



Office Councilwoman Deborah Ortega
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MEMORANDUM

Staff report from the Office of Councilwoman Ortega on an ordinance to reduce the consumption of single-use shopping bags in Denver.

July 17, 2013

Background

In 2007, Greenprint Denver, in partnership with local grocery stores and retailers, set out to reduce the consumption rate of single-use shopping bags by 50 percent over a period of five years. That initiative was based entirely upon voluntary reductions by individuals and included a challenge to retailers to sell reusable bags at checkout stands, advertise reusable bags, train baggers to use good bagging practices, provide plastic bag recycling, and commit to bag reduction goals. This program was an important step toward establishing a sustainability dialogue with grocery merchants in Denver.

In October of 2012, the Office of Councilwoman Ortega began research on legislation to further reduce the use of single-use shopping bags. The impetus of this research was an awareness of the successful implementation of municipal bag reduction policies nationwide as well as knowledge of other Colorado cities and towns working on similar efforts. To date, Aspen, Boulder, Breckenridge, Telluride and Carbondale have adopted programs. Fort Collins, Durango and Englewood are in the middle of efforts to adopt a bag reduction program.

In November of 2012, the Office of Councilwoman Ortega administered a survey to recipients of Councilwoman Ortega's electronic newsletter. The results of this outreach showed overwhelming support for an ordinance to reduce the use of single-use point of sale shopping bags in Denver.

Later, in January of 2013, Councilwoman Ortega met with Mayor Michael B. Hancock to discuss a proposal to reduce the use of single-use shopping bags by way of imposing a fee for their use. Mayor Hancock expressed a concern on the impact to Denver's low-income residents, a sentiment shared by Councilwoman Ortega.

From that point forward, the Office of Councilwoman Ortega has focused on conducting research and outreach to retailers, labor organizations, business organizations, constituents, and city agencies. The result was an analysis of bag consumption in Denver as well as a draft ordinance that balances the policy

options for reducing single-use shopping bag consumption with the interests and feedback of stakeholders.

Moreover, it can now be estimated that approximately 130 million single-use shopping bags are consumed in Denver annually at large grocery and convenience stores, more than 4 tons of paper bags and sacks and plastic bags, wraps, and sacks are entering Denver's municipal waste streams each year, and the overall fiscal impacts for the use of these bags is in excess of \$1 million. These figures are explained in more detail in other sections of this report.

Consequently, Councilwoman Ortega has made the decision to pursue legislation to reduce the use of single-use shopping bags in Denver by way of a \$0.05 fee for their use. A portion of this fee will be returned to the City and County of Denver while the remainder will stay with the retailer. This fee will be imposed on paper and plastic point of sale bags at retail establishments where more than 2 percent of annual gross sales are food products and of which are also more than 1,500 square in retail space. This policy will also set forth the goal of a 50 percent reduction in single-use shopping bag usage in the program's inaugural year.

Bag Usage in Denver

The Office of Councilwoman Ortega in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Health, have estimated that 130 million paper and plastic disposable bags are consumed in Denver annually at grocery and convenience stores. Moreover, on average, Denver households, on average, consume 7.6 single-use shopping bags per week at grocery and convenience stores. These estimates were determined through the use of retail sales tax data as well as aggregated bag purchasing data supplied by private retailers. This number compares well with per capita and/or per household estimates of other jurisdictions in the U.S. who have implemented bag fee programs.

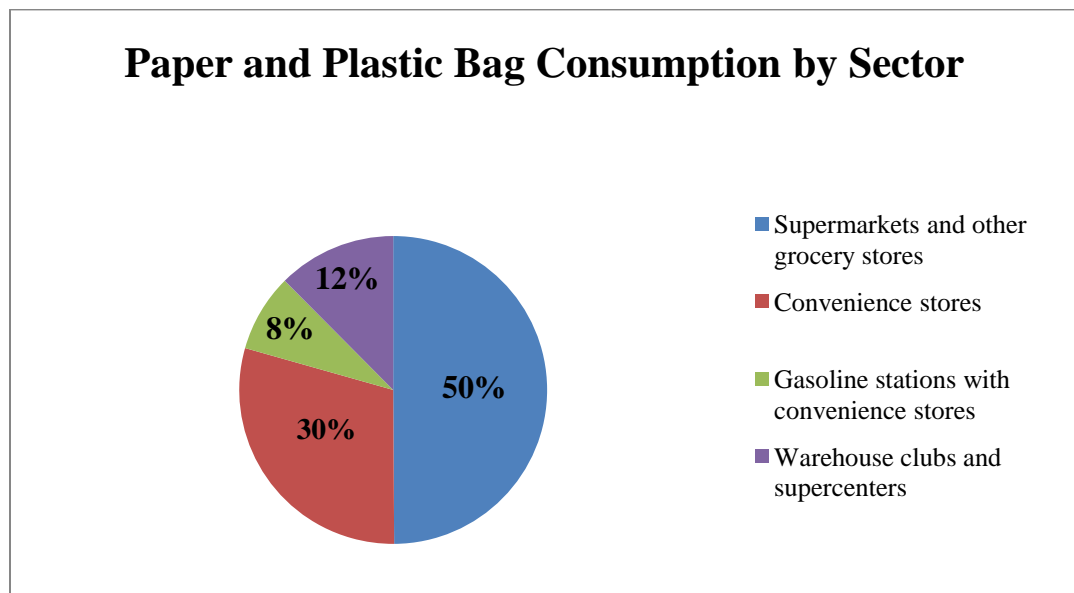


Figure 1: Bag Usage Estimates by sector. Source: Denver Department of Environmental Health and the Office of Councilwoman Ortega.

In addition, using this estimate, we have projected the \$1,670,217.00 to be returned to the City and County of Denver in year-one of the program. This figure represents the city's retained portion of the fee on 65 million bags, which assumes a 50 percent reduction in single-use bag consumption.

Single-Use Shopping Bags: Cost to Taxpayers

This section includes a report of identified costs to taxpayers that are a result of disposable bag consumption. Some costs could not be quantified, but rather are simply stated as they are known to exist. Moreover, this list is not exhaustive, and is a representation of available information.

In 2009, 4.8 million tons of "*paper bags and sacks*" "*plastic bags, wraps, and sacks*" were added to our nation's municipal waste streams (EPA, 2009, pp. 40 and 53). Less than half of the paper waste and only 9.4 percent of plastics were recycled (EPA, 2009, pp. 40 and 53). Using US Census data, we can estimate that 4.3 tons of paper bags and sacks and plastic bags, wraps, and sacks were added to Denver's municipal waste streams in 2009.

