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Skip the Plastic Norwalk—a group dedicated to raising awareness about the impact of single-use plastics on our environment, health and economy—supports the passage of an ordinance that would ban plastic checkout bags at grocery stores, pharmacies and retail and food establishments, among other business categories that distribute plastic bags.

Why a ban on plastic checkout bags?

- According to the Center for Biological Diversity, Americans use 100 billion plastic bags a year, which require 12 million barrels of oil to manufacture. And, a recent story in the [Hartford Courant](#) estimated that Connecticut alone uses 1 billion plastic bags each year. Breaking down that number further translates into Norwalk using about 30 million plastic bags each year.
- As of October 1<sup>st</sup>, Norwalk no longer accepts plastic bags or plastic film for recycling. They are now on the “what’s out” list of acceptable recycling items and cannot be placed in blue bins.
- Plastic bags are used for an average of 12 minutes.
- Only 1% of plastic bags are returned for recycling
- Fewer than 1 in 7 plastic bags are actually recycled.
- According to the [EPA](#), when it rains, storm sewers, sewer overflows, and drainage outflows transport litter to rivers which eventually carry the plastic into waterways such as Long Island Sound.
- More than 100,000 plastic bags end up in the Long Island Sound each year. Robert Burg with the Long Island Sound Study, an arm of the federal EPA, said the volume of plastic in the Sound is startling. “We do cleanups along Long Island Sound and last year in one day we took 18,000 pounds of debris off the shore.” One of the top items included plastic bags.
- Plastic bags don’t biodegrade; instead, they photo-degrade, breaking down into smaller pieces (microplastics) that absorb toxins and continue to pollute the environment. As a result, plastic bags essentially last forever.
- According to the [EPA](#), there is a growing concern about the hazards of plastic pollution in the marine environment. Plastics pose both physical (for example, entanglement, gastrointestinal blockage) and chemical threats (for example, bioaccumulation of the chemical ingredients of plastic) to wildlife and the marine ecosystem. In Long Island Sound and the oceans, plastic bags disintegrate into microplastics that are ingested by all types of fish. According to *Scientific American*, these toxic microplastics bioaccumulate up the food chain to humans.
- Cutting down on the use of plastic bags is a waste-management tool, creating fewer emissions at garbage-to-energy plants, which, in turn, reduces air pollution.
- In lieu of plastic checkout bags, we support the use of reusable shopping bags. The average reusable bag has a lifespan equal to or greater than 700 plastic bags.

- With major markets such as China no longer accepting as much plastic trash as they were before, the impact is twofold:
  - municipalities will have to pay more to have recyclables carted away, whereas before recyclables were a source of revenue.
  - finding buyers for plastic bags that ARE returned to proper retail outlets is getting increasingly difficult.
- And, according to ReuseThisBag.com, which reviewed studies by 200 individual cities and municipalities that have enacted ordinances around the country, results include:
  - reduction of plastic bags in storm drains, rivers, and residential areas
  - reduction of plastic bags in both residential and commercial waste
  - reduction of number of bags per person
  - savings in plastic processing fees
- We believe Norwalk needs to be perceived as a progressive city devoted to sustainability in order to attract people who want to live here.
- Stamford, Greenwich, Weston and Westport have all passed ordinances banning plastic checkout bags. We believe Norwalk needs to do the same in order to stay competitive. According to a recent story in Forbes, there are 349 known cities, counties, and states that have, in some way, banned or taxed plastic bag use.
- In less than a month, nearly 800 Norwalk residents have signed a petition supporting a plastic bag ban; in addition, 150 students have signed the petition.

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