

# Late Backup

## City of Austin Plastic Bag Initiative

Summary Report including reporting information from January 2008 thru June 30, 2009.

Resolution Number 20070419-026 of Austin City Council on April 19, 2007 directed the City Manager to evaluate and recommend strategies for limiting the use of non-compostable plastic bags and promoting the use of compostable plastic bags, and reusable checkout bags. All these strategies would, in turn substantially reduce the amount of plastic bags entering the local landfills.

After meeting almost monthly with City Council staff and City of Austin Solid Waste Services Department, the Texas Retailers Association (TRA) and its member companies can now recommend a voluntary, 18 month "**Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle**" pilot program, to gauge effectiveness of a comprehensive program that included voluntary participation as compared to an imposed ordinance.

The goal of the pilot program is to reduce the amount of plastic bags entering the local landfill by 50% by June 2009 through encouraging the use of reusable checkout bags, the recycling of plastic bags and a reduction in purchases of plastic bags by the participating retailers. The "Austin's Got a Brand New Bag" awareness campaign will be a rallying point around which city government, retailers, environmentalists and the industry can keep working toward for the betterment of the environment and the community.

The retail participants are committed to the initiative and have made the following commitments to help reach the plastic bag reduction goals of the 2008 pilot program:

- **REUSABLE BAGS-** Our commitment is to make available reusable bags at affordable prices in every participating retail task force store by April 1, 2008. We will work with the City of Austin and Keep Austin Beautiful, through free distribution events and other marketing efforts, to encourage and motivate Austin citizens to acquire and utilize reusable bags to the greatest degree when shopping at our stores.

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Jan- June 08  | 443,227 sold in 82 participating stores         |
|               | Average sold per store: 5,405 during the period |
| July- Dec. 08 | 274,120 sold in 80 participating stores.        |
|               | Average sold per store: 3,426 during the period |
| Jan-June 09   | 190,256 sold in 82 participating stores.        |
|               | Average sold per store: 2,320 during the period |

There were no community efforts incorporating design a bag event, or Reusable Shopping Bag Days scheduled during the second or third reporting period.

- **RECYCLING-** We pledge to make available recycling bins/canisters located in a highly visible area and, in most store locations, at the front of the store near the entrance. We are redeveloping our messaging formats on the bins/canisters and will complete those formats by April 1, 2008. Our plastic bags include language that encourages shoppers to "reduce, reuse, and recycle". Our participating retailers recycled more than 215,000 pounds of plastic during the base period of January-June 2006. Our goal is to more than double that amount of plastic recycled by the June 2009.

| Reporting Periods      |             | Pounds of Plastic Recycled |
|------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Base Period            | Jan-June 06 | 215,301                    |
| Interim                | Jan-June 08 | 262,662 + 22%              |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Period | July-Dec 08 | 278,735 + 30%              |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Period | Jan-June 09 | 374,485 + 74%              |

These numbers do not include the pilot started and participation of recycling plastic film by the dry cleaning industry which was plastic film we collected in our recycling bins during the base and first reporting period.

- **REDUCE-** Our participating retailers bought approximately 1.6 million pounds of plastic bags during the base period. Our goal for the period of January-June 2009 is 1.28 million pounds or a 20% reduction. This will be achieved by concerted efforts to change both consumer behavior and retailer business practices.

| Reporting Periods      |             | Plastic Bags Purchased (Lbs) |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Base Period            | Jan-June 06 | 1,569,744 lbs.               |
| Interim                | Jan-June 08 | 918,881 lbs -41.46%          |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Period | July-Dec 08 | 1,278,431 -18.55%            |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> period | Jan-June 09 | 1,257,210- 19.91 %           |

Overall reduction of 1,254,710 pounds over the 18 month pilot period. Reduction of approximately 87,829,700 plastic bags that would have been placed in the community without the efforts of the participants in the pilot (Austin City Council, Austin Solid Waste Dept., KAB, HEB, Randall's, Target, Walgreen's and Wal-Mart).

One concern is we had no announced events or activities helping to drive the message and the results since the first period from Jan-June 2008. We wonder

what the results would have been had we been able to sustain marketing efforts over the entire 18 month pilot?

The Texas Retailers Association (TRA) will report and certify aggregated plastic recycling and plastic purchasing figures to the City of Austin's Solid Waste Services offices as noted to demonstrate steady progress toward the overall goals.