In 2012, The Greenway Foundation and the Denver Department of Environmental Health, in conjunction with state and federal agency representatives and hundreds of community volunteers, conducted three one-day trash sweeps along the South Platte River. Volunteers collected and inventoried trash in three small sections along the river:

- At the confluence of the South Platte River and Cherry Creek at Cuernavaca Park;
- Along the South Platte River adjacent to Aqua Golf Pond and Johnson-Habitat Park, and;
- Between the confluence of the South Platte River and Bear Creek and Hampden Ave.

Inventories were conducted on April 21, July 21, and September 29, 2012. It should be noted that less than 5 percent of the South Platte River in Denver was inventoried. Overall, 8-11 percent of all pieces of trash collected were plastic bags, putting it into the top 4 categories of trash collected along with cigarette butts, paper and cardboard, and food packaging/wrappers.

DEH estimates that approximately 150 volunteers took part in each inventory event. If you assume 4 hours per volunteer valued at an hourly rate of \$15, approximately \$10,000 of in-kind costs can be attributed to each event. Again, these efforts only covered less than five percent of the river. To cover the entire river would easily exceed \$250,000 of in-kind costs if such events were conducted only once per year.

The Urban Drainage and Flood Control District (UDFCD) also conduct routine maintenance and debris removal programs along the South Platte River from West Coal Mine Avenue in Littleton to West 168th Avenue in Brighton. Debris and trash are collected from the entire area nine times a year and three additional times from the segment of the river between Bear Creek and Franklin Street in Denver. Cities in the UDFCD boundary pay into this program. In 2012, Denver paid over \$50,000 to UDFCD.

Additionally, plastic bags create a cost to the taxpayers with their impacts to our waste streams. First, plastic bags that enter into our recycling stream, where they cannot be recycled, cause jams to machinery, that add to the manual labor costs of recycling and by causing facility shutdowns. The data to determine

an exact cost to Denver were not available, nonetheless the City of San Jose, California, (population 967,487) has estimated an annual loss of \$1 million due to plastic bag related repairs in their facilities (Californians Against Waste and U.S. Census Bureau). Using this data, the cost to each resident in San Jose for these delays and repairs is \$1.03 per year. If we use this same per capita cost and apply it to Denver, we can estimate an annual cost of \$640,802.00 to the taxpayers.

Furthermore, it is important to note that plastic bags can be recycled. The Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (CHaRM) is the only facility in Colorado that has the capability to recycle plastic bags and the City of Boulder estimated an annual county-wide cost of \$182,000, to recycle the 120 million plastic bags at CHaRM that were discarded throughout the county in 2010 (Boulder Nexus Fee Study, p. 18). At that rate, it would cost the City of Denver \$197,166.00 annually to recycle the 130 million bags that our residents consume at grocery and convenience stores.

Second, plastic bags negatively impact Denver's compost streams, of which are currently managed by A-1 Organics. This Colorado-based company has been composting since 1974 and implemented its first food waste commercial composting program in 2000. As a stakeholder to this policy proposal, A-1 Organics reported that contamination from plastics is their single greatest materials processing challenge with impacts that have resulted in an estimated 20 percent increase to their cost of production. These costs to remove, remediate, and collect plastic contaminants will become a direct cost to Denver residents participating in the city's composting program. At this time, Denver residents who are eligible to participate in the city's pilot compost program (nearly 2,500), pay a fee of \$117 per year. Assuming this cost includes the 20 percent increase in production costs, each participant pays an extra \$23 per year for this service. When applied citywide to all 173,000 households currently being serviced by Denver's Solid Waste Management, a total annual cost of \$3,979,000 can be estimated.

Third, through this research, the Office of Councilwoman Ortega has gathered anecdotal evidence to suggest that plastic bags also impose litter control costs at the city's landfill sites. Although this data on the exact cost of litter control at these sites were not available, it was learned that plastic bag cleanup makes up almost all of that cost.

To conclude, the annual costs to Denver's taxpayers estimated in this section that are attributable to disposable bag use (cleanups, recycling, waste management, etc) when applied citywide, exceed \$1,000,000.00.

Determination of the Fee-Level

To determine the appropriate fee-level for Denver, economic data from the American Community Survey were used. Data for Denver were compared to two other jurisdictions with adopted bag fee legislation; Washington, D.C and Boulder, CO.

When comparing Denver to Boulder, where a 10-cent fee on paper and plastic bags went into effect July 1, 2013 Denver residents have lower mean and median incomes, nearly two times as many food stamp and SNAP benefit recipients per capita, and double the rate of families below the poverty line (see Appendix A). Furthermore, when making the same comparison between Denver and Washington, D.C., a city that legislated a 5-cent fee on paper and plastic bags in 2009, much more comparable demographics were found (see Appendix A).

The fee-level's relation to its impact on a reduction of single-use bag consumption was also considered and a case study of Washington D.C. was used. This research found that the 5-cent fee did have a significant impact on bag use in that city, reducing single-use bag consumption by 67 percent in the first two years (Beacon Hill Institute, 2012, p. 2).

Furthermore, in its analysis of the economic impacts to retail customers, AECOM examined unincorporated Los Angeles County's ordinance that imposes a ban on plastic bags and a 10-cent fee for paper single-use bags. That report estimated the economic impact to residents of the unincorporated areas of that County to be \$5.72 per capita annually and also concluded that the impacts to lower-income residents to be negligible (AECOM, 2010). Furthermore, in our assessment of bag usage in Denver, an annual per capita rate of 176 bags was determined. Thus, should a shopper in Denver continue to consume an equivalent number of bags after the implementation of this proposed ordinance, at most, said shopper would be subject to \$8.80 in annual fees. Taking that one step further, if we assume a 50 percent reduction in bag consumption, as is predicted with this ordinance, this same consumer would only be subject to \$4.40 in annual fees.

Determination of Portion Retained and Portion Remitted

To determine the appropriate portion of the \$0.05 fee that will be retained by retailers (\$0.02) and that which will be remitted to the city (\$0.03), research from the City of Boulder was relied upon. The findings of Tischler Bise Fiscal, Economic, and Planning Consultants in their report *Disposable Bag Fee Nexus Study, City of Boulder, Colorado*, were that a bag fee in that jurisdiction would cost the retailers \$0.04 per bag. Moreover, it was learned through conversations with stakeholders that these costs include administrative (remittance, signage, and programming) and added labor costs (training and delays at the point of sale). Additionally, in Boulder the \$0.04 retained is 40 percent of the \$0.10 fee that was legislated. This same rate was applied to determine the portion retained by the retailer in this proposal.

Lastly, in looking at other jurisdictions across the country where bag fees are in place, it was learned that allowing retailers to retain a portion of the total fees was standard practice.

