

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2025, 8:00am – 9:30am

Minute Taker: Dailey Brannin

Hybrid Meeting

Members Present: Dailey Brannin, Dave Demme, Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Sakiko Isomichi, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Richard Nurse, Carlie Peters, Dawn Quirk, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Quinten Steenhuis, Stephanie Wasiuk

Members Absent: Lee Elliot, Rob Vandenabeele

Staff Present: Mike Orr

Public Present: Amy Walz

1. Housekeeping

- March 2025 minutes: amended to add Meera Singh as present and to clarify public health comment. With amendments, minutes were approved.
- Tracie and Carlie are interested in becoming Chair of RAC

2. City Updates

- Mobile Recycle Center was one of the winning solutions in Participatory Budget!
- Earth Day: 4/19: Save the Date. Finished Compost giveaway, Fix-It Clinic and tabling, all in front of and inside the main library
 - 9am-1pm for compost pick up; 11am-2pm for fixit clinic.
 - They have plenty of volunteers from the new volunteer group but there's always room for more help – especially on the early side.
 - A few city departments will be tabling
- Volunteer opportunities
 - There will be a separate email for volunteer opportunities going forward

3. ZWMP 2.0

- Debrief City Council hearing on ZWMP from 3/25. [See slides from hearing for details and ZWMP timeline]
 - Draft ZWMP is out!
 - City Council hearing went well. Helen, Debby G., Meera, and Judy Nathans attended. Some objections around our food scraps disposal being labeled “compost” and objections to the biosolids/sludge that the process produces (re: PFAS).
 - Nuanced issue. There's a difference in scale of PFAS in sludge vs what we are exposed to daily. Also, if we sent our food waste somewhere else, we're still not solving the PFAS problem.
 - What does a ban of PFAS mean? Nonstick pans, Goretex – some sale bans. Legacy PFAS – exposure today is from decades ago – measurement ability has gotten better, more precise.
 - PFAS in film: Industry is working to remove PFAS in process aids and substituting alternatives.
 - Simple response to people who have an issue with this?
 - It's in the environment already – doesn't go away.

- Plan will be tweaked slightly with Councilor Nolan and the Health & Environment Committee.
 - Compost label vs. alternatives
 - May include something on mini liquor bottles (nips)
- Major ZWMP changes
 - Zero Waste Plans required for 13+ unit bldgs. and commercial bldgs., with 25K sq. ft or more
 - Mandatory food waste separation citywide
 - Reduce single-use items
 - Opt-in vs opt-out
 - Polystyrene ban
 - BYOB ordinance change
- Publication of ZWMP; thoughts, questions, concerns, etc?
 - Is Cambridge's 80% waste reduction by 2050 an ambitious enough goal? Short discussion around if the metric of the goal matters; how much it affects individual motivation or behavior change, etc.
 - Implementation at MIT and Harvard to be discussed
 - Composting messaging: person to person is more effective than website resources

4. Closing

- Public Comment
- Action Plan/Decisions
 - Volunteer at Earth Day
 - Come up with simple messaging on wastewater pellets from GLSD after anaerobic digestion
- Announcements
 - Free Store set for June 1st! Volunteers welcome.

Zoom Chat:

Dawn Quirk 8:06 AM
abstain (did not attend)

Carlie 8:11 AM
I might be interested!
Messages addressed to "meeting group chat" will also appear in the meeting group chat in Team Chat

Quinten Steenhuis 8:21 AM
Yes

Meera Singh 8:34 AM
Mike, if someone asks us what are the residual pellets used for shall we say they are used as fertilizers for hay fields?
Richard, when you can, can you please share a link to an article we can read on what you just shared?

Quinten Steenhuis 8:39 AM
Our trash is sent to Virginia or Vermont?

Meera Singh 8:50 AM

Thank you Stephanie!

Stephanie Wasiuk 8:58 AM

I think you're onto something Elka - maybe we need to think about how to execute it, but I agree. How do we "reward" and support the restaurants who are trying

Quinten Steenhuis left

Quinten Steenhuis joined as a guest

Sakiko Isomichi 9:14 AM

Thank you, all! I need to take off but look forward to our next meeting.

Sakiko Isomichi left

Quinten Steenhuis 9:16 AM

we can hear

Dawn Quirk 9:16 AM

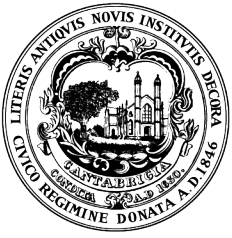
congratulations!

