

DRAFT

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2020, 8am – 9:30am
City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave, Council Chambers
Minute Taker: Quinten Steenhuis

Members Present: Ilana Bebchick, Leah Beckett, Holden Cookson, Catrina Damrell, Debby Galef, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Lindsay Levine, Scott MacGrath, Janet Mosley, Audrey Ng, Laura Nichols, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Quinten Steenhuis, Suzanne Wong

Members Absent: Shirley Elliot, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Meera Singh, Mary Verhage, Kristen Watkins

Staff Present: Meryl Brott, Camilla Elvis, John Fitzgerald, Mike Orr

Public Present: Katharine Davis, Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping

February meeting minutes approved by acclamation.

2. Review of the RAC and its responsibilities

Michael Orr continued with slides covering responsibilities of RAC and achievements of RAC/DPW in the last year. All slides will be attached to minutes. Some highlights:

Cambridge has achieved its 2020 waste reduction goals early, with a greater than 30% reduction in waste! Because of the coronavirus, celebration of this achievement will be postponed.

Discussion of the zero waste master plan. Many recommendations already implemented (including mattress recycling, expansion of compost). One key to do is to “right-size” the garbage containers that will eventually be provided to residents, with the goal of incentivizing recycling/compost/etc.

Disposal costs for recycling currently average around \$70/ton. Cambridge is committed to continuing recycling program, but there is a chance costs could be even higher at upcoming renewal this fall. Still cheaper than landfill.

Our trash on average contains ⅔ divertable materials, including organics, textiles, electronics, and recyclables.

The Recycle Right campaign was extremely successful thanks to hard work of DPW staff. We reduced contamination rate from about 11% to 5.9% in 2019.

Expansion of organics program reduced trash by 8% (by weight). Still room to grow. Considering expanding to larger buildings, without city trash collection, in 2021. Contract up for renewal in April 2021.

Discussion of goals of RAC for 2020 - recap of December discussion

High level goals:

- Reuse
- Support new and existing recycling programs

Detailed goals:

- Single use plastics
- Compost
- City-wide yard sale
- Small business recycling

UN Development Goal #13 is to promote circular economy principles and reduce consumption/food waste. How can this frame our discussion?

Goal setting exercise

Committee members broke into small groups to reflect on their personal goals, skills, and what they think the RAC should prioritize in the coming year.

Group 1: Spokesperson, Janet

- Learning more about **business recycling** - learn about current business waste reduction program and potential ways to develop
- Increasing waste and recycling **education for low income housing** – expand our creative problem solving in those areas
- Explore and improve **extended producer responsibility**: how to make it easier for individual, and increase advocacy at the state level

Group 2: Spokesperson, Quinten

- Explore **extended producer responsibility**
- Increase tools for helping with **larger units composting program**
- **Social marketing campaign** for consumers – i.e. plastic film recycling at grocery stores
- Further getting **businesses involved in reducing single use packaging**, i.e. to go containers program
- Using **compostable bags for produce across all grocery stores** (Richard added we need to get the right spec on the material)

Group 3: Spokesperson Holden

- Reaching out to more people than “the choir”
- Increasing messaging around **food waste and education** - how to get messages out to people, recycle right, etc.

Group 4: Spokespeople, Sakiko/Richard

- Would like to see a pie chart with **business sector waste recycling**, how it compares to residential
- Design more **qualitative research** - the “why” question - behavior vs. design
- Richard’s superpower is the **plastics** piece
- Mike said they are thinking about the “why”, too at the city, might be interesting to get RAC feedback on survey

Group 5: Spokesperson, Suzanne

- **Large employers encouraging reuse in** their organizations
- **Branding consistency** - get rid of it right vs. zero waste – look at uniting brands across city programs - re-branding efforts to coalesce them into one
- **Increasing re-use** in general

Closing

- Mike reports that revenue from recycling was \$13,675, but it was dwarfed by expenses. Nevertheless overall we saved money as landfill is more expensive.
- April 2nd Mass Recycle conference, but it might be canceled [it has been postponed].