Determination of the 2 Percent Food Sales Threshold

In its research, the City of Boulder found that 60 percent of disposable bag consumption occurs at supermarkets in that city (Boulder City Council, 2012). Knowing then that a majority of single-use shopping bags are being generated through food stores, it became clear that Denver should capture as many of these retailers as possible.

The City of Boulder used a threshold of food sales as 2 percent of total retail sales as a mechanism to capture food retailers who are also selling general merchandise. Denver would like to capture those retailers as well and has substantiated that food sales will be greater than 2 percent of total sales through stakeholder communications and research.

Determination of the 1,500 Square Foot Threshold

A square foot threshold to determine exemption from the disposable bag ordinance greater than 1,500 square feet would exclude 40% of the convenience stores and would often exclude stores in the same chain. Using a 1,500 square foot threshold, approximately 25 percent of the convenience stores are exempt and the same chain exclusions are minimized. Square foot data analyses were derived from the Denver County Assessor's Real Property database.

Reusable Bags

The cost per use of reusable bags will be lower than the proposed \$0.05 fee for a single-use shopping bag. Assuming an average cost per bag of \$0.87 and an average reuse capacity of 165 uses, AECOM found that the cost per use of a reusable bag amounts to \$0.005 or in other words, half of one-cent (AECOM, 2010).

Life Cycle Assessments

A review of life cycle assessment (LCA) research for single-use plastic, single-use paper, and reusable bags was also conducted (Boustead, 2007, Dilli, 2007, and Greene, 2011). An LCA is a standardized examination of the environmental impacts of a product from the harvesting of raw materials, to the fabrication and use of the product, and finally to the disposal or reuse of the product.

Existing research supports the conclusion that, reusable shopping bags have lower environmental impacts than single-use bags. Moreover, a shift from one single-use bag to another (i.e., paper v. plastic) may improve one environmental outcome, but this will then be offset by another environmental impact. As a result, when compared, neither paper nor plastic is a more sustainable than the other.

Colorado Municipal Policies

Other municipalities and counties across the U.S. have used bans, fees, or a combination of both to successfully reduce disposable bag use. In recent years, these policies have proliferated in Colorado having now been adopted in Telluride, Aspen, Boulder, and Breckenridge. The Cities of Fort Collins, Durango, and Englewood are also pursuing such initiatives and expect to have them successfully enacted in the near future.

Border Competition

In its research of the triple bottom line effects of bag fee legislation, the City of Fort Collins concluded that it would be more costly to the consumer in fuel and time to take their business outside of the policy area. Moreover, using this research, we can delineate that with a cost of \$0.05 per bag in Denver, a shopper purchasing 10 bags would have to travel less than 3 miles to an alternative store to save money by shopping at a store outside of the policy area.

Constituent Survey

In November of 2012, the Office of Councilwoman Ortega offered a survey to recipients of Councilwoman Ortega's electronic newsletter. This survey garnered 182 responses to a series of three multiple-choice questions. One hundred and twelve comments were also provided by participants.

The results of this survey showed an overwhelming support for legislation to reduce the use of single-use shopping bags in Denver. Please see Appendix B for a more detailed review of these results.

Stakeholder Outreach and Input

After receiving input from stakeholders including Denver residents, retailers, community, advocacy, labor organizations, and business organizations, the Office of Councilwoman Ortega has evaluated balancing the policy options for reducing the use of disposable bags with consumer impacts as well as financial costs to businesses and the City of Denver for implementation, administration and enforcement.

To summarize, numerous provisions of the ordinance were a direct result of stakeholder input. Those provisions include; a quarterly remittance schedule, the option for retailers to donate reusable bags for distribution by the city, the option for retailers to donate the portion of the fee that they retain to an environmental cause, elimination of the exemption for food assistance benefit recipients whereas this would stigmatize these customers as well as create delays at the point of sale, phasing in the inclusion of all retailers, educating the public on the importance of washing their reusable bags, allowing retailers to use their own brand standards on store signage related to the ordinance, allowing retailers to house their audit records at a location outside the retail establishment, at least a six-month delay in implementation of the ordinance, exemption of pharmacy bags due to privacy concerns, and a minimum square footage threshold.

Please see Appendix C for a complete list of stakeholders.

Conclusions

This research has estimated that 130 million single-use shopping bags are consumed annually at Denver's large grocery and convenience store establishments, more than 4.3 tons of paper bags and sacks and plastic bags, wraps, and sacks are entering Denver's municipal waste streams each year, and there is a cost to the taxpayers for the use of these bags that exceeds \$1 million annually.

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Appendix A

U.S. Census Bureau

AMERICAN
FactFinder



DP03

SELECTED ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Note: This is a modified view of the original table.

Supporting documentation on code lists, subject definitions, data accuracy, and statistical testing can be found on the American Community Survey website in the Data and Documentation section.

Sample size and data quality measures (including coverage rates, allocation rates, and response rates) can be found on the American Community Survey website in the Methodology section.

Although the American Community Survey (ACS) produces population, demographic and housing unit estimates, it is the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program that produces and disseminates the official estimates of the population for the nation, states, counties, cities and towns and estimates of housing units for states and counties.

Subject	Boulder city, Colorado		Denver city, Colorado		Washington city, District of Columbia	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
INCOME AND BENEFITS (IN 2011 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)						
Less than \$10,000	4,196	10.5%	25,310	9.5%	29,641	11.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1,760	4.4%	14,837	5.6%	11,462	4.3%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4,067	10.1%	30,937	11.6%	21,040	7.8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3,260	8.1%	27,135	10.2%	17,567	6.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	4,071	10.1%	40,548	15.2%	29,263	10.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	6,011	15.0%	43,267	16.2%	41,572	15.5%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3,783	9.4%	29,578	11.1%	29,481	11.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	4,650	11.6%	28,683	10.8%	40,423	15.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4,188	10.4%	12,467	4.7%	17,878	6.7%
\$200,000 or more	4,131	10.3%	13,862	5.2%	30,343	11.3%
Median household income (dollars)	57,112	(X)	47,371	(X)	63,124	(X)
Mean household income (dollars)	92,134	(X)	71,488	(X)	98,177	(X)
With Supplemental Security Income	982	2.4%	11,240	4.2%	16,291	6.1%
With cash public assistance income	385	1.0%	7,724	2.9%	10,065	3.7%
Mean cash public assistance income (dollars)	N	(X)	4,799	(X)	3,719	(X)
With Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months	2,101	5.2%	27,193	10.2%	38,777	14.4%
Families	17,726	17,726	125,763	125,763	114,045	114,045
Less than \$10,000	300	1.7%	6,930	5.5%	10,015	8.8%