All the elements are in place for the successful rollout and implementation of this groundbreaking effort. The Austin Stakeholders group is very pleased to be participating in this cooperative and comprehensive pilot program. We believe that this initiative, which:

- a) establishes very aggressive yet attainable **"reduce, reuse and recycle"** goals;
- b) implements an effective outreach and education program; and
- c) recognizes that this 2008 pilot program is just the beginning,

will lead to a sustained and successful communitywide effort to change our culture, both as retailers and consumers, and play an important part in achieving the City of Austin's goal of having a zero waste plan in place by 2040.

Some of the lessons learned by our participating retailers were:

- By encouraging the use of reusable bags by signage, marketing products near the front check-outs and contests with clerks, our participating retailers are having a positive impact on the environment.
- Some of our participating retailers also compost in the front and in the back of the stores.
- Some of our participating retailers are now using biodegradable supplies for food and wine sampling and in dining area's where located in stores.
- Some of the participating retailers are now providing for recycling of glass, and plastic bottles.
- Some of the participating retailers are continuing to work control bag usage/cost information for review with regional and local store management and team members
- Best practice is to only give plastic bag for carry out when asked for small purchases of one-two items or items with built-in handles.
- To refresh signage to encourage customers to recycle at the participating stores.
- To change reusable bag design through out the year. Possibly changing with season's or even with special events like Breast Cancer Awareness, etc.

- Base line numbers should be established from yearly or annual average. Customer count during the July –December time frames is substantial increase due to major holidays during this period compared to customer count from a January – June time period.
- We had no organized or planned events during the reporting periods since the very first reporting period. Results in second and third reporting periods are based strictly on participates efforts to support the pilot.
- First reporting period and base period includes plastic film from dry cleaners that was sought and recycled by the participants.
- Increase number of participants to grow it to a community effort at Recycling-Reduction-Reusable program.

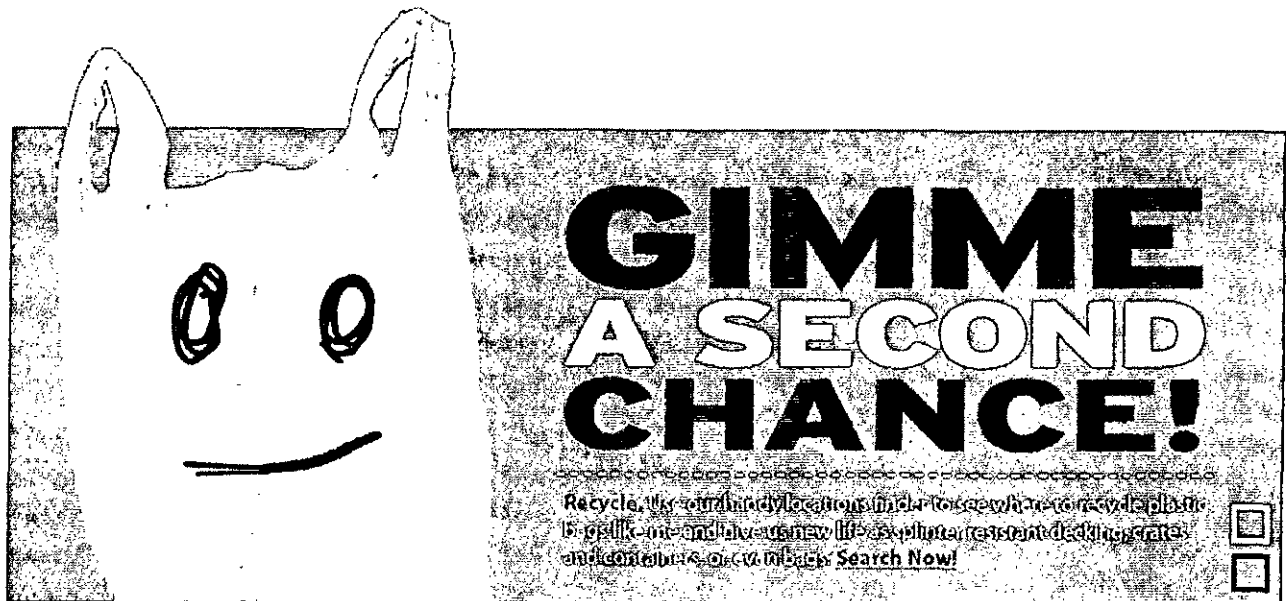
Respectfully submitted

Joe Williams

Texas Retailers Association



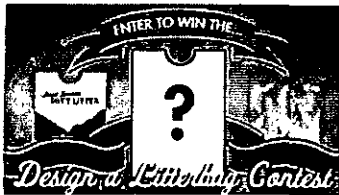
Enter Zip Code  Within 10 mi. ☐ **Search**



