



# 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)



# Bring Your Own Bag – Plastic Bag Ordinance Effective January 1, 2020

## Retailer F.A.Q.

### **What is the Bring Your Own Bag – Plastic Bag Ordinance?**

Starting January 1, 2020, retailers in unincorporated Kitsap County, City of Bremerton, and City of Port Orchard are prohibited from offering thin plastic carryout bags to customers. Paper or thick plastic bags may be provided to customers for a minimum pass-through fee of \$0.08 each. Stores keep the pass-through fee to help cover the cost of providing bags. Everyone is encouraged to use and sell reusable bags.

**What businesses are affected?** All retail businesses in unincorporated Kitsap County, City of Bremerton, and City of Port Orchard are affected by the ordinance. Food banks and other food assistance programs in unincorporated Kitsap County and City of Port Orchard are exempt from the requirements; however, City of Bremerton food banks and food assistance programs are affected by the ordinance.

**What carryout bags are allowed by the ordinance?** Under the ordinance, retail establishments may provide consumers large paper bags and thick plastic bags as carryout bags. To qualify, paper carryout bags (1/8 barrel or 882 cubic inches or greater in size) must contain at least 40% recycled paper. Plastic carryout bags must be at least 2.25 mils thick.

**Are retailers required to provide a paper or thick plastic bag?** No, you are not required to provide bags to customers. If you choose to provide bags, you must charge \$0.08 for large paper bags or thick plastic bags. You cannot provide thin, single-use plastic carryout bags less than 2.25 mils in thickness.

**What is the required carryout pass-through fee?** Retailers are required to charge a minimum of \$0.08 for each carryout bag provided to a consumer. This fee is kept by the retailer and intended to defray the cost of implementing the ordinance. Retailers may begin charging customers the pass-through fee for paper or thick plastic bags prior to January 1, 2020 and the charge should be clearly indicated on the customer transaction receipt.

**Do I have to charge the customer the pass-through fee?** Yes, customers must pay the fee for each paper and/or thick plastic bag, thereby encouraging the customer to bring their own reusable bag instead of purchasing a disposable one.

**Are all customers required to pay the pass-through fee?** Customers who have the following benefits will not pay the pass-through fee when they receive a paper or thick plastic bag during checkout: Women Infants and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Washington State Food Assistance Program (FAP).

**Where does the pass-through fee go?** The pass-through fee is retained by the retailer to offset the cost of providing recycled content paper bags or thick plastic bags (at least 2.25 mils thick) which are generally more expensive than thin plastic bags.

### **How will the Plastic Bag Ordinance be enforced?**

Enforcement of the plastic bag ordinance will be complaint-based.

### **How can I learn more?**

Visit [kcowa.us/byob](http://kcowa.us/byob) to learn more about the Plastic Bag Ordinance.