Subject	Boulder city, Colorado		Denver city, Colorado		Washington city, District of Columbia	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
\$10,000 to \$14,999	390	2.2%	4,169	3.3%	4,391	3.9%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	1,001	5.6%	13,058	10.4%	9,557	8.4%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	807	4.6%	10,995	8.7%	7,259	6.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	902	5.1%	17,630	14.0%	10,532	9.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,402	13.6%	19,147	15.2%	14,865	13.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,834	10.3%	15,880	12.6%	9,860	8.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3,692	20.8%	18,894	15.0%	15,924	14.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2,925	16.5%	9,068	7.2%	10,243	9.0%
\$200,000 or more	3,473	19.6%	9,992	7.9%	21,399	18.8%
Median family income (dollars)	113,681	(X)	63,290	(X)	75,603	(X)
Mean family income (dollars)	141,041	(X)	89,819	(X)	123,998	(X)
Per capita income (dollars)	37,600	(X)	31,869	(X)	44,578	(X)
Nonfamily households	22,391	22,391	140,861	140,861	154,625	154,625
Median nonfamily income (dollars)	35,541	(X)	38,168	(X)	56,745	(X)
Mean nonfamily income (dollars)	51,610	(X)	53,919	(X)	77,492	(X)
Median earnings for workers (dollars)	20,924	(X)	31,789	(X)	46,112	(X)
Median earnings for male full-time, year-round workers (dollars)	71,993	(X)	48,283	(X)	66,760	(X)
Median earnings for female full-time, year-round workers (dollars)	47,574	(X)	42,055	(X)	60,332	(X)
PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES AND PEOPLE WHOSE INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL						
All families	(X)	7.6%	(X)	13.4%	(X)	15.4%
With related children under 18 years	(X)	13.4%	(X)	21.6%	(X)	24.2%
With related children under 5 years only	(X)	5.9%	(X)	18.6%	(X)	19.7%
Married couple families	(X)	2.1%	(X)	7.3%	(X)	3.8%
With related children under 18 years	(X)	3.0%	(X)	11.3%	(X)	5.5%
With related children under 5 years only	(X)	8.1%	(X)	8.6%	(X)	2.4%
Families with female householder, no husband present	(X)	33.8%	(X)	32.7%	(X)	29.4%
With related children under 18 years	(X)	45.7%	(X)	44.7%	(X)	38.1%
With related children under 5 years only	(X)	0.0%	(X)	49.6%	(X)	47.9%
All people	(X)	24.8%	(X)	18.4%	(X)	18.7%
Under 18 years	(X)	17.4%	(X)	25.6%	(X)	30.3%
Related children under 18 years	(X)	17.4%	(X)	25.3%	(X)	30.2%
Related children under 5 years	(X)	16.8%	(X)	28.0%	(X)	29.6%
Related children 5 to 17 years	(X)	17.7%	(X)	24.0%	(X)	30.6%
18 years and over	(X)	26.1%	(X)	16.4%	(X)	16.2%
18 to 64 years	(X)	28.3%	(X)	17.1%	(X)	16.8%
65 years and over	(X)	6.0%	(X)	12.2%	(X)	12.5%
People in families	(X)	9.2%	(X)	16.0%	(X)	17.6%
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	(X)	42.8%	(X)	23.4%	(X)	20.4%