Actions still needed:

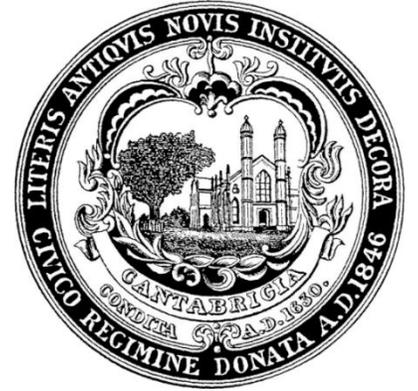
- Can members call in for meetings?
- When should elections be held for Chair, Co-chair, Secretary?
- Due to insufficient time at January’s meeting, RAC needs to identify its 2020 goals and evaluate results from 2019

Action items

Everyone needs to complete the conflict of interest certification.

Look at the list of outreach opportunities. Email Mike if there is one you can do. Everyone should do at least 2/year.

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC)



ZERO 
WASTE
CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE
DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC
**THE
WORKS**

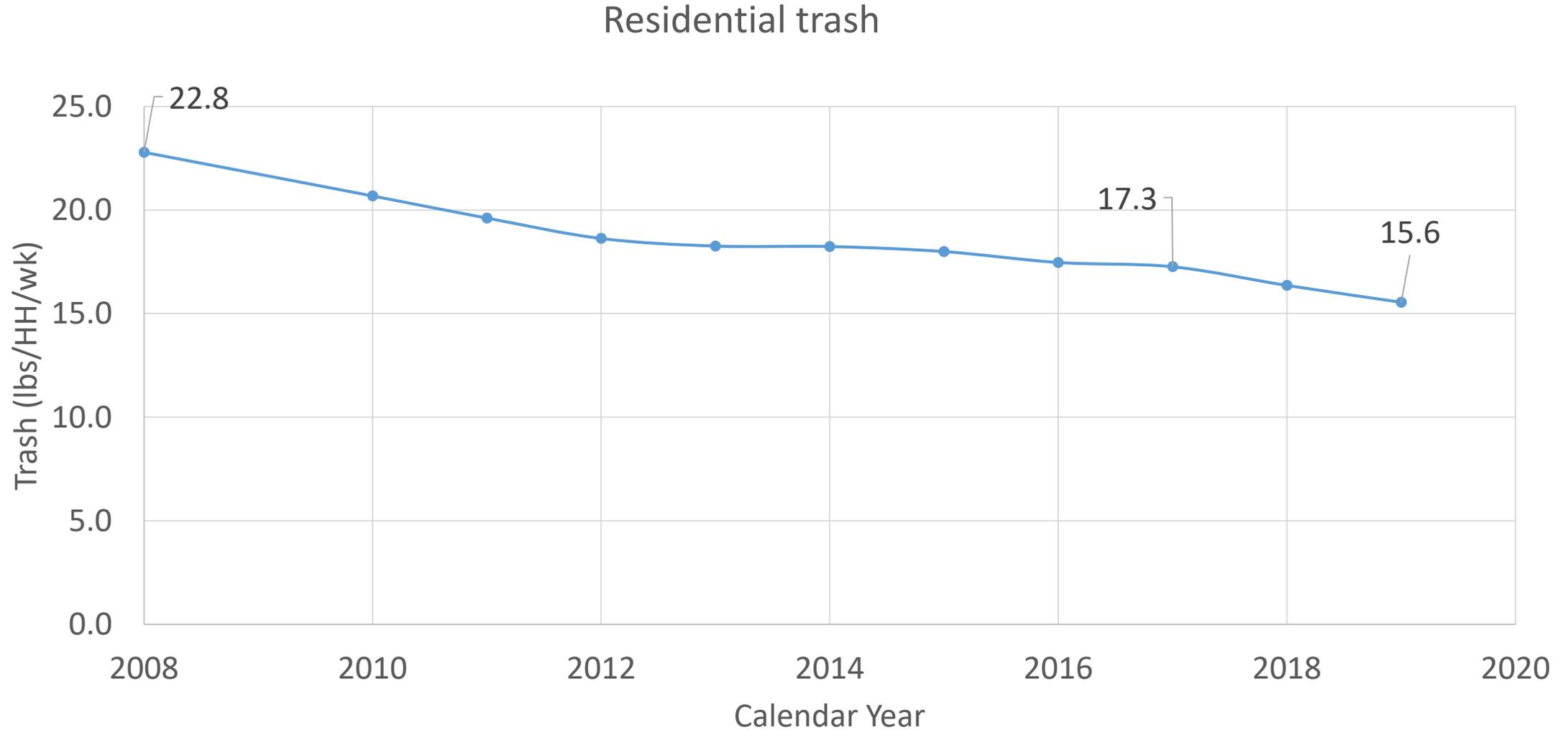
Recent Initiatives of DPW and Recycling

- Zero Waste Master Plan
- Curbside Compost
