

Public Education Plan for the Plastic Bag Ban

Objective: To raise awareness about the plastic bag ban, promote understanding of its importance, and provide guidance for compliance to businesses, residents, and stakeholders within the community. By implementing this plan, we aim to foster a cleaner and more sustainable community.

Target Audience:

1. **Businesses:** Retail establishments affected by the ban, including grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants, and big box stores.
2. **Residents:** The general public, including individuals and households.
3. **Stakeholders:** Local community organizations, environmental groups, schools, and government agencies.

Public Education/Outreach Plan Components:

1. **Website:** Develop a dedicated webpage on the City of Pittsburgh's website to serve as the central hub for information on the plastic bag ban. The webpage will include the following sections:
 - a. Overview: Concise information on the ban's purpose, its environmental impact, and the timeline for implementation.
 - b. Guidelines: Detailed guidelines for businesses and residents on the use of reusable bags, exemptions, and alternatives to single-use plastic bags.
 - c. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Address common questions and concerns related to the ban to ensure clarity.
 - d. Resources: Provide links to additional resources, such as plastic bag ban signage for businesses to post at points of sale to inform customers of the plastic bag ban, a list of compliant bag vendors for businesses, a link to the full text of the bill, informational flyers for businesses and residents, and educational materials for community organizations.
 - e. Getting Involved: Provide information and links for residents that wish to donate reusable bags, report business compliance violations, help promote the plastic bag ban, or ask general questions.
 - f. News and Updates: Regularly update the webpage with news, announcements, and any changes to the plastic bag ban regulations.
2. **Social Media:**
 - a. Develop a digital communications plan and an executive calendar for when/what to post on social media platforms.
 - i. Utilize existing channels – Department of Public Works, Office of Council District 8, Mayor's Office, community organizations, etc.
 - ii. Consider creating new accounts dedicated to promoting the plastic bag ban and other sustainability efforts by DPW and the City of Pittsburgh.
 - b. Create informative and engaging posts for social media to reach a broader audience.
 - c. Utilize visually appealing graphics, infographics, and videos to highlight the environmental impact of plastic pollution and promote the use of reusable alternatives.
 - d. Encourage businesses and residents to share their experiences, tips, and success stories related to the plastic bag ban.

- e. Respond promptly to comments, questions, and concerns raised by the public via social media channels.
- 3. Public Events and Workshops:**
- a. Organize public meetings/workshops and invite business owners to discuss policy details, hear concerns, and provide helpful resources.
 - b. Conduct informative townhall sessions to educate community organizations and residents on the plastic bag ban and its benefits.
 - c. Consider inviting local environmental experts and organizations to provide talks and presentations on sustainability and waste reduction as they relate to the plastic bag ban.
- 4. Collaborations and Partnerships:**
- a. Forge partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and schools to enhance the reach and impact of the public education campaign.
 - b. Engage local schools in awareness programs, encouraging students to create artwork or participate in contests that promote the reduction of plastic bag usage.
 - c. Establish convenient collection/distribution points where residents can donate their surplus reusable bags for others to take as needed. Prioritize easily accessible locations (libraries, community centers, small grocers) and communities with greatest need for reusable bags.
 - d. Consider collaborating with retailers to offer additional incentives for customers who bring their own reusable bags.
- 5. Printed Materials:**
- a. Design and distribute informative signage, flyers, and posters to local businesses, libraries, and community centers,
 - b. Encourage retail establishments to display educational signage to inform customers about the plastic bag ban and alternative options.
- 6. Media Engagement:**
- a. Issue press releases to local media outlets to remind the public of the plastic bag ban implementation date, highlight the ban's environmental significance, and emphasize the community's commitment to sustainability.
 - b. Engage with local newspapers, radio stations, and television channels for interviews or guest appearances to discuss the ban and answer questions from the public.
- 7. Continuous Evaluation and Improvement:**
- a. Regularly assess the understanding and compliance levels among residents and businesses.
 - b. Monitor the effectiveness of public education efforts through surveys, feedback forms, and data analysis.
 - c. Use the collected feedback to make necessary adjustments to the education plan, improve messaging, and address any misconceptions or challenges.

Public Education/Outreach Plan Overview and Timeline:

- **Phase 1: Pre-Implementation – Initiate and Educate** (*July 2023 – August 2023*)
 - Anticipate and proactively provide answers to the questions that businesses and individuals have regarding the plastic bag ban by creating a website, public resources, and posting on social media.

- Initiate contact with businesses, low-income communities, and community organizations; assess needs and target information accordingly.
- Utilize: *website, social media, printed materials, public events and workshops.*
- **Phase 2: Pre-Implementation – Engage and Support** *(September 2023 – October 2023)*
 - Promote the plastic bag ban more widely through social media and traditional media. Utilize in-person events and meetings to distribute more information and hear concerns from residents and businesses. Ensuring information is widely distributed enough to meet most people where they are.
 - By this stage in implementation, many of the needs of Pittsburgh’s diverse community members should already be communicated and taken into consideration, but this phase will also serve as an opportunity to support those who still need resources. Monitor needs and distribute additional resources to communities through reusable bag distribution and a more curated messaging strategy and media presence.
 - Utilize: *website, social media, printed materials, public events and workshops, media engagement, collaborations and partnerships*
- **Phase 3: Post-Implementation – Enforcement and Encouragement** *(October 2023 and beyond)*
 - Positively reinforce compliance by highlighting businesses that have proactively removed plastic bags and replaced them with paper and reusable bags.
 - Reach out to the business community to gauge who needs more support and resources to promptly come into compliance with the plastic bag ban.
 - Begin visiting businesses that are not yet compliant to share written warnings, a list of paper and reusable bag vendors, public messaging tips, and additional resources to help promote compliance.
 - Utilize: *social media, printed materials, collaborations and partnerships*