Appendix B

November 2012 Newsletter

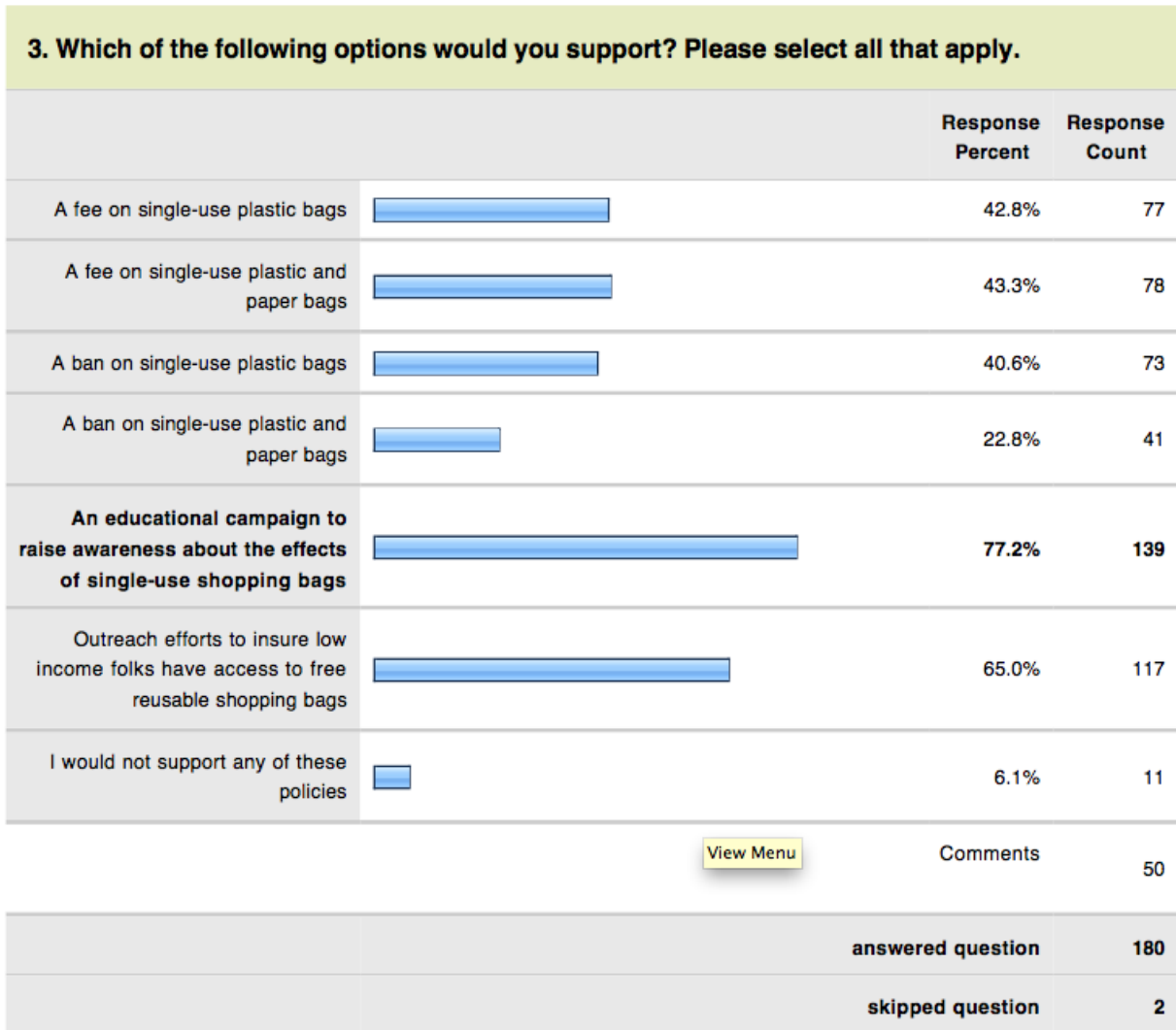


1. When you go shopping in Denver, what do you most often use to bring home your groceries and retail merchandise?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Plastic bags provided by the retailer		21.5%	39
Paper bags provided by the retailer		3.9%	7
Reused paper or plastic bags from a prior trip to the store		0.6%	1
My own reusable bag (cloth, plastic, etc.)		74.0%	134
answered question			181
skipped question			1

2. Should the Denver City Council adopt an ordinance targeted at the reduction of single-use shopping bags (plastic or paper disposable bags)?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		77.5%	141
No		14.8%	27
Not sure		7.7%	14
Comments			62
answered question			182
skipped question			0



Survey Comments

it is ridiculous that Denver isn't doing something to reduce this pollution to our environment.

4/3/2013 11:30 AM

Single use plastic bags are a waste of resources and a trash and litter problem. It is time we start discouraging thier use.

3/17/2013 5:54 PM

Have you researched how such a program is working in the cities where it's been instituted? I'd like to see some data on how effective it's been in reducing waste and how it's been received by the public.

3/11/2013 10:26 AM

Denver is already leading the way on other sustainable issues such as B-cycles. These may seem like minor issues but totaled they provide an added draw to young professionals and families choosing where to locate. Eventually all municipalities will have some type of restriction on single-use shopping bags. By leading the way Denver will be a leader versus follower.

3/8/2013 1:46 PM

Plastic bags from stores don't need to be "single use". They certainly are not in my household. I use them as my garbage bags; the city of Denver wants our garbage in plastic bags, remember. Any that are too torn to re-use are returned to the store for recycling. An ordinance prohibiting their use would force people to buy more new plastic bags.

3/1/2013 9:09 AM

Do we have a problem with the single use bags? I am all for reducing them and many people have changed their behaviors already.

12/10/2012 9:52 PM

Against plastic products!

11/25/2012 11:15 AM

As well as a charge people a minimal fee for the plastic bags if they forget to bring their own...

<http://www.sfenvironment.org/article/prevent-waste/checkout-bag-ordinance>

11/21/2012 9:18 AM

People scream "freedom" when they are too lazy to do the right thing. Single use bags shouldn't be illegal, they should be charged a deposit to use.

11/20/2012 3:41 PM

It works in Aspen, Colorado

11/20/2012 3:40 PM

Here is some back-up information for the Denver City Council: <http://www.earthresource.org/campaigns/capp/capp-background-info.html> There is no valid recycling benefits to plastic bags...even though some stores collect them. They are damaging our oceans and wildlife. <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/1006-04.htm> (info about plastic is about 3/4 into this article). Bags are made from oil and we must reduce our use of oil in this country as well...this information shows the destruction that oil company greed plays in this as well

<http://ocean.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/critical-issues-marine-pollution/>

11/20/2012 2:30 PM

BUT I think that the ban or taxes put responsibility on the wrong party. It shouldn't be the customer's responsibility. I think that the stores should have to CREATE a recycled bag market to take the bags, in order to be able to give them out. Make them figure out the waste stream problem. Plus, I'm concerned that a bag ban wouldn't be applied uniformly (Does it include produce bags? Meat counter? Floral department? Are convenience stores and department stores included, too, or just groceries?) or that it may lead to additional packaging (such as all the produce being shrink wrapped or put on styrofoam trays and wrapped in plastic -- neither of which are BAGS, so they wouldn't be included in the ban).

11/20/2012 2:17 PM

Currently, the cost of single-use bags is incorporated into the cost of merchandise for all customers. There is rarely a benefit or incentive to use your own bags. The cost of these bags should be put on the individuals who choose to use them.

11/20/2012 1:34 PM

Do not make it mandatory. Educate the people, but do not put an added burden to the many ordinances already in place.

11/16/2012 3:30 PM

Yes, please! When studying abroad in Germany I was fascinated by how reusable bags are indoctrinated into their society. There is simply no need for single-use shopping bags. Stores will save funds from not having to provide them; indeed they can charge a nominal fee for bags in the event that people forget to bring their own.

11/15/2012 8:45 PM

At the very least a tax should cover the cost of litter cleanup including storm drain maintenance and reusable bag promotion. Environmental costs should be monetized through a more global carbon tax covering all petroleum products.

11/14/2012 12:01 AM

Absolutely! I think it is time to get people committed to bringing their own bags. It is such a simple practice that saves so much harmful waste both in the production of bags and the trash from their improper disposal. I think we are ready for this here in the Front Range. Boulder is creating a fee policy next year, let's do this together. Make it happen Denver!

11/13/2012 9:13 AM

I am guilty of having purchased many reusable bags and then leaving them at home when I run to the grocery store. I suspect that if there were no other options and/or a fee, I would be more conscientious about bringing my own. I know it's an issue of personal responsibility but sometimes a busy professional and mom needs some outside pressure.

11/12/2012 4:06 PM

Denver needs to catch up to LA & other major cities across the USA.

11/12/2012 3:57 PM

I'll help campaign on this.

11/12/2012 2:53 PM

i am in favor of this passionately...

11/12/2012 1:27 PM

As a country, we can't afford to ignore this out of convenience. Thank you for considering a responsible approach!

11/9/2012 9:33 AM

We can all learn to bring our own containers for purchases. It will take time to completely switch over to the consumer bringing bags/boxes vs the retailer providing the bags.

11/8/2012 9:36 PM

Follow Vitamin Cottage lead: No bags, they offer their packing boxes if you forget your own shopping bag. The idea is not to punish stores and people with punitive actions and added costs - but to offer an existing resource for at least one more use before recycling.

11/6/2012 6:10 PM

Would there be a supply of reusable bags for those who are truly poor?

11/6/2012 3:30 PM

People should be encouraged to use reusable bags, not penalized for using single use. Encouragement should be more reusable bag giveaways and education of the population. I regularly use reusable bags because I have received them from various Denver events, like 5Ks, promotional events. etc.

