



# FAQS FOR SHOPPERS

## Reusable Bag Ordinance

Effective March 1, 2020

### OVERVIEW



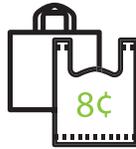
#### ENCOURAGED

bring your bag to help reduce waste



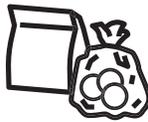
#### NOT ALLOWED

single-use plastic bags (some exceptions apply)



#### ALLOWED WITH FEE

large paper and thick plastic bags (made with at least 40% recycled content)



#### ALLOWED WITH NO FEE

small bags used to protect items

### WHAT IS THE REUSABLE BAG ORDINANCE?

In August 2019, the Kent City Council passed an ordinance that regulates which checkout bags retailers can give to customers. As of March 1, 2020, Kent retailers must do the following at checkout:

- No longer provide thin plastic bags
- Charge customers 8¢ for each thick plastic or paper bag they request
- Provide only bags made of at least 40% post-consumer recycled material
- Display the bag charge on customer receipts
- Not charge customers with WIC, TANF, SNAP, or FAP benefits when they request thick plastic or paper bags

Retailers will keep all collected fees but continue to provide other bags for free. These no-cost bags include plastic bags for produce, bulk products, and dry cleaning, as well as paper bags for baked goods, prescriptions, and hardware.

### WHEN DOES THE ORDINANCE TAKE EFFECT?

March 1, 2020

### WHICH BUSINESSES DOES THE ORDINANCE APPLY TO?

Stores, shops, outlets or vendors in Kent that sell retail goods. This includes vendors at farmer's markets, street fairs, festivals, and events. Wholesale distributors will not be affected.

### BAGS

#### WHICH PLASTIC BAGS ARE PROHIBITED?

Plastic bags provided at checkout that are thinner than 2.25 mils. Bags made of durable plastic (2.25 mils or thicker) are considered reusable and are allowed.

#### CAN RETAILERS PROVIDE PAPER BAGS?

Yes. Paper bags provided at checkout fall into two categories: barrel-size or smaller. Retailers must charge 8¢ for each barrel-size paper bag provided at checkout. Barrel-size bags are full-sized grocery bags typically found at most grocery stores. These bags are approximately 12 inches wide, 7 inches deep, and 13 to 18 inches tall, with a capacity of 1,100 to 1,600 cubic inches. Smaller paper bags provided at checkout do not require 8¢ fees, and neither do paper bags provided to customers before checkout. Regardless of size, all paper bags provided at checkout must contain at least 40% post-consumer recycled paper, be recyclable, and be compostable in a commercial facility.

#### WHAT ABOUT SMALL PAPER BAGS?

Small paper bags (less than 1/8 barrel or 882 cubic inches) can be distributed at checkout without a fee, but the bags must contain at least 40% post-consumer recycled paper.

#### CAN RESTAURANTS PROVIDE THIN, SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAGS FOR TAKEOUT FOOD?

Yes. To protect public health and safety, restaurants or grocery delis may provide thin single-use bags at no cost to protect unwrapped food.

### FEES

#### HOW MUCH IS THE FEE?

8¢ per large reusable plastic or paper bag provided at checkout

#### WHO WILL RECEIVE THE FEE?

All retail establishments are required to collect the fee. Retailers will keep the fee to offset the cost of purchasing the sturdy reusable carryout bags.

#### DO ALL BAGS HAVE FEES?

No. There are only fees for large reusable paper or plastic bags distributed at checkout. Fees will not be charged on bags used inside stores such as produce bags, bulk food bags, or bags used to wrap meat or fish. The fee does not apply to select other bags such as newspaper bags, dry cleaning bags, or prescription medicine bags.

## EXEMPTIONS

### ARE ANY BUSINESSES EXEMPT?

Yes. Food banks and other food assistance programs are exempt from all requirements. Retailers may also request a one-year exemption from Kent's Public Works Director if the ordinance would cause undue hardship.

### WHAT ABOUT RESTAURANTS?

Restaurants and other establishments whose primary business is preparing food or drink may provide free single-use plastic carryout bags to customers ordering takeout food or drinks. If, however, restaurant customers are only purchasing pre-packaged items such as spices or canned sauces, restaurants must provide customers requesting a bag with one meeting ordinance requirements.

### WHICH BAGS ARE EXEMPT FROM THE FEE?

#### Paper or plastic bags used for:

- bulk items (produce, grains, small hardware items, etc.)
- damp items (frozen foods, meat, flowers, etc.)
- unwrapped prepared foods or bakery goods
- prescription medicine
- newspapers or dry cleaning
- protecting purchased items from damaging or contaminating other items

### WHICH CUSTOMERS ARE EXEMPT FROM THE FEE?

Customers will not be charged for carryout bags if they use a voucher or electronic benefits card issued under food assistance programs including, but not limited to, the Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) Program; Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as Basic Food; and the Washington State Food Assistance Program (FAP).

## IMPLEMENTATION

### HOW CAN I REMEMBER TO BRING REUSABLE BAGS TO THE STORE?

#### At home

- Make "Bring bags" the first item on all your grocery lists
- Keep reusable bags in your backpack, gym bag, or purse
- Hang reusable bags on the back of your main door
- Set a regular "Bring bags" reminder on your phone for the days and times you usually buy groceries

#### In the car

- Store reusable bags in the front where you can see them easily
- Post a "Bring shopping bags" stickie note on your dashboard

### HOW CAN I KEEP MY REUSABLE SHOPPING BAGS CLEAN?

Shake out and wash the reusable bags after using them. If the bags are boxy and made from plastic, you can also clean them with a sponge and soapy water. If you use your reusable shopping bags for carrying other items such as gym clothes, wash the bags before using them for groceries.

### I REUSE MY THIN PLASTIC BAGS A LOT. WHAT ARE SOME IDEAS FOR LIVING WITHOUT THEM?

#### Pet waste:

Use other plastic bags for disposing of pet waste, such as bread, produce, cereal, or Ziploc bags.

#### Garbage bags:

Line your garbage can with paper bags and newspaper or buy plastic bags from the store.