#### A BAGS LIFE TWITTER UPDATES

[follow me on Twitter \(http://twitter.com/abagslife\)](http://twitter.com/abagslife)

RT with the crafts you have made from plastic bags! - about 18 hours ago



[\(http://dontmesswithtexas.org/programs/design-a-litterbag/\)](http://dontmesswithtexas.org/programs/design-a-litterbag/)

A Bag's Life and TxDOT team up to reduce litter.

[//states/texas/article/think-outside-bag-14300\)](http://states.texas/article/think-outside-bag-14300)

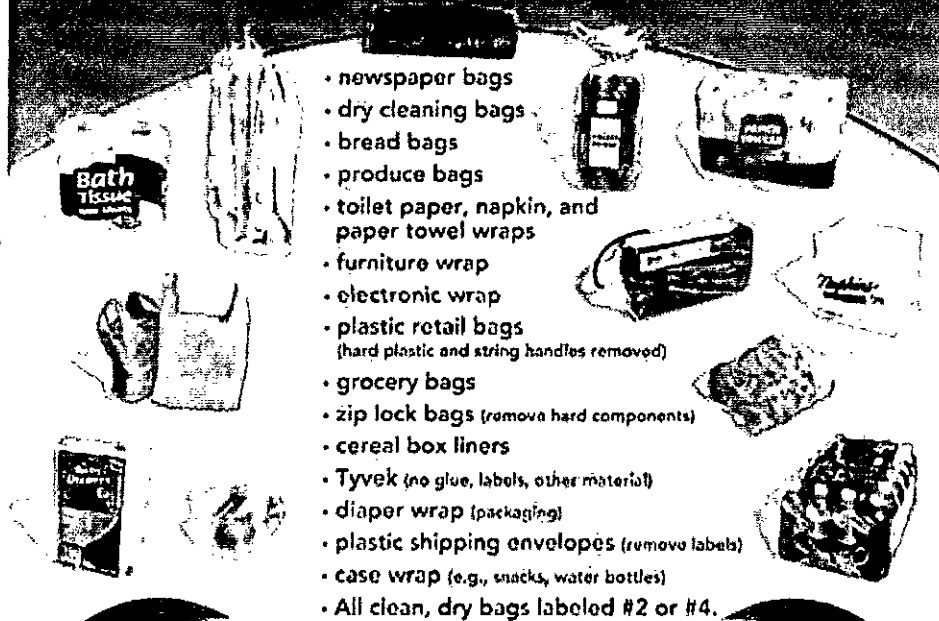


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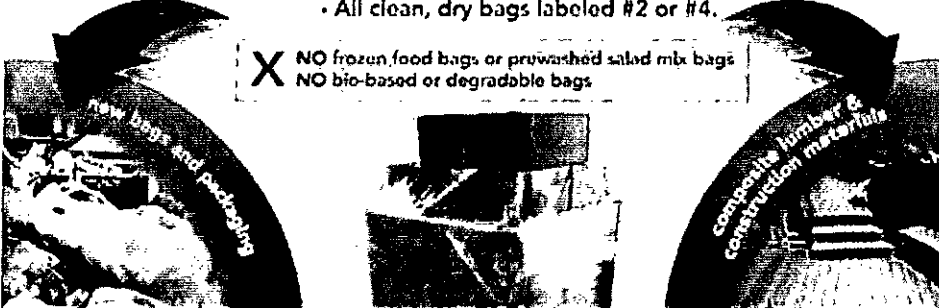
Think Outside The Bag

# RECYCLE

## CLEAN, DRY, EMPTY PLASTIC BAGS & FILM PACKAGING



**X** NO frozen food bags or prewashed salad mix bags  
NO bio-based or degradable bags



For more information visit [www.plasticbagrecycling.org](http://www.plasticbagrecycling.org)

This was printed from Austin Business Journal

## **Business Pulse Survey**

### **Should Austin City Council ban plastic bags?**

Should Austin City Council ban plastic bags at grocery stores and shops?

Yes **34%**

No **59%**

I'm not sure **5%**

Other (please explain) **2%**

Votes Cast: 1073

This survey is not a scientific sampling, but offers a quick view of what readers are thinking