



Duluth Businesses as Minnesota Leaders

Background

Citizens understand concern about global plastic contamination. In 2017, National Geographic featured an entire issue on the issue of global plastic contamination. Cities and counties from South Carolina to Anchorage, Alaska and across the globe have passed local legislation and started to turn off the source of the most common disposable plastics.

Global corporations including McDonalds, Starbucks and more are now changing policies around single use plastics. US grocer Kroger recently announced that by 2025 they would offer only reusable bags, beginning implementation in Seattle in 2019. New England multi-state grocery chain Price Chopper is moving away from disposables. According to a spokesperson, *“Our focus is to find and support the most effective way forward to diminish our reliance on disposable plastics, paper and plastic (bags), and encourage the use of long-term, heavy-duty alternatives”*

National retailer Savers, with a branch in Duluth, implemented a policy in which they now charge 10 cents per paper carry out bag and no longer provide plastic single use carryout bags. Other Duluth retailers, including Yarn Harbor and the Great Lakes Aquarium, recently adopted a fee on single use carryout bags. These Duluth retailers report significant support by customers. Grandma’s Restaurant reports a decrease of 1.8 million straws used by switching to a straws on request policy.

Single Use Bag Studies ⁱ

- Our demand for free single use bags carry out bags costs an average grocery store about \$60,000 per year.
- Duluth retailers spend an estimated average \$1.5 million dollars on single use bags every year. This is equivalent to the cost of purchasing 15 reusable bags per Duluth citizen per year.
- Both plastic and paper bags have an environmental footprint
- Micro plastics are found in Lake Superior fish, the St. Louis River, Duluth beer and elsewhere.
- Studies show a pass through charge on single use bags can reduce usage by an estimated 85%

Organizational, Congregation and Business Support

[Approximately 110 businesses and organizations](#) support Bag it Duluth’s proposal to place a pass through charge on single use carryout bags. These include the St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Regional Stormwater Protection Team, Great Lakes Aquarium, Duluth Sister Cities International, NAACP-Duluth Branch, Congdon Park School Wellness Committee, Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Ski Hut, and more. Approximately, [1000 citizens have publically indicated they would support stores](#) that place a fee on single use bags and a city ordinance.

The Opportunity

There is a clear trend away from single use products. Leading retailers, cities and states are advancing policies to reduce waste and promote reuse. The Duluth business community has an opportunity to distinguish itself by voluntarily adopting a single use bag fees while recouping the cost of bags, providing straws by request only and phasing out the use of Styrofoam to-go containers.

ⁱ Citations available at www.bagitduluth.org. Local usage estimates based on conversation with Super One store manager and national usage estimates.