

Calabasas Grocers Prepare for Plastic Bag Ban

City officials will give away reusable bags on July 1, when the plastic bag ban goes into effect.

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Calabasas shoppers used to being asked for paper or plastic as they check out their groceries soon won't have much of a choice—the city's ban on plastic shopping bags goes into effect on Friday.

The ban, adopted by the [Calabasas City Council](#) with a 5-0 vote on Feb. 2, requires all stores in the city to do away with the ubiquitous plastic bags that, according to the Calabasas city [information page](#) on the ordinance, have created an environmental disaster. They also cost California about \$375 in cleanup and litter prevention.

Michael Hafken, a Calabasas city spokesman, said the ban will be implemented in two phases. The first phase of the ban would only include the largest stores in the city - those that grossed more than \$2 million in sales every year or were larger than 10,000 square feet. The second phase, beginning Jan. 1, 2012, will include the remaining independent stores in the city.

Hafken said the city council made sure to involve many of the retail stores in Calabasas to ease the transition from plastic to paper and reusable bags.

"We worked very closely with the stores from the very beginning . . . they're all on board," Hafken said.

Many large grocery stores in Calabasas have been preparing themselves for the ban since its passage.

Most of these stores have been reminding customers of the impending ban with signs, giveaways and deals. Representatives from stores like Ralph's, Albertson's and Gelson's Market have all said that they've been in full support of the ban and have worked with the city to both get it passed and to help with the transition to recycled and reusable bags.

"The response has been very good . . . [the ban] has allowed us to go globally green," said one employee at the [Ralph's](#) in Calabasas who wouldn't give her name.

Rick Crandall, director of environmental stewardship for [Albertsons](#), said the grocery chain has been in full support of the ban. As for letting customers know about the impending switch, Crandall said the store has done everything from putting up signs to giving out free bags to inform its patrons about the ban - according to him, Albertson's plans to give out 10,000 to 15,000 bags by July 7.

The ordinance also mandated that large stores must charge shoppers 10 cents for every recycled paper bag they use. According to the city website, the charge is meant to dissuade people from using the recycled bags in favor of getting their own reusable bags. The paper bags are nearly as bad for the environment as the plastic bags, according to the site.

Crandall said such a charge probably wouldn't be a turn off to customers, however.

"A lot of customers will say 'Gee, we used to get our bags for free.' Remember one thing - things are never free. We didn't charge you for those bags, but if you think you didn't in some way pay for those bags, something's wrong," Crandall said. "No matter what business you go to, Home Depot, Kmart, Wal-Mart, you're paying for those bags. It's just put into the cost of goods."

Crandall also said the 10-cent charge was likely included in the bill to help independent stores in the area afford to buy thousands of the new, more expensive paper bags.

Shoppers at the [Commons](#) appeared to be in favor of the ban for its purpose of making Calabasas a more environmentally conscious city.

Eric Olson of Sherman Oaks said that other countries in Europe have been experimenting with bans like this for years.

"It just doesn't make any sense," Olson said of using plastic bags for shopping. "You get a bag to carry a few items to your car, but that bag lasts for hundreds of years."

Janet Mace of Valley Village was also supportive of the ban, saying it would just reinforce a practice she already preaches.

"When stores ask if you want paper or plastic, I've always said paper," she said. Mace said she was concerned about what the continued use of plastic bags was doing to the environment.

"We're in deep trouble," she said.

A plastic bag ban for unincorporated Los Angeles County cities also goes into effect on July 1.

Elected officials, staff and volunteers will be distributing 2,500 free reusable bags on Friday at the following locations from 9 a.m. to noon:

- Gelson's Market, 22277 Mulholland Highway.
- Ralphs, in the Commons.
- Rite Aid, also in the Commons.

As well as the following stores from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

- Albertsons, 26521 Agoura Road.
- Maddy's Market 26767 Agoura Road.