- Recycle Right
- Mattress recycling
- Single-use Plastics
- Fix It Clinics
- Get Rid of It Right tool

RAC Governance continuation

- Topics for discussion and goal-setting is collaborative. Communicate with Chair, co-Chair, and Secretary about agenda items
- Remote Participation for RAC meetings: On an as-needed basis.

2020 Residential Trash Reduction Goal



2020 Goal: 30% reduction (16 lbs/HH/wk)

2050 Goal: 80% reduction (4 lbs/HH/wk)

Zero Waste Master Plan

- ZWMP process began in 2017 with our consultants
- Public meetings were held in late-2018 for public comment and Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) comment
- RAC input has been important in the ZWMP process
- Final ZWMP published in Summer 2019

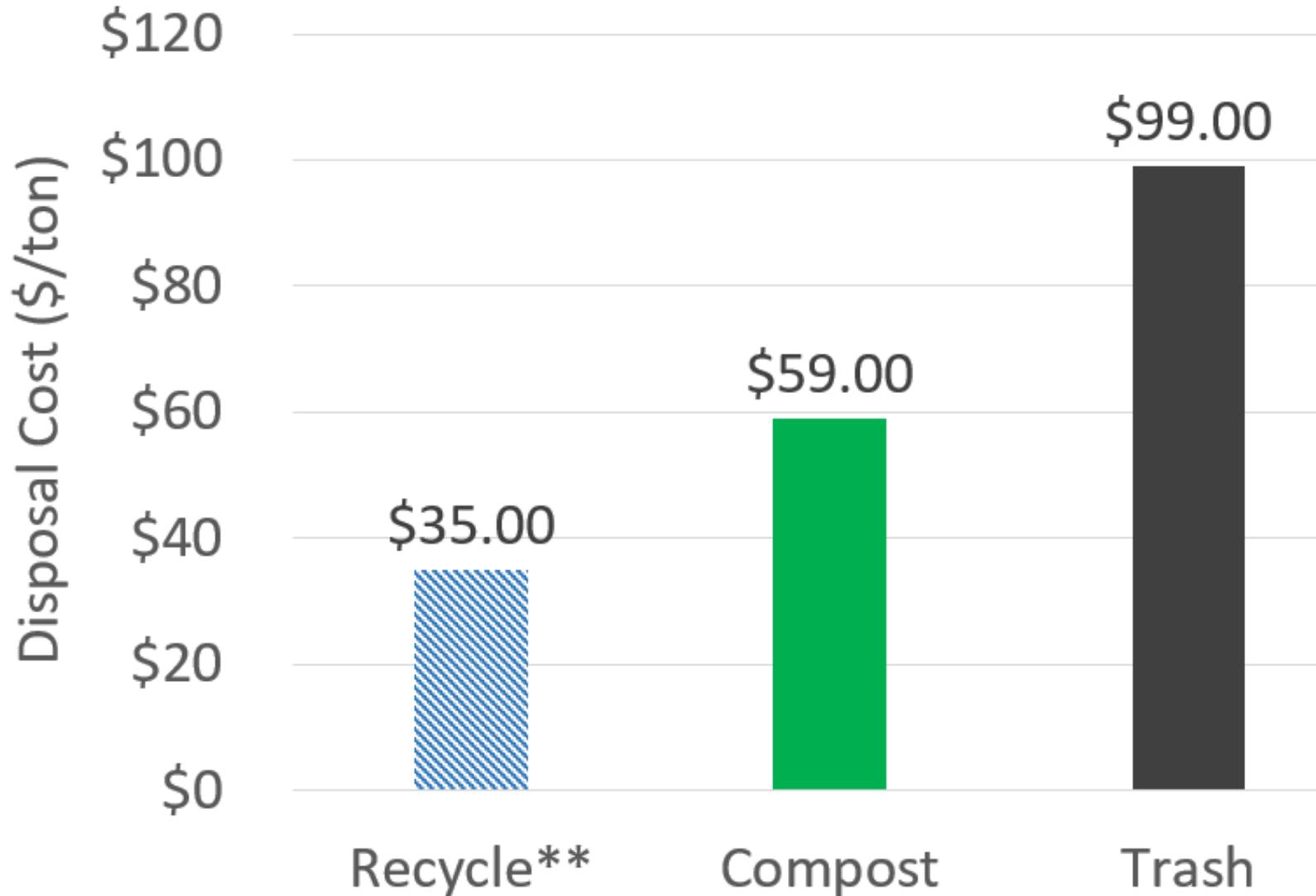
Zero Waste Master Plan --Recommendations

