



OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY

Waste Reduction Policies

Strategies to Reduce Landfill Waste



March 26, 2025

POLICY GOAL

Reduce landfill waste by 25% by 2030 while advancing environmental justice goals and economic benefits for Richmond.



DISPOSABLE
PLASTIC BAG TAX



POLYSTYRENE
BAN
(STATE)



BALLOON
RELEASE BAN
(STATE)



ADMINISTRATIVE
UPDATES



LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

VA Code § 58.1-1745. Disposable plastic bag tax.

Any county or city may, by duly adopted ordinance, impose a tax in the amount of five cents (\$0.05) for each disposable plastic bag provided...

VA Code § 10.1-1424.3. Expanded polystyrene food service containers prohibited.

Beginning July 1, 2023³⁵, no a chain with 20 or more locations... shall dispense prepared food to a customer in an expanded food vendor that is a restaurant or similar retail food establishment and is part of polystyrene food service container...

VA Code § 29.1-556.1. Release of certain balloons prohibited.

It is unlawful for any individual 16 years of age or older or other person to intentionally release, discard, or cause to be released or discarded outdoors any balloon...



PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

RICHMOND 300 (2017)

Objective 15.4.h: Advocate in the General Assembly for enabling legislation allowing cities to ban or tax plastic bags, single-use plastics, balloons, and Styrofoam.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESOLUTION (2021)

“...implement a tax on disposable bags at retail outlets..”

RVAgreen 2050 (2023)

Strategy WR-4.1.iii: Pass an ordinance to impose a tax on plastic bags, the phasing out of polystyrene containers, and a balloon ban release, per state-enabling legislation.



DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BAG TAX



Localities with Disposable Plastic Bag Tax

Albemarle County

Alexandria City

Arlington County

Charlottesville City

Fairfax City

Fairfax County

Falls Church City

Fredericksburg City

Loudoun County

Roanoke City



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Roanoke City

Peer-City Analysis

Individual tax burden on residents: \$2.12/annually



DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BAG TAX



What type of bags are subject to this tax?

Disposable plastic bags provided to shoppers in grocery stores, convenience stores, or pharmacies. The tax applies whether the bags are provided to the customer free of charge, or if the store charges the customer for the bags.

What does this tax fund?

Money raised by this tax goes to support fund environmental cleanups, environmental and recycling education programs, or providing reusable bags to recipients of SNAP/WIC benefit.

- Ordinance proposes 3:2 cent revenue split with retailers for Y1, 4:1 cent revenue split for years following.
- Tax collection is managed through Virginia Tax via Form ST-9 Retail Sales and Use Tax return

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Peer City Analysis

Projected Revenue: \$391,725/annually



DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BAG TAX



Implementation Timeline

- March to July 2025: City Council Adoption Process (includes public hearing)
- July to December 2025: Business and Community Engagement Period
- January 2026: Disposable Plastic Bag Tax Collection Starts

Business Engagement

OOS to partner with DED to meet with business associations, conduct business visits, use marketing arm for virtual engagement, and email blasts.

Community Engagement Plan

OOS to host reusable bag giveaways, prioritizing neighborhoods with high participation rates in SNAP/WIC.

POLYSTYRENE BAN FOR PREPARED FOODS (STATE)



Implementation Timeline

- July 1, 2025: Polystyrene banned for food vendors with 20+ locations statewide
- July 1, 2026: Polystyrene banned for all food vendors

Business Engagement

OOS to partner with DED to meet with business associations, conduct business visits, use marketing arm for virtual engagement, and email blasts.

Exemptions

State may grant an exemption if food vendor provides evidence of “undue economic hardship”.



BALLOON RELEASE BAN (STATE)



Implementation Timeline

- Statewide Balloon Ban is in effect - *No person shall intentionally release one or more balloons into the atmosphere...*

Enforcement

Managed by State: Civil penalty for \$25 per balloon, to be paid into the Game Protection Fund.

Consumer Education

Retailers selling balloons will be provided education signage to be displayed regarding the prohibition on balloon releases at the point of sale.





Single-Use Plastics Reduction Administrative Regulation

Purpose: To reduce the city's reliance on single-use plastics (includes plastic and polystyrene plates, cutlery, cups, bowls, water bottles, trays, lids, and disposable bags).

Proposed Targets:

- 50% reduction by 2025
- 75% reduction by 2027
- Zero single-use plastics by 2030

Special Event Permit Update

Purpose: To reduce landfill waste produced by city-permitted events by providing 'eco-waste stations' that include recycling and composting receptacles.

Resources provided:

- Recycling Instructional Signage for event
- Recycling and Composting Receptacles for event
- Recyclable/Compostable Resource Guide for Vendors
- List of Non-Profits to provide volunteers to man 'eco-waste stations'



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