



PLASTIC BAG BAN

Effective Date: April 22, 2014

BANNED

Plastic shopping or carryout bags (less than 2.25mil thick)



OK - FEE OPTIONAL

Large paper grocery-sized shopping bags



OK - ALLOWED

Small paper bags

Plastic bags used for:

- Bulk foods
- Meat/Fish/Poultry
- Produce
- Deli items
- Bakery goods
- Frozen foods
- Newspapers
- Flowers
- Dry cleaning
- Take-out food
- Small hardware items
- Prescriptions



ENCOURAGED

Reusable bags of all types





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OVERVIEW

The Mercer Island City Council recently adopted new regulations that ban single-use, plastic carryout bags at grocery stores, retailers, and other venues. As a stepping stone measure, stores are still allowed to distribute standard paper grocery bags. Ultimately, the best solution is for retailers to offer durable reusable bags and steer consumers towards them.

By limiting wasteful single-use bags, the regulations are intended to reduce plastic litter in the delicate aquatic environment that completely surrounds the Island, minimize harm to fish and other marine animals, and encourage consumers to purchase more sustainable, long-lived, reusable bags. Discarded plastic bags do not biodegrade, instead breaking down into smaller and smaller pieces that are often consumed by filter-feeders, shellfish, fish, and birds.

REGULATIONS

- Retailers are not permitted to provide customers with single-use plastic carryout (shopping) bags, including bags labeled as biodegradable, compostable, or similar.
- Retailers may provide customers with any size recyclable paper or reusable carryout bag, for free or for a charge.
- Any standard-size paper grocery bag issued by retailers must contain at least 40% recycled content and be labeled as such.
- Thicker plastic bags are considered to be reusable, and may be provided for free or for a charge.
- Non-compliance constitutes a Class I civil infraction and may be subject to daily fines.

EXEMPTIONS

- Heavy-duty, reusable plastic bags (>2.25 mils or 0.00225 inches thick) are allowed.
- Food banks and food assistance programs may still use plastic carryout bags of any kind.
- These types of bags are still allowed:
 - Plastic bags used inside stores for bulk foods, or to protect meat, fish, poultry, fruits and vegetables, deli foods, bakery goods, frozen foods. Also, plastic bags used for small hardware items, prescriptions drugs and medical equipment; damp items; etc.
 - Plastic carryout bags for take-out orders from food service establishments and grocery delis; recyclable paper bags are encouraged in these cases.
 - Newspaper, door-hanger, and dry-cleaning bags.
 - All plastic bags sold in packages intended for garbage, pet waste, and yard waste.

Note: Merchants with existing supplies of plastic carryout bags already purchased may use them until supplies are exhausted, although they must be prepared for questions from customers.

CONTACT

Sustainability Manager Ross Freeman, ross.freeman@mercergov.org, (206) 275-7662

www.mercergov.org/bags