

Not on the Same Page

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"Paper or plastic?" says Helen Lee to a young man purchasing groceries inside Cullen's Corner Market and Deli on North Alberta Street.

"It doesn't matter," the customer says, and Lee smiles gently as she packs his few items into a small, brown paper bag.

As a longtime store co-owner with her husband, Lee says she has used brown paper bags for quite some time now. "We use more paper bags, because plastic bags are...not good for the environment," Lee said. "I think that before, we used more plastic bags, but the neighborhood has changed, and now more people use paper," she says, though she still gives customers the choice.

Lee and her husband's market may be one of the few convenient stores in north and northeast Portland that offer paper carryout bags as first resort, but the small retailers like nearly everyone else also provides plastic, especially to those customers who have to walk in the rain.

Chris Chung, owner of Alberta Street Market, says that he does not think the proposed ban will harm his business financially.

"It won't affect me much," Chung said. "We might have to pay an extra dollar or two to get more paper bags, but people will still shop here and

we will provide paper bags."

However, Chung believes that his customers might be the ones burdened by a plastic bag ban.

"A lot of people walk or ride bikes here, so it will be inconvenient for those customers, especially in Oregon where it rains a lot, I don't see how paper bags are going to work," he said.

Despite thoughts of paper bags melting midway through a customer's rainy commute, Chung sees the banning of plastic bags as a good thing, environmentally.

"We all have to contribute somehow for the next generation. Whatever we have now might not be there in 2200," said Chung, "and what they're doing now is better for our environment."

Other local convenient stores shared contrasting opinions.

The manager of the KC Food Market on North Killingsworth Street, Matthew Yi, outright disagreed with the 5-cent charge for paper bags and claimed that there was nothing wrong with using plastic:

Yi said, "We cannot charge 5 cents to customers because they might not be happy about it." Though Yi thinks the charge might displease clientele, he realizes that it would be optional, saying, "its better if they bring their own re-usable bag."

Co-owner of Killingsworth Market, Kyung Hee Koh, speaks on

similar terms.

"Everybody here uses plastic bags 100 percent" and "using small plastic bags saves our business, money," she said.

On the prospects of customers bringing re-usable bags, Koh said, right now, only, "One or two white people bring their own bags, but blacks and everybody else don't bring their own bag."

In an increasingly gentrified neighborhood, not everyone is going to be on the same page, if on the page at all. One storeowner was not even aware of the debate nor his

potential loss of plastic bags.

"I didn't hear about it! I didn't know," said Mohammad Musa, manager of In and Out Food Market on North Albina Avenue, when asked for his opinion about the proposed bill that could go into effect as early as November if it passes in the Legislature.

Once briefed on the issues, he said, "I don't think it will affect people much, especially since that will be the only choice they have. But for us, it will cost more definitely, because paper bags are more expensive than plastic."

Though some storeowners refuse to shrug off some of the downsides that would make the bill passing a rough transition, there was some agreement that paper bags

cost more than plastic; paper bags stand no chance against Oregon weather for those traveling by foot or bike; the 5-cent charge will irritate unacknowledged customers; and not everybody will remember to bring re-usable bags, if they even own one.

But many embraced the potential burdens as an inevitable favor to the environment.

As one customer said, as Going Street Market Owner Charles Bedford packed her few items into a notorious black plastic sack, "It ain't passed yet. But I guess I have to buy one of those (reusable) bags."

Bedford agrees. He will wait to see if the bill passes or not before he draws a conclusion on the banning of plastic bags for his store.

Despondent Man Fires on Police

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scope rifle in the house, Reese said. He was charged with aggravated murder.

The house is a duplex in a gradually gentrifying but still industrial area. The shooting took place blocks from the iconic Aladdin Theater, and surprised Portland's Sunday brunch crowd.

Juan Carlos Munoz said he heard gunshots at about 9:20 a.m. He dressed quickly and stepped outside, where he saw a police officer take at least one bullet in the park.

"He wasn't moving too much, but he had a vest on," Munoz said. "There was a lot of shooting, but they pulled him out pretty quickly."

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