11/6/2012 2:59 PM

I re-use plastic bags to line my trash/garbage containers. (Saves purchasing same.) When I don't take them to the grocery store, I use big paper bags to take newspapers, etc., to our building's recycle bin.

11/6/2012 12:28 AM

Less govt. is best. These are on their way out due to public opinion and use, and we should allow them to go naturally. I reuse every single plastic bag I bring home, so I will have to buy plastic bags if shopping bags are not available. I do have reusable bags that I often use.

11/6/2012 10:15 AM

Sooner or later we will be forced to do this. why wait until it's too late. Let's be a leader

11/6/2012 8:49 AM

We use single use bags again in the home. If these are eliminated, we may end up purchasing other bags to use in the home.

11/6/2012 7:56 AM

Absolutely! I'm disappointed that Denver, an aspiring "World Class City" has not yet done what so many other world class cities have done. Reducing our reliance on foreign oil (yes, those plastic bags are a petro product!) and cleaning up our environment should be top of Denver's "Yo Do" list. There is no reason for the tens of millions of plastic bags - single use, no less - wasted in Denver. Let's be proud and get this simple change made!

11/6/2012 7:24 AM

Absolutely! I'm disappointed that Denver, an aspiring "World Class City" has not yet done what so many other world class cities have done. Reducing our reliance on foreign oil (yes, those plastic bags are a petro product!) and cleaning up our environment should be top of Denver's "Yo Do" list. There is no reason for the tens of millions of plastic bags - single use, no less - wasted in Denver. Let's be proud and get this simple change made!

11/6/2012 7:24 AM

Right now reuse of bags is voluntary. I don't see a lot of volunteers. Save-a-lot groceries doesn't provide free bags and that does not stop anyone of any economic level from shopping there. Costco also does not offer free bags. I forget to bring my reusable bags. If there was a noticeable fee for bags, I'd start remembering real fast. And I would see much less of the plastic bag caught in trees.

11/5/2012 9:14 PM

I reuse those bags at least once more. I recycle newspapers, line trash cans and litter boxes, store linens in whole sets in the closet, and store sweaters. If I didn't get these bags, I would probably buy some. I think education is better. And making recycling easy helps.

11/5/2012 6:54 PM

We do not need fee or so called "tax" on plastic bags especially lower income neighborhood.

11/5/2012 6:45 PM

People need to wake up and put effort into conserving resources, instead of wasting them. It is not difficult to keep a larger bag of cloth and stronger, reusable plastic bags in my car to take into the store with me. Target still gives 5 cent credit for bringing your own bag. What would be done with the revenue raised from charging people for bags?

11/5/2012 4:37 PM

Although I usually use plastic bags provided by the retailer, this is because my wife and I usually shop together and she believes reusable bags of any kind are unsanitary after being used once or twice. I would love some encouragement for using reusable bags.

11/5/2012 4:37 PM

yes, yes, yes!!!

11/5/2012 3:45 PM

Use of plastic bags should remain a choice. This needs to be part of a much larger environmental education effort. I see people discarding recyclable materials all too frequently. We also have to ask what regulation would do to the cost of shopping. Why not get manufacturers to produce more degradable bags?

11/5/2012 2:45 PM

I don't take the daily paper anymore, so the pooper scooper bags I make available are the larger grocery size.

11/5/2012 2:10 PM

We live in a very healthy and environmentally conscious state, so it seems appropriate to be a leader in reducing the use of plastic grocery bags. Let's work harder at reducing our nations dependence on foreign fossil fuel and saving trees.

11/5/2012 1:59 PM

This program is working well in other cities I have visited. One look at any waste disposal site will convince any reasonable person that plastic bags are a problem. They don't de-compse and clog drains, sewers, waterways and now even the ocean. Something must be done. There are presently hidden costs to municipalities for removal of plastic bags. If we could quantify that cost, many doubters would be more willing to consider placing a price on their use.

11/5/2012 1:55 PM

This is long overdue.

11/5/2012 1:13 PM

Targeting the reduction would be great. There will always be a use for plastic bags - if people reuse them reliably, the impact is reduced, but still there.

11/5/2012 12:16 AM

If there was an ordinance I would be more steadfast about using my reusable bags. I just forget so often, and end up using the store bags because they are there,

11/5/2012 12:13 AM

Hw will very low income folks affort to purchase theri reusable bags?

11/5/2012 12:02 AM

I use my own bags for some purchases and just carry small items to the car unwrapped. I do not want to give up plastic bags at the supermarket. I only shop once a week or once every ten days. I need a lot of bags and find it hard to estimate how many bags I would use for meats (which often drip blood), produce and packaged items all of which should be kept separate. I do reuse the plastic bags I bring home as trash can liners.

11/5/2012 11:24 AM

I reuse plastic bags for groceries and I use them to line my waste baskets at home. Were these to be outlawed, I would need to purchase plastic waste basket liners and they would truly be single use bags.

11/5/2012 11:17 AM

I have tons of cloth bags in the hose and in the car. I use paper bags to hold my recycling - then recycle it along with the rest. I actually save my plastic bags and recycle them too! But I know that I'm the rare one. So, of course I like the idea, but the reality is there are people who don't have access to reusable bags (unless the go to events or can afford to buy one or make one). I guess I would have to see some qualitative research before I would feel comfortable about totally supporting the idea.

11/5/2012 11:14 AM

I think it would be a good idea to do a phase-out of these bags...charge a small fee at first, then raise the fee, then ban bags after people have had time and incentive to do the right thing!

11/5/2012 10:33 AM

I use my own re-useable bags at the grocery store, it would be harder at the mall or other places since that would seem to impose some security issues with individuals carrying in bags since there isn't a cart to hold the bags.

11/5/2012 10:29 AM

Charge small amount for bags then make them re-usable. See: Europe.

11/5/2012 10:23 AM

My initial reaction is to say 'Yes', but I'm not sure all of the possible unintended consequences have been brought to light.

11/5/2012 10:22 AM

Absolutely. Consumers should be responsible for bringing their own bags and if they do not, they should have to purchase bags from the store. That way the costs of the groceries can be reduced because the store no longer eats the costs of the bags.

11/5/2012 10:13 AM

I believe an ordinance is necessary because people who are still using single-use shopping bags are not going to change that insidious habit unless they are forced to do so.

11/5/2012 10:13 AM

I feel strongly that Denver should join other cities that have implemented measures to reduce the use of paper and plastic shopping bags.

11/5/2012 10:11 AM

Most dog parks rely on users picking up the poop with "single-use" shopping bags. Although this is not the best re-use of this single use item, it does help keep dog parks and parks cleaner, which is a good thing!

