



A Reusable Bag Ordinance for Kitsap County

The GOAL: Encourage people to bring their own bag when they shop

The PROBLEM with plastic bags:

- Made from finite, non-renewable natural gas and oil resources
- Clog machines at the recycling facility causing contamination and extra costs
- Easily become litter, blown from trash cans and landfills, among the top ten littered items in Washington (WA Dept. of Ecology)
- Littered plastics end up in the ocean - a top item found at beach cleanups (Ocean Conservancy)
- Ocean plastics break into smaller pieces, absorb toxic chemicals, and hurt wildlife (US EPA)



The DETAILS

No more thin "carry-home" plastic bags at grocery stores and retailers

Retailers charge \$0.08 for paper carry-home bags and thick reusable plastic bags (2.25 mils thick)

Still allowed: plastic bags for produce, bulk and frozen foods, meat, prescription drugs, newspapers, dry cleaning , etc.

Stores will not charge the fee to WIC/EBT/TANF participants



Kitsap County consumes around **87 million plastic bags** per year. Only 12% are recycled. (US EPA)



Plastic bags aren't free. Taxpayers and the environment pay the price of litter, and retailers pay to provide bags for their customers.



An estimated **32% of all plastics** annually end up in the environment. (Ellen MacArthur Foundation)



F.A.Q.



What businesses are affected? All retailers are affected, including grocery stores, convenience stores, home improvement stores, corner stores, clothing stores, farmers markets, and all other establishments that sell goods.

Are retailers required to provide a reusable plastic or paper bag? No. Retailers are not required to provide bags to customers. If they choose to provide bags, they must charge \$0.08 for large paper bags or thick reusable plastic bags. They cannot provide thin plastic carry-home bags.

Aren't plastic bags recyclable? There are only a few product manufacturers who use old plastic bags to make something new. Even though these manufacturers put plastic bag collection bins in grocery stores, they only use around 12% of all plastic bags created every year. There is a large supply of bags but low demand for them.

Recycling plastic bags does not make economic or environmental sense. The current cost of recycling is high and the value of the resulting product is low. Plastics are "downcycled," which means that plastics can only be recycled a few times before the material's quality is too poor to use again. Even if they are recycled once, plastics are eventually landfilled or escape into the environment.

What will I use to line my garbage can? Trash bags sold in rolls or bulk will still be available in stores and are not affected by the ordinance. Recycling should never be bagged because the recyclers cannot tell whether it is contaminated. It is too costly to open bagged recyclables, so recyclers often throw them away.

What will I use for my pet waste? Many products (like bread, pet food, and cereal) are packaged in bags that work well for holding pet waste. Pet waste bags sold in rolls or bulk will still be available and are not affected by the ordinance. Many public spaces in Kitsap have pet waste bag dispensers.

Isn't paper worse for the environment? Single-use paper bags are not good for the environment. Producing them requires more fuel, water, and toxic chemicals than producing plastic bags. Unlike plastic bags, however, paper bags are compostable, decompose in the environment, and can be recycled into new bags. They are made from renewable resources grown in the Pacific Northwest's working forests.

Reusable shopping bags have a lower environmental impact than both paper and plastic bags and we encourage everyone to use them instead of paying the \$0.08 charge for paper bags.

Why will retailers charge a \$0.08 fee for paper bags? The \$0.08 charge encourages customers to bring their own shopping bags. Retailers support the charge and will use it to help cover the cost of providing customers with paper bags or thick plastic bags. The charge is known as a "pass through charge."

In GOOD Company

These jurisdictions already have a reusable bag ordinance:

Bainbridge Island (2012)
Bremerton (2019)
Bellingham (2011)
Burien (2019)
Edmonds (2009)
Ellensburg (2016)
Everett (2018)
Friday Harbor (2017)
Gig Harbor (2018)
Issaquah (2013)
Kirkland (2015)
Kenmore (2018)
La Conner (2018)
Lacey (2014)
Lake Forest Park (2018)
Mercer Island (2014)
Mukilteo (2011)
North Bend (2018)
Olympia (2013)
Port Angeles (2018)
Port Townsend (2012)
Quil Ceda Village (2017)
San Juan County (2016)
Seattle (2011)
Shoreline (2013)
City of Snohomish (2019)
Tacoma (2016)
Thurston County (2013)
Tumwater (2013)

These businesses will no longer provide single-use plastic shopping bags:

Trader Joe's (2019)
QFC (2019)
Fred Meyer (2025)

127 countries worldwide regulate plastic bags.
(UN Environment)

