

# Bag Ban Update

CRUEDA Committee Presentation

Seattle Public Utilities

July 23, 2019



# Background – 2019 Bag Ban Update

- Seattle’s Bag Ban Ordinances (123775 & 125165) address environment, health, & safety concerns
- Requires annual evaluation of:
  - Waste & litter reduction benefits
  - Strategies to increase bag ban compliance
  - Effectiveness in reducing non-compostable bags contaminating organics waste stream
  - Strategies to address loose plastic bags in curbside recycling
- Update data based on surveys conducted by Evans School Student Consultants & SPU Green Business Team



# Seattle Bag Ordinances Requirements



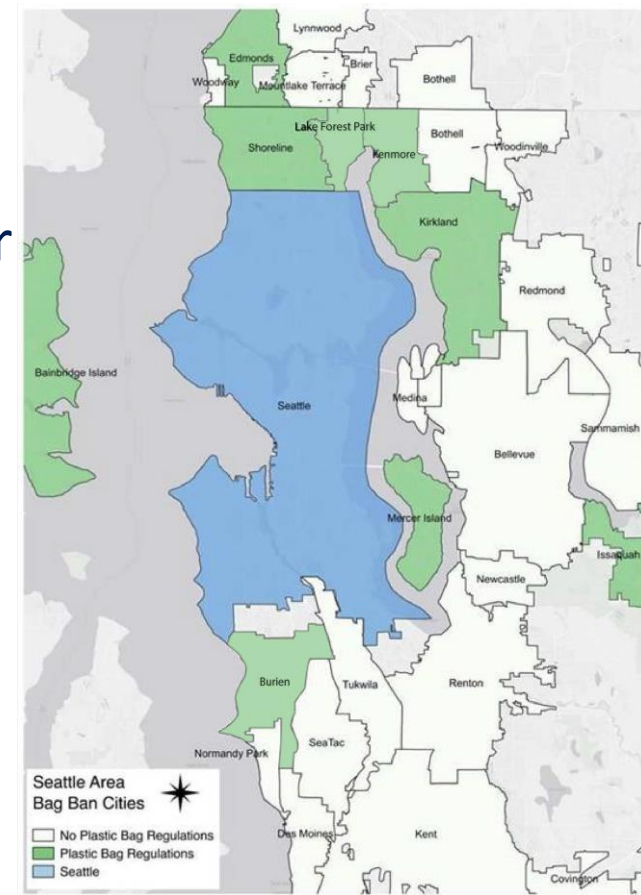
- Also:

- 2.25 mil “reusable” plastic film bag allowed, no required pass-through fee
- Does not apply to carryout bags for take-out food
- Compostable bags not allowed as carryout bags
- Compostable bags allowed for produce & must be tinted green or brown

