

# Environmental Resources Planning, LLC

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July 9, 2012

Los Angeles City Councilmembers  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

## Re: Single-Use Carryout Bags / City Policy Council File: 11-1531

Dear Councilmembers:

I appreciate the recent opportunity we had to discuss plastic carryout bags as a component of litter. While I was in Los Angeles, some individuals were claiming that plastic bags comprise 60 percent of litter, attributing this data to FoLAR's trash sorts, which is inaccurate. The purpose of this memo is to correct that misstatement and to provide the correct data.

FoLAR sorts that counted plastic grocery bags separately showed that they comprised an average of 13-16 percent by weight and 17-20 percent by volume, significantly less than some are claiming.

Trash sorts that recorded data for all plastic film products showed that they comprised about 25 percent by weight and 38-41 percent by volume of all trash, still much less than some are claiming.

The FoLAR trash sort data tables are shown below:

**Table 1: Plastic Grocery Bags: % of Trash**

Site	Year	Wt.	Vol.	Count
Fletcher	2004	-	-	
Long Beach	2004	-	-	
Willow	2004	10%	10%	
Fletcher	2005	-	n/a	
Fletcher	2009	-	-	
Balboa	2010	-	-	9%
Fletcher	2010	-	-	
Steelhead	2010	13%	15%	
Balboa	2011	16%	33%	
Compton	2011	13%	19%	
Steelhead	2011	31%	31%	
Willow	2011	13%	10%	
<b>Median</b>		<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>	
Mean		16%	20%	

**Table 2: All Plastic Film Products: % of Trash**

Site	Year	Wt.	Vol.	Count
Fletcher	2004	-	34%	
Long Beach	2004	27%	46%	
Willow	2004	33%	30%	
Fletcher	2005	15%	-	
Fletcher	2009	33%	47%	
Balboa	2010	-	-	17%
Fletcher	2010	11%	30%	
Steelhead	2010	25%	42%	
Balboa	2011	25%	67%	
Compton	2011	15%	29%	
Steelhead	2011	44%	51%	
Willow	2011	17%	29%	
<b>Median</b>		<b>25%</b>	<b>38%</b>	
Mean		25%	41%	

Numerous litter surveys show that plastic bags comprise a much smaller portion of litter than this. Additionally, these surveys, including those conducted in San Francisco and San Jose, consistently show that all retail plastic bags account for less than 5 percent of litter, less than 1 percent in most of them.


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Due to this disparity, it behooves the City to conduct its own statistically-based litter survey to clarify this point of confusion before acting on regulations intended to reduce plastic and paper bag litter.

Conducting a comprehensive litter survey in the City of Los Angeles will provide the City with unimpeachable data from which informed and comprehensive litter reduction programs can be crafted and implemented.

Sincerely,



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