Option	Recommendation	Timing
Organics	Phase 1: Expand program to residents on City's trash collection routes (7,500 households) Evaluate collection operations. Phase 2: Expand program to residents on City recycling collection routes (12,000 households)	Phase 1: 2019-2020 Phase 2: 2021-2022
Trash	"Right size" trash container; 32 to 48 gallons per household. Provide a mechanism for occasional excess trash.	2021-2023
Reduce/ Reuse	Continue to support reduction/reuse activities in the community including Fix-It clinics, reuse events, food waste reduction, and waste exchange/swaps.	2019 and ongoing
Mattress Recycling	Collect mattresses and recycle them via MassDEP grant program.	2019

Zero Waste Master Plan --Recommendations

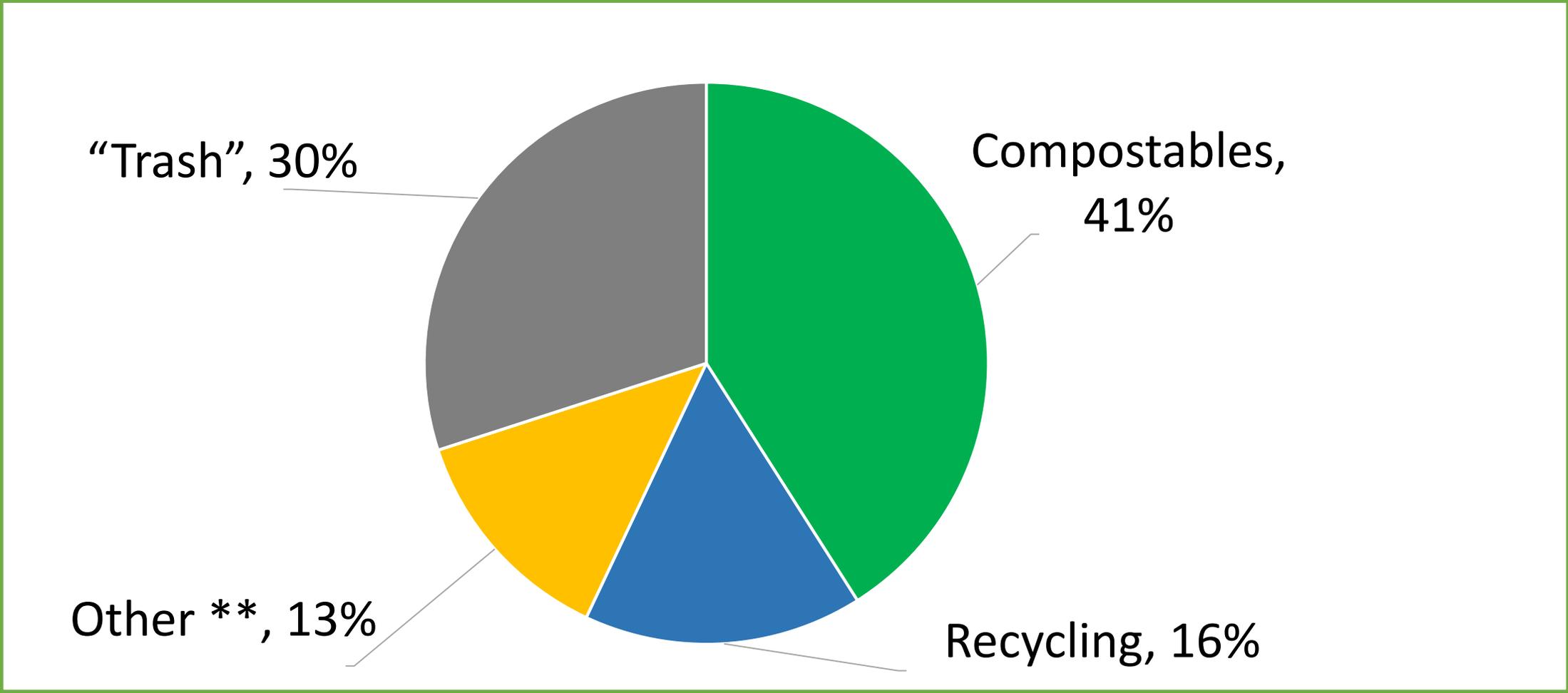
Option	Recommendation	Timing
Curbside Recycling Improvements	Continue Recycle Right campaign, and curbside enforcement to improve capture of target materials and reduce contamination.	2019 and ongoing
Recycling Center	Consider reconfiguration of the Recycling Center to focus on collection and/or consolidation of specific materials.	2020/2021
Textile Recycling	Develop and implement a textile recycling strategy either run by the City or in partnership with an existing organization.	2020/2021
Commercial Recycling	Expand Small Business Recycle Pilot Explore Small Business Compost Pilot	2020 2021-2022

