

# PLASTIC BAGS ARE THE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE CHOICE



## NYC MYTH VS FACT

**Myth:** Sponsors of the bill to tax plastic retail bags claim they are “single-use,” and “not designed for multiple reuses.”

**Fact:** Not only are plastic retail bags reusable, but studies consistently show that 90% of people reuse their bags for several household purposes.

**Myth:** A tax on plastic retail bags will significantly reduce the amount of waste and litter in the environment.

**Fact:** Plastic bags comprise less than 2% of the New York City waste stream, so taxing plastic bags will not have a significant impact on waste reduction in the city. Similarly, plastic retail bags traditionally make up less than 1% of litter.

**Myth:** Paper and “reusable” bags are better for the environment than plastic retail bags.

**Fact:** Plastic bags are the most environmentally-friendly choice at the checkout. They consume fewer natural resources, generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions, take up less landfill space than paper or “reusable” bags and are made in America. The vast majority of reusable bags are made from petroleum and manufactured overseas.

**Myth:** There’s no demand for recycled plastic.

**Fact:** There is a market for recycled plastic because it is cheaper to use recycled plastic than to purchase raw materials. Recycled plastic can be turned into many things beyond just new plastic bags. Following Hurricane Sandy, decking materials containing recycled plastic bags were used to rebuild boardwalks throughout New York and New Jersey.

**Myth:** The New York City Council’s plastic bag tax is friendly to low-income New Yorkers.

**Fact:** The NYC bag tax will burden the millions of New Yorkers who struggle to make ends meet. Though stores will waive the charge for providing paper or plastic bags for customers using SNAP or WIC benefits, the exemption does nothing for the working poor who are not SNAP or WIC participants and will have to pay more for their groceries.

**Myth:** Taxing plastic retail bags will have no effect on the economy.

**Fact:** The plastic bag industry employs over 30,000 Americans across the United States, with 1,800 working families in New York State relying on the plastic bag manufacturing and recycling sector for their livelihoods. Alternatively, “reusable” bags are largely produced overseas.

**Myth:** Plastic bags are not recyclable and have a tendency to jam recycling equipment, leading to costly repairs.

**Fact:** Plastic retail bags are 100% recyclable, and the industry has created more than 30,000 retailer drop-off points to make plastic bag recycling as easy as possible for consumers. In addition to plastic retail bags, New Yorkers are encouraged to return newspaper, dry cleaning, bread and cereal bags as well as overwraps on cases of bottles, paper towels and bath tissue. This retailer take-back system is efficient and separate from municipal recycling facilities. In fact, certain stores are mandated by New York State law to provide plastic bag collection bins onsite.

**Myth:** Low recycling rates for plastic bags prove recycling them doesn’t work.

**Fact:** Recycling works. The problem is not everyone knows that plastic grocery bags are 100% recyclable and not everyone has access to plastic bag recycling in their community. A city-wide plastic bag education campaign would help change this. Additionally, recycling rates for plastic bags are lower than other products because so many people reuse them as trash bags. This reuse keeps new and often thicker plastic out of the waste stream and is a unique attribute of the plastic bag.

**Myth:** Plastic retail bags are made from oil and are commonly made overseas.

**Fact:** The standard plastic grocery bag is American-made, even produced in the boroughs of New York City, and are made from a byproduct of natural gas.

**Myth:** SNAP & WIC participants are completely exempt from paying the 5 cent tax.

**Fact:** As per Councilmember Lander himself, SNAP & WIC participants are only exempt when they are using their card or food stamps. If they are paying with cash, they will have to pay the 5 cent tax, regardless of income.

**Myth:** The Sponsors emphasize that because plastic bag fees and bans have been implemented in a number of cities, that a tax will be successful in New York City.

**Fact:** Unlike San Francisco and Washington, D.C., New York City is a walking city. This tax may pass muster in some wealthier neighborhoods but not with the working class of the City.