11/5/2012 10:03 AM

I have cloth bags and forget to use them, but should use them! SO I would support the DCC and get myself in line about this this important issue.m veges

11/5/2012 9:59 AM

It's a misconception to suppose that these bags are "single-use". If not using my own bag, I always specifically request plastic bags because I re-use these as trash can liners at home. This saves the expense and waste of purchasing plastic bags for that purpose. every one of these bags I take is either re-used or recycled.

11/5/2012 9:59 AM

Including PSA to consumers and stores to consider going bagless if they don't have a reusable bag. One item purchased at a store does not require a bag.

11/5/2012 9:47 AM

Controversial, but yes. When I last traveled in Europe this was the NORM - bring your own bag. Please step up all aspects of recycling- get rid of dumpsters across Denver. Ellen Winiarczyk

11/5/2012 9:44 AM

We have a recycling program

11/5/2012 9:38 AM

I think most people know that plastic bags are a problem, but they just keep using them out of habit or convenience. I think a ban would be more definitive and less to argue against than a fee. Maybe after the ban is in place, stores could offer bags for a fee until people get the habit of bringing their own bags. Upscale stores could give reusable bags with an initial purchase and encourage people to return them when they shop and buy again.

3/11/2013 10:26 AM

The first choice should be an educational campaign so people appreciate the benefits of re-using shopping bags. The environmental impact of plastic and paper bags is about the same so banning or restricting one over the other doesn't make sense.

3/8/2013 1:46 PM

The fees can obviously be used to support the campaign and outreach.

12/10/2012 9:52 PM

I would most support a large fee on single use bags - \$1-\$2.

11/25/2012 11:22 AM

Fee only if it went into a recycling or sustainable project.

11/25/2012 11:15 AM

An educational campaign will only work if you have community-based social marketing to back it up (i.e environmental effects of plastic bags, costs & benefits of plastic packaging, partnerships with big box stores: Wal-Mart & King Soopers, Safeway, Target) And incentives! An EVENTUAL ban on plastic bags will be feasible with the development of incentives. People like incentives, not fees. WholeFoods does a bag donation credit and helps local schools. I like that idea :) <http://asbury.dpsk12.org/whole-foods-bag-donation/>
11/21/2012 9:18 AM

Send bag vouchers along with food stamps.
11/20/2012 3:41 PM

If we are not part of the solution to the destruction of our environment, we are part of the problem. You can do something about it on behalf of all citizens and those to come. You have more power to do something about this than one individual alone can do. I will and do my part...will you do yours? No one used seat belts or child restraints until someone in a position of power required it. In that situation lives were at stake immediately. This is a matter of lives being at stake over a long term and something must be done now! People are like frogs, put them in cold water and gradually turn up the heat and they don't jump out, even to save their own lives.
11/20/2012 2:30 PM

Think about you're primary goal: reducing plastics in the waste stream. Does your policy address this? (Are ALL bags in the community included? Are you creating more of another kind of waste, like shrink wrap?) Think about equity: who bares the burden of this policy? Are poor burdened greater as a proportion of their income, which are regressive taxes? (How fair is this policy?)
11/20/2012 2:17 PM

Paper bags, while from a natural source and have biodegradability, actually consume more energy and resources in their production than plastic bags. Plastic bags are harmful to the environment, animals, and are an eyesore as they blow around the city. Neither is an ideal single-use item. Fee structures (they have to be high enough to enact change, and they must be a fee per bag used - not just a flat fee), have been successful in several European countries. Fees discourage single-use usage, and allow the public to understand there is an embedded cost to their consumption practices. Bans make it difficult for people who are visiting from out-of-town who might not be traveling with reusable bags. In some instances these bags may be needed. Single-use bags only became part of the American norm in the last 60 years. Within our own lifetimes we have changed our behaviors, so we know that we can survive without single-use bags.
11/20/2012 1:24 PM

Only optional and educational. Enough bans in place!
11/16/2012 3:30 PM

I'm wondering what the fee revenue would be used for?
11/15/2012 1:22 PM

I would encourage a bag exchange program utilizing a nominal refundable deposit on reusable bags available at checkout for people without bags or for people who forget to bring them. On the occasion that I forget a bag or make a last-minute stop, it would be nice to put down a deposit (based on the wholesale cost of the bag) to borrow a store-owned bag and then get that refunded when I return to the store the next time. Fees for plastic bags could be used to replace worn out bags.
11/14/2012 12:01 AM

I think it is very important to ban or place a fee on BOTH paper and plastic bags. They are equally harmful when you look at the big picture of production, resource use and disposal. It's a tough call on banning or fees. I personally think getting them out of stores would be preferable but see the wisdom in creating a fee. I would push for a pretty high fee: 25 cents a bag or more if that's the way we go.
11/13/2012 9:13 AM

I'm in support of getting single-use plastic grocery bags out of Denver. I fully realize that educational & outreach campaigns will be needed to raise awareness, but in the end reusable shopping bags will save people money & better the environment.

11/12/2012 3:57 PM

Evergreen's Alliance for Sustainability ran a campaign last summer towards single-use plastic bag consumption reduction. Evergreen is unincorporated Jefferson County, therefore without a municipality to enact change. We toted the campaign as a voluntary reduction measure. We will be re-invigorating the campaign again this spring utilizing Community-Based Social Marketing framework and would love to work in tandem with Denver towards an effective approach to behavior change. --Rachel Emmer, Interim Executive Director, Evergreen's Alliance for Sustainability, 720.837.8007

11/12/2012 3:08 PM

What is startling to me, is that consumers assume it is their right to receive a single-use bag. However, the store has to pay for it as some point, its not like its a free utility, but it does result in free-riders. This is a great initiative.

11/12/2012 2:34 PM

In Europe they charge a hefty price for disposable bags. I think it's \$.25 per bag or more, maybe more. My supermarket gives a measly 5 cent credit for your own bags. Cost needs to be higher.

11/9/2012 7:46 PM

There are plenty of businesses that advertise on reusable bags and give them away free. I have many of them and I haven't paid for 1.

11/8/2012 9:36 PM

Perhaps larger bags (i.e., those provided by Target, etc.) could be bio-degradable. I re-use those as trash can liners and, when full, throw out in the dumpster. When I have to use the smaller bags used by grocery stores, I have collected them and turned them in at King Soopers for recycling, but would not object to a small fee being charged by the stores as most people only throw those smaller bags in the trash.

11/7/2012 11:34 AM

I'm 71 years old and you want to make it more difficult for me to get food to eat - that is, carrying it from my car into my house. I reuse and recycle plastic bags. They are not single use for me.

11/7/2012 10:50 AM

Skip the outreach to poor. Too costly and shopping is the great equalizer regarding resources. Spend social and welfare money on healthy food, not free shopping bags!