FY19 Disposal Costs (Tip Fee only)



** Currently pay \$70/ton to recycle due to excessive contamination.

What's still in our trash barrels?



**Other: Textiles, Electronics, Scrap metal



Recycle Right

Level of Contamination in Cambridge Recycling

Minimal	59%
Moderate	31%
Major	10%

Based on Summer 2018 survey of 1165 recycle carts citywide

Most Problematic Contaminants

Contaminant	Plastic Bags, Film, Wrappers	Plastic Bagged Recycling	Paper Towels, Tissues, Napkins	Excessive Food & Liquid	Paper Plates, Take-out container
# of carts	605	248	238	168	160
% of carts **	52%	21%	20%	14%	14%

Contaminant	Clothing & Textiles	Trash	Tanglers, Cords, Hoses	Straws, Utensils	Wood, Metal, Electronics
# of carts	116	55	52	43	34
% of carts **	10%	5%	4%	4%	3%

**Total Percentage is greater than 100% because some carts had more than 1 contaminant

Recycle Right Campaign (2018)

- Video & Press release for beginning of campaign – July 2018
- Curbside Monitoring Began 9/1/18.
 - 4400 carts inspected
 - High & Medium contamination had OOPS tag put on cart
 - Postcard mailed to High contamination buildings
 - Drivers reject recycling more frequently
- Citywide Mailer – December 2018

OOPS!

We need your help to

Recycle Right.

Leave these items out of your recycling cart:



Do Not Bag Recyclables
No Garbage



No Plastic Bags,
Films or Wrappers



No Food or Liquids
(empty all containers)



No Clothing or Linens
(donate)



No Tangles,
Cords, Hoses, Hangers
or Electronics



No Hazardous Items,
Wood or Scrap Metal

NOTES

Thank you for your attention to this--

**Don't let your recycling get rejected.
Recycle Right.**

THE WORKS
Cambridge
San Francisco

CambridgeMA.Gov/Recycle
617.349.4800

Recycle Right Campaign Update (2019)

- Water Bill Inserts –Feb 2019
- Recycle Right + Mattress Postcard Citywide – early April 2019
- Door-to-Door outreach—Mid-April

Recycle Right

Cambridge's curbside recycling continues to be recycled despite challenges in the industry. But, costs have increased. Help us reduce costs by cleaning up contamination in your recycling.

