



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Community Development and Planning
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472

Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance

Coming soon in July there will be a change to how customers will be able to take away their products. Starting **July 1, 2017**, you will only be able to use paper bags, degradable bags, or reusable bags. We think it is important to let you know now, so that your current supply of plastic bags can be used up by then and you can order an appropriate bag stock for July. There will be much more information coming between now and July 2017.

Why prohibit Single Use Plastic Bags?

- A plastic bag can take between 400 and 1,000 years to break down in the environment.
- Plastic particles contaminate soil and waterways and enter the food chain when animals accidentally ingest them.
- Rid our streets, river, parklands, and landfills of litter.
- Single-use plastic bags clog storm drainage systems and add to our solid waste collection.
- In some locations, there are 46 times more plastic than available food for marine animals.
- Plastic bags cause over 100,000 sea turtle and other marine animal deaths every year.
- Nearly 90% of the debris in our oceans is plastic.
- Plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups, according to the non-profit Center for Marine Conservation.
- When fish and other marine animals ingest plastic debris, they are also ingesting toxins from plastic bags and other plastic waste.
- If the food we eat is contaminated with toxins, we will be too.



- ***To Help Save the Environment!***

For more information, contact the Code Enforcement Office, or visit the Single-Use Bag website at <http://www.ci.watertown.ma.us/index.aspx?NID=861>

Single-Use Plastic Bag Ordinance

FAQs

WHAT ESTABLISHMENTS ARE COVERED BY THIS ORDINANCE?

Any commercial enterprise selling goods, articles, food, or personal services to the public, including, but not limited to markets, restaurants, bars, take-out food purveyors, merchandise retailers, florists, and galleries.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A SINGLE USE PLASTIC BAG?

"Single-use plastic bag" is a bag made of plastic, **including, but not limited to:** bags made of high-density polyethylene, low-density polyethylene, "biodegradable," "compostable," or "oxo-biodegradable" materials, which are intended for the purpose of transporting food or merchandise out of an establishment covered by this ordinance.

Single-use plastic bags shall NOT include: bags, whether plastic or not, in which loose or bulk candy, produce, or products are placed by a consumer to deliver such items to the point of sale or check-out area of an establishment; bags used to segregate food or merchandise that could damage or contaminate other food or merchandise when placed together in a point-of-sale bag; laundry or dry-cleaner bags; bags holding prescription medication dispensed from a pharmacy; and/or newspaper bags.

WHAT BAGS ARE PERMITTED?

Covered establishments may provide or sell to customers' recyclable paper bags or reusable bags. Degradable plastic bags are ONLY permitted if they meet the ASTM or ISO standards. "**Recyclable paper bag**" is a paper bag that is 100% recyclable and contains at least 40% post-consumer recycled content, and displays the words "Recyclable" and "made from 40% post-consumer recycled content" in a visible manner on the outside of the bag. "**Reusable bag**" is a bag with handles that is designed and manufactured for multiple use. Reusable plastic bags are allowed, if and only if the bag is a minimum of 4 Mil, or more, thick and meets minimum ASTM or ISO standards.

ARE THERE ANY EXEMPTIONS?

The Director may exempt an establishment from the requirements of the ordinance for a period of up to six (6) additional months, upon a finding that the requirements of the ordinance would cause undue hardship to the establishment.

WHERE CAN I OBTAIN RECYCLABLE/REUSABLE BAGS?

A list of [vendors](#) which sell recyclable and reusable bags can be found on the town's website. Also, to assist in the roll-out, the Town and ReThink Plastic will be distributing thousands of canvas shopping bags knowing that it takes some time to replace the throwaway habit. We appreciate your help.