

To keep plastic pollution out of our creeks and Bay,

Starting **July 1, 2013** at all Retail Establishments



What is Palo Alto's Bag Ordinance?

Starting July 1, 2013, retail establishments (including grocery stores covered under Palo Alto's 2009 Bag Ordinance) may no longer distribute single-use plastic checkout bags and must charge a minimum of ten cents for paper or reusable bags.

Product bags as defined in the ordinance used to carry produce, bulk items, meat, etc. to the checkout stand, or used to protect merchandise from getting damaged (such as paper bags around individual wine bottles) can continue to be used although reusable options are encouraged and are available for sale in many locations.

Starting November 1, 2013, food service establishments such as restaurants, delicatessens, convenience stores selling prepared food, and food trucks cannot distribute single-use plastic checkout bags. Paper bags can be provided to customers at no charge and reusable bags can be used at the discretion of each establishment. Individual product bags without handles may be used around containers of soups or stews to prevent spilling.

Why is the city of Palo Alto restricting single-use plastic carryout bags?

The Ordinance seeks to encourage customers to use long-lasting reusable bags. Single-use plastic bags are one of the most common litter items found in creek and roadside cleanups and the impacts of plastic pollution on marine life are well documented. The average single-use plastic bag is made from nonrenewable natural resources

but is used for only 12 minutes before disposal in a landfill or becoming pollution. Recycling options are limited. A sturdy reusable bag can replace hundreds of single-use bags and similar bag ordinances have significantly reduced litter in cities and countries around the world.

While paper bags are recyclable they use resources as part of their manufacture, disposal or recycling. Therefore, their use is discouraged over the benefits of reusable bags.

How can I avoid paying 10 cents per bag?

Remember to bring reusable bags to the store or decline a bag when making a purchase.

Will the charge for paper bags increase from 10 cents?

City Council may opt to increase the store charge if ordinance goals related to the charge are not being met. This option will be evaluated after the ordinance has been in effect for several months.

Who keeps the charge for paper and reusable bags distributed at the point of sale?

The charge is kept entirely by each store to offset the costs of the paper or reusable bags. The charge is not subject to tax per the California State Board of Equalization.

What about produce bags?

Plastic or paper product bags without handles as defined in the ordinance to carry produce, bulk items, meat, etc. to the checkout stand can be used without charge, although reusable options are encouraged and are available for sale in many locations.

How can I remember my bag?

- **Keep reusable bags by the door**, in your car or near your keys.
- **Keep foldable bags in pockets**, backpacks and purses.
- **Call or email Public Works–Watershed Protection** to request a static cling reminder for the inside of your car.

How will this ordinance help the environment?

Palo Alto's Ordinance is estimated to eliminate 20 million single use bags each year reducing pollution and landfill waste (*Palo Alto Disposable Checkout Bag Ordinance Environmental Impact Report, January 2013*).

How will the ordinance affect low-income residents?

Customers participating in supplemental food programs such as WIC, CalFresh or SNAP (formerly food stamps) are exempt from the bag charge until July 1, 2014 and can receive a free reusable bag by calling or emailing Public Works–Watershed Protection. Low-income residents will be able to avoid all bag costs by bringing their own bags to the store.

Can I still recycle my unused plastic checkout bags?

Yes, plastic bags may be recycled in your recycling container. Please consolidate bags inside one clear plastic bag and knot the top of the bag.

Does Palo Alto's ordinance apply to residents within the unincorporated area of Stanford?

Stanford is part of an unincorporated area of Santa Clara County which has its own ordinance. The Stanford Shopping Center is within Palo Alto City boundaries and must comply with the Palo Alto Ordinance.



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

WWW.CITYOFPALOALTO.ORG/BAGS