

ARIZONA FOOD INDUSTRY JOURNAL



Mayor **Phil Gordon**,
City of Phoenix



Councilman **Claude Mattox**,
City of Phoenix



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It's all About the Bags!

AFMA partners with the City of Phoenix to encourage recycling of plastic bags.

By Debbie Roth

The grocery industry has been working to address concerns raised by City of Phoenix Councilman Doug Lingner and the Phoenix City Council regarding unsightly litter and recycling issues resulting from plastic bags. Councilman Lingner, Chairman of the Sustainability-Subcommittee has led the charge to encourage City of Phoenix residents to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags. He hopes these efforts will aid in the reduction of plastic bags that end up in landfills and also reduce the litter associated with plastic bags.



Left to Right: Kendra Doyel, Public and Media Relations, Fry's; Mandy Robinett from Safeway store #2651; Mayor Phil Gordon; Councilman Claude Mattox; Shantelle Roshetko, Albertsons and Adrienne Begay, Best Bagger Contestant from Bashas'.

The Issue

Many residents are not aware that Phoenix's commingled recycling program cannot accept plastic bags. While plastic bags are recyclable they are not collected through traditional recycling collection methods. Plastic bags must be separated from other recycled materials. The main problem is that residents are unaware that plastic bags cause these problems. Therefore, they continue to put their used plastic bags into the City of Phoenix's recycling "blue bins". When plastic bags end up at the City's recycling center they cause damage to processing equipment, problems in processing quality, and reductions in the market value of recycled materials.

In efforts to solve these problems AFMA has worked closely in conjunction with City staff to create a collection system for plastic

bags. Retailers have agreed to place recycle bins in their stores for the collection of plastic bags. In addition, an educational campaign is a key element being implemented to educate residents on plastic bag recycling issues.



where plastic bags belong.

Provided by the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance
in Partnership with the City of Phoenix.

Voluntary Action Step

The retail grocery industry stepped up early and worked with City staff over the summer to develop a voluntary plastic bag recycling program. The following are the components of the program:

1. Retail establishments in Phoenix that provide plastic carry-out bags for their customers will place a recycling container for the bags in a prominent location inside their store.

Current status - Most retail establishments have placed containers for recycling plastic bags in a prominent location within their store. The Bashas' chain, which includes Bashas', AJ's, and Food City outlets, have installed containers in the front of their stores for plastic bag collection. Safeway and Albertsons had existing programs in place and have since upgraded bins within their stores. Fry's has also implemented its Bag2Bag program. The Bag2Bag program takes plastic carry-out bags and recycles them to create more bags for use in its stores. The City of Phoenix in cooperation with the E.B. Lane advertising agency has taken the lead to create a common identifying slogan and logo to identify establishments as partners in the City of Phoenix program, as well as for use in publications and other educational media.

2. Any carry-out plastic bags utilized in Phoenix will have a "reduce, reuse, recycle" message on it.

Current status -The grocery partners agreed a more informative message than the standard "This bag is recyclable" was necessary. Each individual chain will decide on wording as most bags are purchased at the corporate level. Albertsons has already decided to change its message to encourage customers to bring the bag back to the store. Full implementation will not occur until current stocks of bags are exhausted and corporate level approvals are reached.

3. An education and marketing partnership will be formed between the City of Phoenix and participating retailers to jointly market the plastic bag recycling program.

Current status - A brainstorming session occurred between City and Industry in the AFMA offices in early July. A centralized common marketing program was developed to be used by all establishments, and the City, for the plastic bag message. The City committed the use of the municipal services bill insert "NOTES", CityPage, Channel 11, and "Recycling Changes Everything" associated school and neighborhood events to assist with advertising and education on plastic bag recycling programs. A program kick-off is planned for November 15, "America Recycles Day", and in-store kickoff promotions on November 17.

4. Retailers are encouraged to offer for purchase at retail establishments reusable shopping bags.

Current status - Over the summer, many retail outlets expanded the sale and distribution of reusable carry out bags including Bashas', Safeway, Sprouts, IKEA, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Costco, and Lowe's. In all cases, this was a corporate level decision. Public Works is purchasing City reusable bags and is working with various grocers for distribution at an America Recycles Day event on November 17. Staff has made a commitment to find alternatives to door hanging plastic bags for the distribution of informational materials. Direct mailing and cloth bags may be considered.

5. The City will measure the volume of film plastic bags at the City's transfer stations, and retailers will measure the volume collected in the recycling containers.

Current status - The City will measure effectiveness through monitoring the volume of film plastic bags at the City's transfer stations and its recycling material recovery facilities' (MRF). The retail community has committed to monitoring the volume in the recycling containers in select retail establishments.

City staff will continue to report back to the Sustainability Subcommittee with the results of the voluntary recycling plastic bag efforts. Should the voluntary program prove to be ineffective, a mandatory program would be evaluated as a next step.

Around Arizona

Public Works staff is monitoring the progress of other cities in the valley on plastic bag recycling efforts. At the July Valley-wide Recycling Partnership (VRP) meeting, the City of Phoenix took a leadership role on a discussion addressing the issue of plastic bags. Most Valley cities, as well as Flagstaff and Tucson, are interested in the outcome of the proposed plan being developed in Phoenix. City staff will continue to discuss this issue with VRP membership.

Marketing/Education Campaign

AFMA and its members who include Albertsons, Bashas', Fry's, Phoenix Ranch Markets and Safeway are working with the City of Phoenix to ensure the marketing/education campaign will be consistent throughout the City. Plans are moving forward to have a logo and other promotional materials ready for dissemination in November. In addition, the City Council and the grocery industry have planned a joint press conference, which will take place November 15, 2007 in the Atrium at City Hall. The press conference will officially kick-off the City of Phoenix plastic bag recycling program.

On Saturday, November 17th, which is "America Recycles Day" the five participating grocery companies have committed to hosting a table at select Phoenix city store locations where information will be provided relating to plastic bag recycling. In addition, a free City of Phoenix reusable bag will also be distributed.



Left to Right: Trish Hart, AFMA Lobbyist; John Cuccio, Fry's; Kendra Doyel, Fry's; Mandy Robinett, Safeway; Nikki Daly, Safeway; John Trujillo, City of Phoenix; Shantelle Roshetko, Albertsons; Michelle Tostado, Albertsons'; Adrienne Begay, Bashas'; Terry Gillenbeck, City of Phoenix and Telleann Dong, Bashas'.