

## City of Lexington - Project Reusable Bags

	PROS	CONS
<b>PLASTIC BAGS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use 40 percent less energy in production than paper bags.</li> <li>• Far lighter and more compact to transport, saving on truck fuel.</li> <li>• Use less landfill space.</li> <li>• Can be recycled, though few are. Rates are 5.2 percent nationally and 15 percent in Seattle.</li> <li>• Can be reused as lunch bags, trash-can liners or pet-waste picker-uppers.</li> <li>• Cost a penny or two to produce.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made from non-renewable oil and natural gas (which could be refined as fuel instead)</li> <li>• Can take up to 1,000 years to decompose.</li> <li>• An estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide each year (about 380 billion in the U.S.).</li> <li>• Hundreds of thousands of sea turtles, whales and other marine animals die yearly from swallowing plastic bags. Sea turtles mistake them for one of their dietary staples -- jellyfish.</li> <li>• Buildup of plastic-bag litter was blamed for flooding in India that killed 1,000 people.</li> <li>• So-called compostable plastic bags degrade only in industrial-scale composting plants, not in home compost bins; they also contaminate the waste stream if well-intentioned consumers put them in recycling bins, because they can't be recycled with ordinary plastic bags.</li> </ul>
<b>PAPER BAGS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made from a renewable resource.</li> <li>• Generally contain at least 25 percent recycled content, with an industry goal of 55 percent recycled content by 2012.</li> <li>• Are recyclable and compostable. More than 1 in 5 make it to the recycling bin -- a far higher rate than for plastic bags.</li> <li>• Some grocers knock a few cents off your bill for each bag you reuse. Some may even contribute a percentage to a natural resources charity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trees must be cut down, removed by truck or helicopter and transported to pulp plants, at a high cost in fossil fuels.</li> <li>• Production generates 70 percent more air pollution than plastic bags and 50 times the water pollution.</li> <li>• Cost an estimated 5 to 8 cents to produce.</li> <li>• Bulky and heavy, paper and cardboard products are the single biggest user of landfill space.</li> <li>• Nothing breaks down in landfills -- not even biodegradable paper.</li> <li>• 65% of LASWA refuse is paper.</li> </ul>

**SOURCES:** Environmental Protection Agency, Greenfeet, American Chemistry Council, Reusable Bags, American Forest and Paper Institute

## Plastic Bags Reduction - Overview of what may be done

### Policy Options

- PlasTax – tax on plastic bags
- Plastic Bag ban or mandate biodegradable bags or require retailer fee for bags
- Pass a resolution – encourage residents to shop with reusable bags
- Plan to re-evaluate after one year
- Encourage statewide legislation
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### Remediation Options

- Ideally reduce & recycle – keep out of landfill and landscape
- Set a goal, e.g., 50% reduction over the next year
- Make & distribute re-usable bags (\$2,000 - \$2,500 per 1,000)
- Add plastic bag recycling receptacles (\$500 - \$1,000 each)
- Curbside recycling
- Mobilize volunteers to clean up (huge time commitment) (service groups, scouts, etc.?)
- Form a Bag the Bags Coalition
- Competitions?
- Ask walkers to pick up
- Partner with other groups: schools, KLB, Chamber, LASWA
- Schools – incentives (books, trips . . .?)
- Give recognition for success
- Encourage retailers to have bag recycling receptacles
- Have a No Plastic Bag Day or Week
- Recruit a recycling firm that can collect bags and turn into other products
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### Educational Components

- Put educational information in newsletter & website – no cost
- Start changing attitudes – takes time
- Set examples by civic leaders
- News releases
- Advertising (\$)
- Bags should read: “please recycle” or “please return to retailer for recycling”
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In **Canada**, Leaf Rapids, Manitoba, became the country's first city to ban plastic bags, starting in April 2007.<sup>15</sup> Ontario is moving to reduce plastic bag use with incentives, working with the Recycling Council of Ontario and grocer and retail associations. The incentives include store points redeemable for products, airline miles or cash for consumers who use reusable bags. Retailers are training clerks to double-bag less often, fill bags with more items and stop bagging large items.

### **Welcome to the Bag the Bags Austin Coalition**

As Austinites we feel a moral obligation to be national leaders in protecting our environment. While cities across the country are looking at potential bans, today is our opportunity to step up and lead.

This process started on April 19, 2007 when Austin City Council Member Lee Leffingwell sponsored a Resolution along with Mayor Will Wynn and Council Member Mike Martinez to look at ways to reduce the use of plastic bags.

After months of stakeholder meetings, we have come together to urge the Austin City Council to pass an ordinance banning the use of plastic bags by large retailers and instead require those retailers to make compostable bags made of renewable organic material available to consumers.

A ban is not enough. We must fundamentally change our habits and culture. That's why we also strongly support a full-fledged public education campaign to promote the use of reusable bags and end our dependence on oil-based plastic bags.