Remember:

- No Bagged Items
No Garbage
- No Plastic Bags,
Films or Wrappers
- No Tanglers
(no hoses, wires,
hangers or electronics)
- No Clothing
or Linens
(donate)

Mattress Recycling

Beginning April 8, mattresses and box springs will no longer be trashed. The City has partnered with a nonprofit to collect and recycle mattresses at no cost to residents. To schedule your free collection visit CambridgeMA.Gov/Mattress.

Get Rid of It Right

Wondering how to dispose of an item? Download the "Zero Waste Cambridge" app or visit CambridgeMA.Gov/Recycle.

Citywide Composting Turns One!

Thank you for joining in this effort.
CambridgeMA.Gov/Compost

Stay updated on your waste services:
Subscribe to Recycling's monthly e-newsletter at CambridgeMA.Gov/Subscribe.

RECYCLE

Curbside recycling is mandatory in Cambridge. Together, we have diverted thousands of tons of materials from the trash.

What can you recycle?

Recycling is easy!

- ✓ Rinse containers. No food or liquids.
- ✓ Flatten or nest boxes when possible.
- ✗ Do not bag recyclables in a plastic bag.

IMPORTANT!

Some items DO NOT go in the recycling cart:

- ✗ Plastic Bags / Film, Wrappers (See below)
- ✗ Hoses & Cables
- ✗ Clothes Hangers
- ✗ Clothing / Textiles (See below)
- ✗ Electronics
- ✗ Pots / Pans, Scrap Metal
- ✗ No Paper Towels / Plates / Takeout Containers

Plastic bags?

Bring plastic bags and plastic film to the grocery store or Recycling Center.

Clothing / textiles?

Clothing, linens, shoes and accessories in all conditions can be donated. For info, use our "Get Rid Of It Right" tool.

METAL CANS & FOIL

GLASS BOTTLES & JARS

PLASTIC CONTAINERS

PAPER & CARDBOARD

Search for how to dispose of everyday items!

Visit CambridgeMA.Gov/Recycle to use our "Get Rid Of It Right" tool, or download the "Zero Waste Cambridge" app.

Recycle Right Campaign Results

- 2018 avg contamination: 11%
- 2019 avg contamination: 5.9%



Curbside Organics Update

- Apprx. 7 tons collected daily
- Apprx. 7-8% decrease in trash
- DPW began phasing in curbside organics to 7,500 households in 227 buildings in Fall 2019 (13+ unit buildings with City trash).
- 32,000 households have access to program (but not all buildings have bins)



Curbside Organics Expansion Phase 2

- DPW must evaluate collection operations and routing prior to Phase 2 expansion.
- An additional 12,000 households in 13+ unit buildings have City recycling collection (208 bldgs).
- Expansion to be considered in 2021
- Potential tonnage to increase to 10-12 tons or more per day



Processing organics

3-year contract (Expires: April 1, 2021)

- 1st site: CORe in Charlestown
- 2nd site: Greater Lawrence Sanitary District in North Andover

Final processing: anaerobic digestion

- Methane is used to make electricity and heat.
- Waste heat used to catalyze digestion process.
- Offsets demand for fossil fuel.

