

Carpinteria Council Adopts Citywide Ban on Single-Use Shopping Bags

While it's not the first in California to enact such a law, not all cities on the South Coast, including Santa Barbara, have moved as quickly



An employee at the Alberstons in Carpinteria bags groceries in reusable bags that customers can purchase for 32 cents each. The store was ahead of the curve in phasing out single-use bags, with the City Council approving a ban on Monday. (Lara Cooper / Noozhawk photo)

By Lara Cooper, Noozhawk Staff Writer | [@laraanncooper](#) | Published on 10.12.2011 8:09 p.m.

Albertsons employee Gabe Chavez recalls the response when his Carpinteria store first instituted the change.

“What do you mean you don’t have bags?” customers would ask.

The store still had bags for groceries, but they were reusable, and a basic one could be purchased for 32 cents.

Customers were missing the free single-use bags, the plastic and paper options still offered in most stores in California. But Chavez said that after a few weeks, most customers had grown accustomed to the change, and even supported it.

The free bags are moving toward being a thing of the past, at least in Carpinteria. The **City Council** made a bold move with a unanimous vote on Monday to ban all single-use bags in the city.

Large stores, such as Vons and Rite Aid, have three months to phase in the ban, and smaller stores have six weeks. Bags for produce and bags for thrift stores are still allowed. Stores that can prove the ban would be an undue hardship also are exempt.

Though Carpinteria's move is aggressive, it's not the first, as 14 other cities have passed similar ordinances.

The California Senate decided last year not to enact a statewide ban on plastic grocery bags, leaving local governments to deal with the issue. Lawsuits against cities trying to craft bans also have been widespread, led by industry-backed groups, such as the Save the Plastic Bag Coalition.

That group sued the City of Manhattan Beach for banning plastic bags without undertaking a review of the law's environmental impacts. But the state's Supreme Court ruled in favor of Manhattan Beach this summer, ruling that the city needed only a partial environmental review to go forward.

With the city banning both plastic and paper, Carpinteria city attorneys seemed confident Monday that the ordinance could stand up to a legal challenge.

Other cities on the South Coast haven't moved as quickly.

In July, the Santa Barbara City Council mandated that retail and other stores participate in the educational "Where's Your Bag?" program. Voters will also weigh in on a city ballot measure about whether a special tax should be imposed on single-use plastic or paper bags, or both. City staff are crafting the language for that measure now, which is likely to go before residents in 2013.

Several council members, including Bendy White, had expressed frustration that the council wasn't moving forward on the issue.

"We're not moving fast enough," he said earlier this year.

Ultimately, more conservative council members won out, hesitant to enact a ban.

But as council members in Carpinteria gave their unanimous approval this week, the audience applauded. None of the public speakers were against the ban.

Back at Albertsons, store manager Ahmed Jahadmy applauded the move on Wednesday.

“I don’t understand cities like Santa Barbara, who should be environmentally minded, but they’re not,” he said. “I think we are way ahead of the game.”

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