We hope you'll join our cause to make Austin an even better place to live. We can protect our environment, reduce our carbon foot print and do our part to make Texas a better place.

### ***Bag the Bags Coalition Partners***

**Austin Eco Network**  
**Austin Green Art**  
**Capital Area Asian American Democrats**  
**Capital Area Progressive Democrats**  
**Central Austin Democrats**  
**Clean Water Action**  
**Design~Build~Live**  
**Ecology Action**  
**Latinos for Texas**  
**LBJ Sustainability Work Group**  
**Save Barton Creek Association**  
**Sierra Club - Austin Regional Group**  
**Texas Campaign for the Environment**  
**Texas Community Project**  
**Texas Environmental Democrats**  
**Texas Solar Energy Society**  
**University Democrats**

AUSTIN RESOLUTION

**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**WHEREAS**, on April 19, 2007, the City Council unanimously approved Resolution No. 20070419-026 directing the City Manager to evaluate and recommend strategies for limiting the use of non-compostable plastic bags by stores located in the City, and promoting the use of compostable plastic bags, recyclable paper bags, or reusable checkout bags, and

**WHEREAS**, plastic shopping bags are a petroleum product, the production of which contributes to global warming and disposable bags present a unique and pernicious problem for citizens, the environment and wildlife; and

**WHEREAS**, the successful reduction of plastic bags entering the city's solid waste stream, along with the integration of reusable bags and the increase in recycling and composting of plastic bags, will help the city achieve its goal of "Zero Waste" by the year 2040, and

**WHEREAS**, a group that includes local grocers, retailers, plastic bag manufacturers, Keep Austin Beautiful and city officials has met since passage of the resolution to determine policies for improving environmental health and addressing needs of individual stakeholders; and

**WHEREAS**, the group has advised that an ordinance banning plastic bags is not, at present, the most appropriate action for meeting all of the city's goals,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:** That the City Council adopts the following plan for reducing by half (50 percent) from present levels the number of plastic bags entering the City's solid waste stream by June 30, 2009:

- Retailers who are registered for participation with the Texas Retailers Association (participating retailers) agree, upon passage of this resolution, to reduce the pounds of plastic purchased for use as bags in their stores;
- Participating Retailers will:
  1. make available recycling bins/canisters located in a highly visible area and, in most store locations, at the front of the store near the entrance;
  2. redevelop messaging formats on the bins/canisters, including language that encourages shoppers to "reduce, reuse, and recycle"; and
  3. make available reusable bags at affordable prices in every store.
- Participating Retailers will, on a biannual basis, file a report with the Texas Retailers Association which includes their pounds of plastic purchased and pounds of plastic recycled and a notarized statement signed by their own auditors attesting to the accuracy and authenticity of the data submitted.
- The Texas Retailers Association will compile the reported data and statements and submit them to the City of Austin's Solid Waste Services Department (The Solid Waste Services Department).
- The Solid Waste Services Department will analyze the reported data and the Office of the City Auditor will review the analysis and check the Texas Retailers Association's data for reasonableness. Depending on the results of the analysis done by the Solid Waste Services Department and the City Auditor, the City Auditor may request supplemental information on a company-by-company basis;
- The Solid Waste Services Department will begin a pilot program to offer customers the opportunity to recycle plastic bags at curbside and report results of that program and possible expansion within 180 days;
- The Solid Waste Services Department will conduct periodic reviews of plastic bag use in stores and plastic bags entering the City solid waste stream.

- “Keep Austin Beautiful” will coordinate an effort entitled “Austin’s Got A Brand New Bag” which will include print, television, radio, and Internet advertising; public events; school programs; and other marketing efforts aimed at convincing Austin residents to shop with reusable bags. The Solid Waste Services Department will also purchase 5,000 reusable bags produced by “Keep Austin Beautiful” for distribution across the city; and
- The City Manager will report to City Council by August 2009 the status of the pilot program and the analysis of the data submitted by the Texas Retailers Association for consideration by City Council as to whether the plan’s goals have been met. In the event the goals have not been met, City Council will revisit other options for reducing plastic bags entering the city’s solid waste stream.

**ADOPTED: , 2008 ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

Shirley A. Gentry  
City Clerk

**Slogan idea Brainstorming**

Unbag Lexington

Bags Are Garbage

begging for bags

begin the bag-gone

bagatelle

bagel

bagful

baggage

baggily

bagginess

bagging

baggy

Bag the Bags

bagman

bagpipe

baguette

bag begone

bag behavior

debag

Lexington's Got a Brand New Bag

snag a bag

bag's a drag

gag me with a bag

the spy who bagged me

bags-B-gone

The Empire Strikes Bag

Bag To The Future

The Bag Ultimatum

Gone With The Wind

The Good, The Bag, and The Ugly

pack your bags

bag it up

plastered with plastic

blowin' in the wind

A Greener and Cleaner Lexington – (it's) in the Bag!