# 2019 Key Updates

## Waste & Litter Reduction

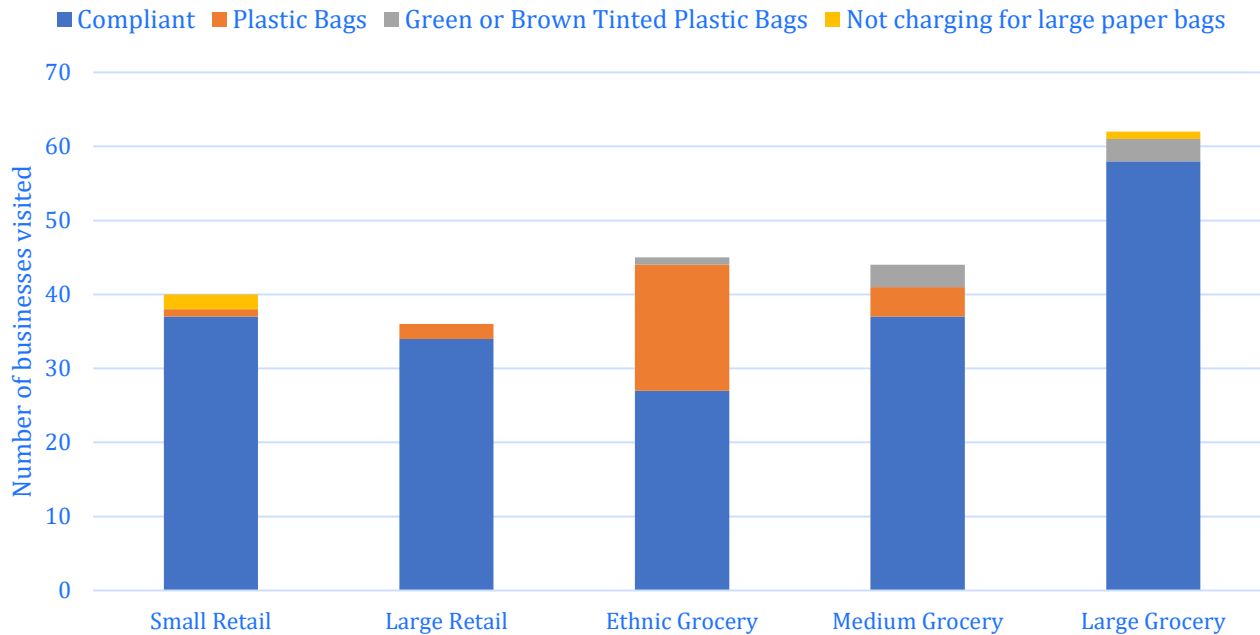
- 28 local bag bans in state
  - Nine since 2018, including three near Seattle
  - Burien, Lake Forest Park, & Kenmore
- State bag ban legislation introduced in 2019
  - Will be back 2020
- Zero Waste WA piloting way to quantify litter in public spaces



# 2019 Key Updates

## Compliance

- Overall compliance rate of 85% (146/177 businesses surveyed)
  - On-going outreach & expansion of bag bans will continue to increase compliance
  - Outreach materials in 18 languages





# 2019 Compliance Updates

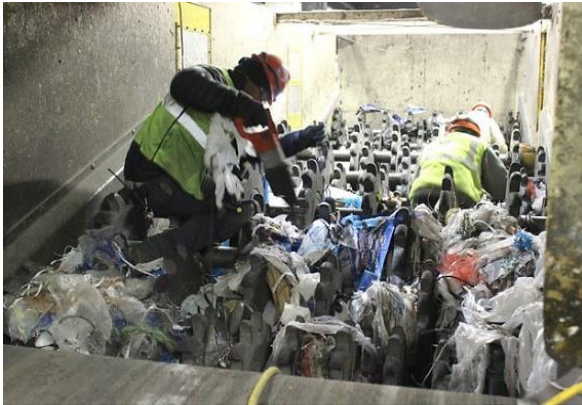
- Green tinted, non-compostable plastic film bags are becoming rare
  - Observed at less than 10% of grocers (6 of 63 surveyed)



# 2019 Updates

## Contamination & Impacts to Curbside

- SPU is removing plastic bags & film from curbside recycling as of 1/1/2020 in response to impacts & regional plastics work
  - Working to improve & expand retail drop-off options



Enormous impacts on Material Recovery Facilities & contaminate paper. Recycling facility workers cut plastic bags & film out of sorting screens



No domestic markets & concern about export of dirty film. Still frame from Jiu-Liang Wang's "Plastic China" documentary



Example of Local Retailer Plastic Bag Take-back Location

# Future Opportunities

- Extend requirements to take-out & meal delivery service bags
- Allow compostable bags for take-out food if they include messaging to use bag for food scraps composting



Examples of  
Compostable Take-out Bags

- Increase the pass-through bag fee to \$0.10
- If “reusable” plastic film bags continue to be allowed, increase thickness to 4 mil & apply pass-through bag fee for these bags



# Questions?

