning certain single-use plastics. While good-intentioned, these measures often have disproportionate, damaging impacts on small, diverse businesses that struggle to bear the costs of eliminating single-use material from their operations.

In early 2023, the [Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia](#), [ECHO Systems](#), and our partners came together to host a series of panel discussions around the issue of single-use plastic waste to better understand how our community can come together to envision a more sustainable and equitable plastic-free future. We heard from dozens of local food sector businesses about their sustainability journeys and their challenges in reducing their reliance on single-use plastics. The feedback we received from these discussions sparked the development of a sustainable packaging toolkit for businesses and launched an ongoing process to engage, educate, and advocate for our communities around this issue. Through this project, we intend to build accessible, comprehensive resources and support systems that reflect the needs and interests of our diverse local food businesses, driving a collective movement toward a sustainable future. Together, we are forging a path toward a greener, more resilient Greater Philadelphia region.

## Our Process

Our process includes a five-pronged approach to reducing our dependence on single-use plastics in the Philadelphia region and supporting local food businesses in their packaging transition. By bringing together business owners, government leaders, community partners, and other key stakeholders at all stages of the process, we can better attain optimal, community-driven social and environmental outcomes.



1

**Building a robust, sustainable packaging toolkit**

We have begun to engage a diverse range of partners and stakeholders across the region in developing a sustainable packaging toolkit. The toolkit offers food businesses a “how-to” guide to begin reducing their reliance on single-use plastics in their daily operations.

2

**Providing opportunities for community engagement**

We'll partner with stakeholders to host sessions for local business owners. These events will foster dialogue and gather insights to align our efforts with community needs while offering practical resources and education on sustainable packaging. Additionally, these sessions will help identify businesses that will benefit from direct support in adopting reusable wares.

3

**Offering direct support to select businesses**

Partnering with Clean Water Action's **ReThink Disposable** program, we'll select local food businesses for hands-on support to reduce disposable packaging at no cost. Chosen businesses will receive guidance on reusable foodware, access to the ReThink's Foodware Transition Calculator, and cost-free reusable foodware for dining and storage.

4

**Digging deeper into the issue with an Implosion**

We aim to support Philadelphia's Trash Academy in developing an Implosion, a creative research and visualization tool. This method will analyze and clarify the complexities of single-use plastic packaging, building shared knowledge and uncovering community driven solutions for sustainable outcomes.



## 5

**Advocating for community-centered solutions**

Alongside business owners and partners, we'll work with government agencies and lawmakers in Greater Philadelphia to advocate for policies and funding that reduce single-use plastic and support sustainable practices. This may involve recommending legislation, developing support programs, or investing in waste-reduction systems. We aim to leverage federal funding to advance these policy goals.

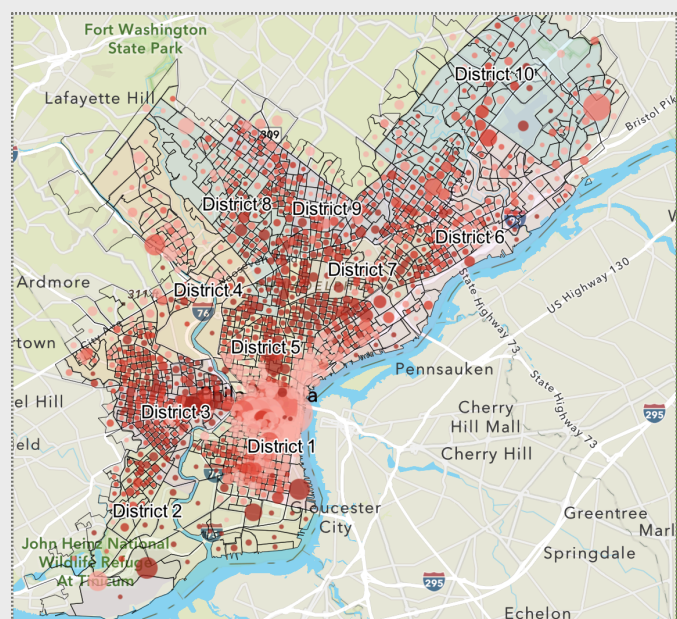


# Mapping Solutions

## Visualizing Challenges

Our data map provides a clear visualization of the distribution of food service establishments across various neighborhoods, with circles of differing sizes and colors indicating their concentration within low-income areas. This map highlights businesses that may face significant challenges when adapting to policy changes, such as bans on polystyrene packaging. These regulations often impose additional cost burdens that can be difficult for small businesses to absorb, potentially leading to higher prices for consumers and increased economic strain.

To address these challenges, Philly Unwrapped aims to offer essential tools and technical assistance to support these businesses. By facilitating a shift towards more circularity and reuse, our initiative will help reduce overall waste and foster a more sustainable approach to food service. Through targeted support, we can enable local businesses to navigate policy changes effectively, benefiting both their operations and the neighborhoods they serve.



# The Future of Philly Unwrapped

Through Philly Unwrapped, we endeavor to build a robust network of food sector businesses, community organizations, government leaders, and advocates committed to advancing community-driven solutions to reducing single-use plastic. As this initiative continues to evolve, we intend to grow our impact through partnerships in the following ways:

## **Sponsorships**

Sponsors contribute essential support to advance our mission, offering financial backing for educational tools or in-kind support such as meals or event spaces for community discussions.

## **Resource Development**

Resource development partners assist with creating our community toolkit or Implosion, providing services like technical support, copyediting, research, graphic design, or translation.

## **Outreach and Promotion**

Promotional partners aid in connecting communities to our project, distributing educational resources, and promoting engagement events to enhance our reach.

## **Policy Advocacy**

Advocacy partners help craft policy memos, talking points, and other materials, educate leaders on our issues, execute advocacy campaigns, and boost public involvement.

## **Data Collection**

Data partners collaborate with us to gather data from food businesses that informs legislative and community efforts to address single-use plastic waste.

## **Community Sessions**

Community session participants engage with a diverse network to explore sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics and develop innovative solutions for reducing plastic waste in the food sector.

# Our Partners



GREENLINE ACCESS CAPITAL  
BREAKING BARRIERS TO ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS



To join our coalition,  
scan the QR code or visit  
<https://tinyurl.com/PUPartner>

