

# Los Altos Plastic Bag Ban Set For July 4

A ban on polystyrene, which Los Altos Hills has already banned, is the next ordinance the city is working on.

By [L.A. Chung](#) | [Email the author](#) | March 16, 2013

Come July 4, single-use plastic bags will be a thing of the past in most stores in Los Altos.

The Los Altos City Council passed the ban on its second reading. [The new ordinance](#) bans the thin, single-use plastic bags and requires retailers to charge customers a minimum of 10 cents for a paper bag (recycled-content) or reusable plastic or cloth bag.

The ordinance exempts restaurants, fast-food establishments and nonprofit resellers. The charge will increase to 25 cents Jan. 1, 2015, the Los Altos Town Crier reported. Retailers must also itemize customer-purchased bags on sales receipts and store those transaction records for a minimum of three years.

Californians Against Waste reported on its site that the total number of local governments with bag ordinances in California rise to [69](#) with Los Altos' ordinance. Other communities are preparing to adopt local ordinances in the coming weeks and months, it said.

Many, like Mountain View, are planning the ordinances to go into effect on Earth Day, April 22. Others, like Cupertino, which approved its ban earlier this year, are planning a much longer education period and the ordinance will not go into effect until October. [Palo Alto, which led the movement several years ago when it banned bags in supermarkets, expanded its bag ban to retail establishments and restaurants](#), will go into effect for most businesses on July 1. Restaurants have until Nov. 1.

There is also movement for a statewide ban. State Sen. Alex Padilla has introduced [SB 405](#), which would ban single-use plastic bags in supermarkets and drugstores statewide and allow the sale of paper or reusable bags.

Plastic bags present unique cleanup problems, according to the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA). With exposure to sunlight and water, they break into smaller toxic pieces that entwine in vegetation, contaminate soil and water, and may be consumed by animals and birds.

“The reusable bag movement has been a process of first encouraging people to bring their own bags, then having some stores offer incentives for doing it and now having ordinances in place,” said BASMAA Executive Director Geoff Brosseau, in a written statement.

Brosseau predicted the adoption of reusable bags would be like the public's learning to use of seat belts and stop smoking in public places. Both were once seemed unthinkable and are now part of daily life.

**Related Topics:** [Polystyrene](#), [recyclable bags](#), and [single use plastic bags](#)