Apprx 90% of food scraps go to making clean energy

Both MassDEP and EPA support Cambridge's process for managing organics



Mattress Recycling Update

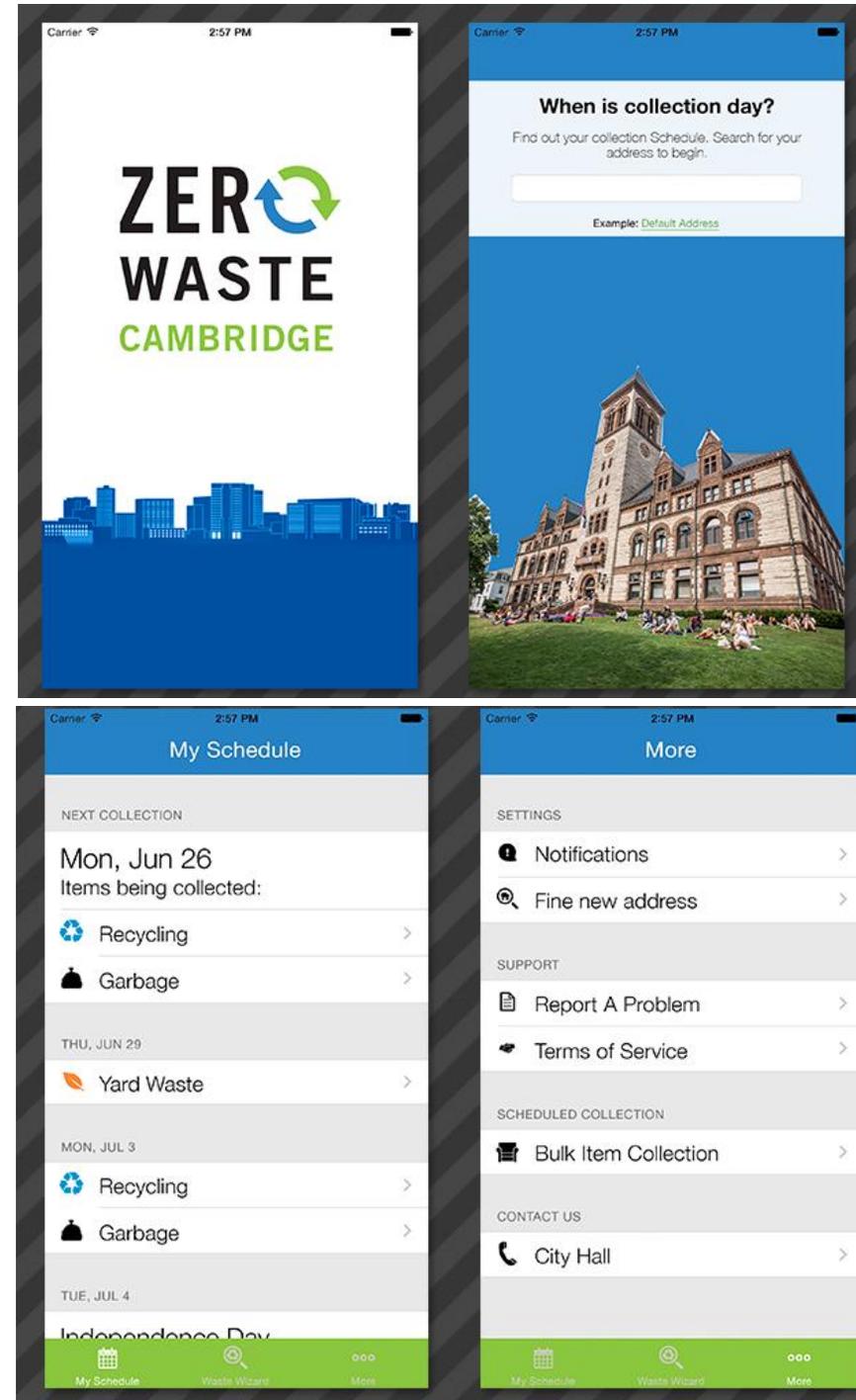
- Collection began April 11, 2019.
- More than 4000 mattresses collected in 2019!



Get Rid of It Right

Use our tool to get reminders on waste collection, look-up how to get rid of waste, and play waste sorting game

- Download Zero Waste Cambridge app in Apple or Google Play Store
- CambridgeMA.Gov/Recycle



Fix-It Clinics

- **Two 2019 events**
 1. May 18
 2. October 26



Cambridge Fix It Clinic

Proposed RAC Responsibilities

- Understand info available to the public on the City's recycling webpage: CambridgeMA.Gov/Recycle.
- Take a leadership role in projects, such as research, organizing & attending events.
- Participate in creating committee direction and implementation of ideas regarding policies, programs, and technical matters.
- Work with the DPW, Climate Protection Action Committee, and other appropriate City staff to provide feedback on City initiatives and collaborate on various projects;
- Research different approaches to communication, education and best practices for recycling, composting, reuse and waste reduction programs;
- Disseminate outreach materials and post flyers in the community to educate the public;
- Write articles for all varieties of media promoting City programs and services including newspaper editorials, blog posts, newsletter articles, etc;
- Initiate, plan, attend and run events to promote recycling, composting, reuse and waste reduction;
- Recruit additional volunteers for specific events and projects;
- Develop positions on city & state level policies & programs
- Meet with the community and volunteer in at least 2-3 events, such as Danehy Park Family Day, Area 4 Community Pride Day, MayFair, Oktoberfest, Family Fun Day, RiverFest, Fresh Pond Day, Arts in the Park, Summer in the City, and other block parties or public events.