11/6/2012 6:10 PM

People should be encouraged to use reusable bags, not penalized for using single use. Encouragement should be more reusable bag giveaways and education of the population. I regularly use reusable bags because I have received them from various Denver events, like 5Ks, promotional events. etc.

11/6/2012 2:59 PM

Sanitary implications of multi-use bags?

11/6/2012 12:28 AM

We use single use bags again in the home. If these are eliminated, we may end up purchasing other bags to use in the home.

11/6/2012 7:56 AM

I prefer an outright ban. It's ludicrous for anyone to say that low income people will have difficulty with a ban on plastic bags. Not too many years ago in Denver, there was no such thing as plastic bags and people of every income level managed just fine. The health and safety implications of current unlimited plastic bag consumption is argument enough for a total ban. Using cloth bags, virtually free and widely available, is the better option.

11/6/2012 7:24 AM

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11/6/2012 7:24 AM

I'm tired of seeing the single use plastic bags hanging from our trees.

11/5/2012 11:08 PM

Many other communities have done this successfully. What are we waiting for?

11/5/2012 9:46 PM

I think the fee for a bag should be \$.25...enough to make me remember to bring my own bag

11/5/2012 9:14 PM

I am opposed to a fee on single-use paper bags because I have not seen a single-use paper bag that I do not reuse in some way. We sometimes ask for paper bags when shopping and they are available so that we will have paper to reuse in a whole host of ways.

11/5/2012 4:37 PM

First choice is ban! Second choice - fee to discourage

11/5/2012 3:45 PM

See previous comments. There are many more ways to reduce use of plastic bags.

11/5/2012 2:45 PM

If the retailer doesn't provide them, they can't be out there. But they are more than just a sack to carry things in, they are advertisement for the retailer. So why charge the consumer for retail advertising?

11/5/2012 2:10 PM

Place a fee on use and increase that fee as removal costs rise. Eventually a majority of citizens will agree with a total ban on their use.

11/5/2012 1:55 PM

Plastic Bags are more efficient and easier to deal with. I reuse them for garbage, grass, and leaf pick up and put in garbage. Number 3 on your list add "hould there be an easy way to recycle the plastic bags". I am not in favor of paper bags. The approach just kills more trees and the planet needs as many trees and Oxygen as it can get. Why not biodegradable bags or make more plastic bags out of recycled plastic bags. No fees on any bags. Are we not taxed enough? Where would the money go? Give out free reusable bags. Of course they are very cumbersome. Have to remember them. Take up a lot of room in my vehicle and it cost people more money. (I have two reusable bags in my car and always forget them). Big families I suspect would need like 15 bags. Not a good solution, plus right now they cost money to buy. I live on Social Security don't need anymore fees, taxes, or costs on anything.

11/5/2012 12:40 AM

So many locations make these bags affordable at dollar cost.

11/5/2012 12:13 AM

How will the fee be collected? To whom will the fee be directed?

11/5/2012 12:02 AM

I don't believe one can change an entire system from a top - down approach. Education, outreach and buy-in are key to any substantive behavior change.

11/5/2012 11:14 AM

I think that paper bags should still be made available--even if there is a fee for it--but not banned. I have from time to time forgotten my reuseable bag and if nothing else was available then I'd be stuck. In terms of the environment, paper bags are marginally better than plastic bags. I would definitely support a ban on all single-use plastic bags.
11/5/2012 11:10 AM

I reuse my plastic shopping bags 2-3 times.
11/5/2012 10:39 AM

"ensure" not "insure" above
11/5/2012 10:15 AM

I don't think a fee would work. It would be a regressive fee for some, while many others would just pay it, ultimately not helping to stop using single-use shopping bags. Natural Grocers at the Vitamin Cottage stopped providing single-use shopping bags sometime ago, but they do provide an array of used product boxes which in reality are very similar to single-use bags. They soon, and ultimately, end up in landfills. I believe the only plan that would work would be for City Council to pass an ordinance outlying single-use bags, and maybe boxes. It would probably be a good idea to support this ban with an educational campaign to raise awareness about the effects of single-use shopping bags.
11/5/2012 10:13 AM

I do not want to single out any economic group! WE all have been short on taking this serious, incl. the DCC Lets get with the program and would it out.m.veges
11/5/2012 9:59 AM

The point is not to ban them, but to encourage re-use/recycling. Paper bags are not necessarily eco-friendly -- and I have no particular use for a paper bag (other than to re-use it at that retailer, which I do.) From my observation, most paper bags end up in the trash.
11/5/2012 9:59 AM

I'm so glad you are taking this survey and looking into these options. It seems I'm always offered a plastic bag, even if I only have one easy-to-carry item. There should not be a ban on single-use bags, but I'd would love to see plastic bags go away entirely. The money our local government spends on landfill for these bags should be incentive enough to see some action taken.
11/5/2012 9:47 AM

To encourage citizen participation I suggest a phased in approach- do simply go to a fee, but education, do outreach, then a fee.
11/5/2012 9:44 AM

I'd wait to see the uproar in Boulder. I like the idea, but what about what would people put their dogs' poop in?
11/5/2012 9:43 AM

Paper is fine. Plastic is the problem.
11/5/2012 9:41 AM

as long as the paper bag is recyclable it is ok. (ie in San Francisco stores have bags but no plastic bags.)
11/5/2012 9:40 AM

Appendix C

- Denver Department of Public Works
- City of Boulder
- Denver Department of Environmental Health
- Constituent Survey
- Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock
- UFCW Local 7 Executive Board
- Alliance for Climate Education
- Alliance for Sustainable Colorado
- Safeway
- King Soopers
- Colorado Retail Council
- First Plymouth Congregational Church
- Waste Management
- Denver City Council (4/12/13)
- Denver Post Editorial Board
- The Town of Breckenridge
- The City of Durango
- Colorado Restaurant Association
- Larry Ambrose, INC
- Downtown Denver Partnership Retail Committee
- Renewable Bag Council
- Helix-Poly
- Mile High Business Alliance
- Whole Foods
- Wal-Mart
- 7 –Eleven
- Speer Wealth Management Group
- Cherry Creek North BID
- Cherry Creek Shopping Center
- Downtown Denver Partnership Economic Development Council
- FRESC
- The GrowHaus
- Target
- Groundwork Denver
- A-1 Organics
- Colorado Licensed Beverage Association
- The Greenway Foundation
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Mayor’s Hancock’s Sustainability Advisory Council
- Sprouts
- Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association
- LiveWell Colorado 06/25/13
- Denver Human Services
- Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Walgreens