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# PLASTIC BAG WASTE

An Administrative Survey for the City of Laramie

# **DEFINING TERMS**

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## **Retail-Use Plastic Bags:**

.5 mil or less packaging made of thin, flexible, plastic film, starch, or plastic textile. Sometimes referred to as “single-use” bags; however, these bags are reuseable and recyclable.

## **Plastic Waste:**

Plastic objects & particles that can accumulate in the environment and often cause adverse affects to wildlife and humans.

# CONTEXT OF WASTE

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- 100 billion plastic bags a year
- 500+ years for a bag to degrade in a landfill
- Average large retailer distributes 2 million a year

# COMMUNITY PARALLELS

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## **WORLDWIDE SHIFT**

- 72 countries
- 349 municipal ordinances

## **TOWN OF JACKSON**

- Only municipality in Wyoming with regulation
- Bag ban began April 15

# ESTIMATED COMMUNITY COSTS

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- Est. Landfill Operations (3-Year):

Catch Fencing \$35,000

Labor/Litter Clean-Up \$92,710

- Community Appearance

Est. Litter Clean-Up (5% of Ttl.)=

49 Service Hours

5-10 Staff Hours

# Common Municipal Strategies for Managing Plastic Bag Waste

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- Public Education on Reuse & Recycling
- Programming to Encourage Non-Plastic Retail-Use Bags
- Banning Retail-Use Plastic Bags
- Charging for Plastic and/or Paper Bags to Incentivize Consumer Actions

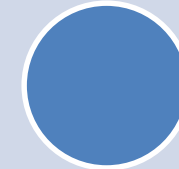
# MUNICIPAL REGULATORY SPECTRUM



Education &  
Programming



Fees  
Charged for  
Bags



Banning  
Bags

**Other Considerations:** bag density, retailer size, incentives for reusable alternatives, type of merchandise

# Pros of Regulating Bags

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## ■ REVENUE

Well-structured regulation(s) could minimize/eliminate the cost of plastic bag waste that is current paid for by residents.

## ■ CLEANER COMMUNITY

May decrease visible litter in community areas and open spaces.

## ■ ENVIRONMENT

Limiting plastic bag use and waste is generally considered environmentally-friendly.

## ■ LANDFILL OPERATIONS

May reduce cost of litter management.



# Cons of Regulating Bags

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## ■ COST TO CONSUMER

Potential added consumer costs for choosing to use plastic bags.

## ■ ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Cost and time of city workers to oversee and enforce regulation(s).

## ■ ENVIRONMENT & LANDFILL OPERATIONS

Paper bag alternatives also affect the environment and take up landfill space.

## ■ IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

Cost and time of retailers to comply with regulation(s).

# RECOMMENDATION

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Should Council wish to prioritize & address plastic bag waste...

City Manager's Office recommend a two-step approach:

**Step 1:** In FY 20/21, prioritize & implement a ***public education campaign and program*** to **a)** reduce the utilization of retail-use plastic bags, and **b)** provide consumers with alternatives. Measure & report impacts 12-months post-inception.

**Step 2:** Consider further regulations in FY21/22 as needed to accomplish Council objectives.

*(At this time, City Manager is inclined to recommend against a ban and for a market-based approach, depending upon data findings from Step 1 and final direction from Council.)*

**NEXT STEPS**

**Laramie Youth Council**

**Questions?**

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