Collaboration with Arts Council: Art and Reuse

- Electrical Department was retrofitting street lamps. DPW came up with a creative way to save the street lamp covers
- Mary Verhage and Cambridge Arts had been in conversation about how artists might incorporate discarded materials in their creations.
- Cambridge artist Andy Graydon turned the plastic light covers into a collection of drums that all museum visitors are welcome to play.



[“City Lights Orchestra”](#)—was on view at the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum for 1 year

Articles written by RAC

Friday, February 28, 2020

- Martha Henry has written 5 articles for Cambridge Day
- [30% reduction goal](#)
- [Textiles](#)
- [Christmas Trees](#)
- [Recycling Contamination](#)
- [Zero Waste Master Plan](#)



Cambridge has curbside recycling and composting in addition to trash pickup. (Photo: Martha Henry)

Cambridge residents have reduced the amount of trash they throw out by 60

RAC Goal Planning –2019

- **High-level Goals:**

1. Promote a culture of re-use
2. Supporting existing and new Cambridge recycling programs

Goals and focus areas voted on by RAC members for 2019:

1. Single use plastics
2. Compost (tied)
2. Citywide yard sale (tied)
4. Business recycling

Strategy Planning –2019

More detailed goals and focus areas:

1. Promote a culture of re-use, i.e.

- Focus on researching single-use plastics/products
- Consider planning a citywide yard sale
- Support Fix it Clinics

2. Support existing and new Cambridge recycling programs, i.e.

- Compost collection efforts, outreach ideas and campaigns, anaerobic digestion
- Business recycling program support, review data
- Regular volunteer participation in events and strategy for time-relevant activities (i.e. Participatory Budgeting, Moveout)

Summer and Fall Focus – *Single Use Plastics Ordinance*

Background:

In May 2019, the City Council voted to have City Manager work with the city solicitor, the Department of Public Works, and the Recycling Advisory Committee and other stakeholders to draft a ban on single-use plastic items. The deadline for the draft ordinance is December 2019.

Draft Charge of Subcommittee:

This summer, we seek to better understand where reusable foodware substitutes may be possible for the Cambridge business community. Through data collection and research, the subcommittee will help the city understand which single-use items could potentially be subject to a ban, as well identify sample language that could be appropriate for a Cambridge-specific ordinance.

Summer and Fall Focus – *Single Use Plastics Ordinance*

- **Pre-survey** for retail establishments to identify single-use plastic items that are currently in use
 - RAC members did brain dump of different items retailers may use for food serviceware.
 - With RAC suggestions, DPW created survey for the business community to understand how a single-use plastics ordinance may impact them.
- **Litter barrel audit** to identify single-use plastic items (Rob Gogan)
- **Residential waste audit** to identify single-use plastic items (DPW conducted audit but results were inconclusive)
- **Research** into sample language for a Cambridge ordinance, specific legal language
- **Draft and submit letter** to Commissioner O’Riordan, DPW in November

Summer and Fall Focus – *Single Use Plastics Ordinance*

RAC Letter to DPW highlights:

1. Reduce the availability of single-use food serviceware items using a phased approach
2. Plan for a Future of Reusables
 - a single-use cup charge
 - requirement dine-in food vendors to use reusable serviceware
 - assist food vendors with transition / dishwashers
3. Provide businesses with clear communications materials and outreach around any new policies
 - A list of acceptable single-use alternatives and information about where they can be purchased for any products that are banned.
 - Clear language and data around the intent and benefits of the ordinance.
 - Downloadable signage

Next Steps for RAC



- Spring visioning
 - Goals
 - Focus Areas
 - Projects