

Cambridge Businesses, Residents, and Local Organizations Come Together to Make Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) Ordinance a Success

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – August 4, 2016 – Thanks to strong support from



Cambridge kids using their new reusable bags.
Photo courtesy of the Cambridge Community
Center.

the local business community and their customers, the City's [Bring Your Own Bag \(BYOB\) Ordinance](#) has led to a significant reduction in use of single-use bags in Cambridge.

Public Works staff and volunteers from the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee recently performed a study at several large Cambridge businesses and found a sizeable reduction in the consumption of single-use bags.

“What we observed was significant,” said Meera Singh of the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee. “We saw a reduction in single-use bags of 50-80% across this group.”

In order to help senior citizens and low-income residents when this Ordinance went into effect, many members of the Cambridge community contributed to a reusable bag drive organized by the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee. More than 8,000 bags were collected and distributed to low-income and



Students in CitySprouts program with Whole Foods staff. Photo courtesy of CitySprouts.

senior residents throughout the City, and another 4,000 reusable bags were purchased to help reach Cambridge youth. Both Whole Foods Market and Star Market contributed reusable bags to this effort.

“We have a goal of reducing waste by 30% in Cambridge by 2020, with 2008 as our baseline year,” said Cambridge Public Works Commissioner Owen O’Riordan. “The bag charge has been very effective at encouraging waste reduction among shoppers in Cambridge.”

Whole Foods Market donated the mandatory bag charges collected in April from their three Cambridge stores to CitySprouts, a Cambridge-based nonprofit. With a focus on educating Cambridge schoolchildren about gardening and sustainability, CitySprouts hopes to use the \$13,000 donation to expand their efforts to engage kids with the natural environment.

Small businesses have also played an important role in ensuring the Ordinance’s success. “The businesses we’ve heard from have been surprised with the waste reduction,” said Executive Director Carrissa Blackburn. “Some businesses have calculated cost savings associated with the Ordinance.” One small business owner also commented, “We all need to take more moments like this to consider our impact on the environment. Too often, waste is routine.”

Nearly 1,000 businesses in Cambridge have eliminated single-use plastic bags and have implemented mandatory charges for reusable, paper, and compostable bags since the BYOB ordinance took effect on March 31. Learn more at www.cambridgema.gov/BYOB.

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About the Department of Public Works:

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