Richard joined as a guest

Richard left

Stephanie Wasiuk 9:26 AM

If anyone wants the file to print on their own, send me a message and I'll share it out



CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

THE CAMBRIDGE
WORKS DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC

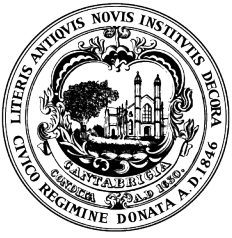
March 25, 2025
City Council Health & Environment
Committee Hearing

2025

Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0

City of Cambridge





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OF PUBLIC
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Agenda

Introductions

Recap of Data – Status of Waste

Draft ZWMP 2.0



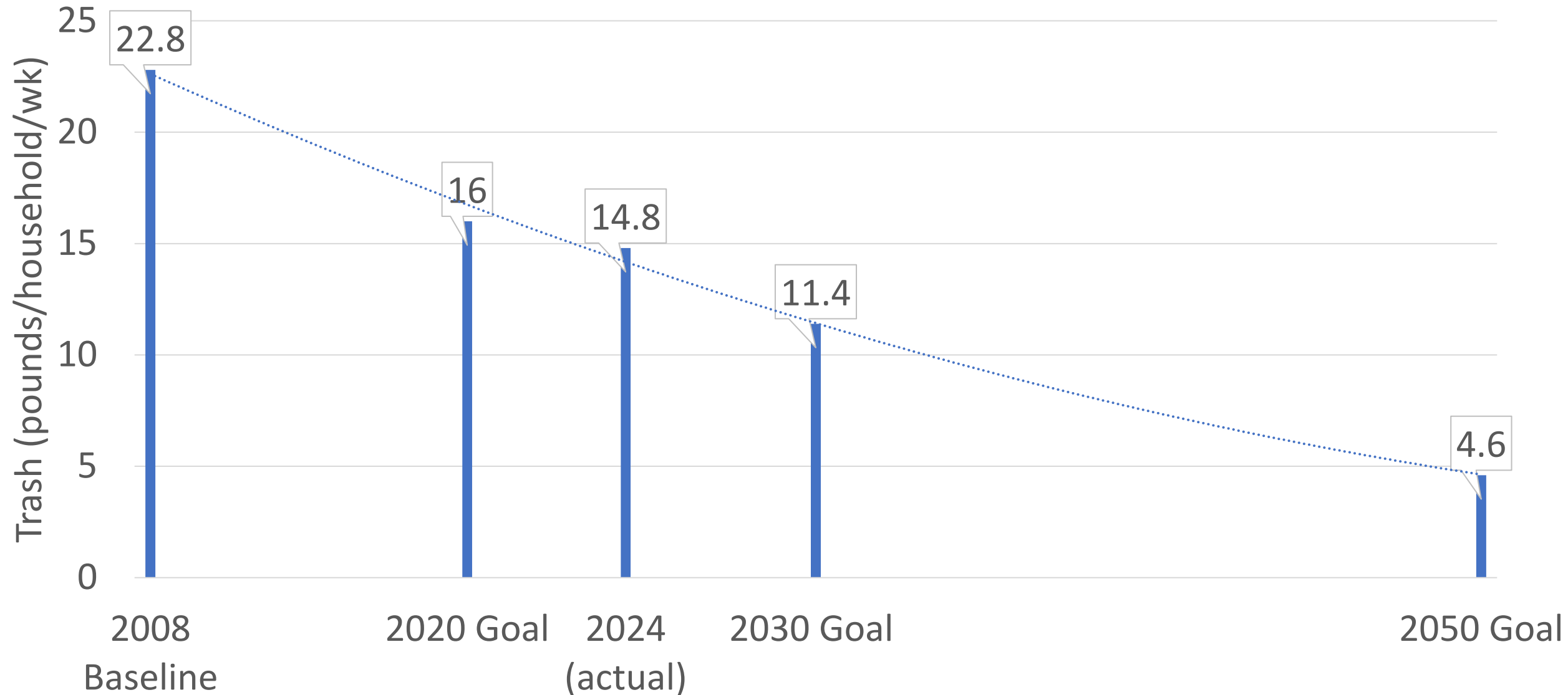
City of Cambridge Zero Waste Goals

- Established in 2009 (2008 is our baseline):
 - 30% trash reduction by 2020 (measured in lbs/HH/wk) ✓
 - 50% reduction by 2030
 - 80% reduction by 2050
- Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0 (2025-2030) will create blueprint to meet 2030 goal.
- ZWMP 3.0: 2030-2035

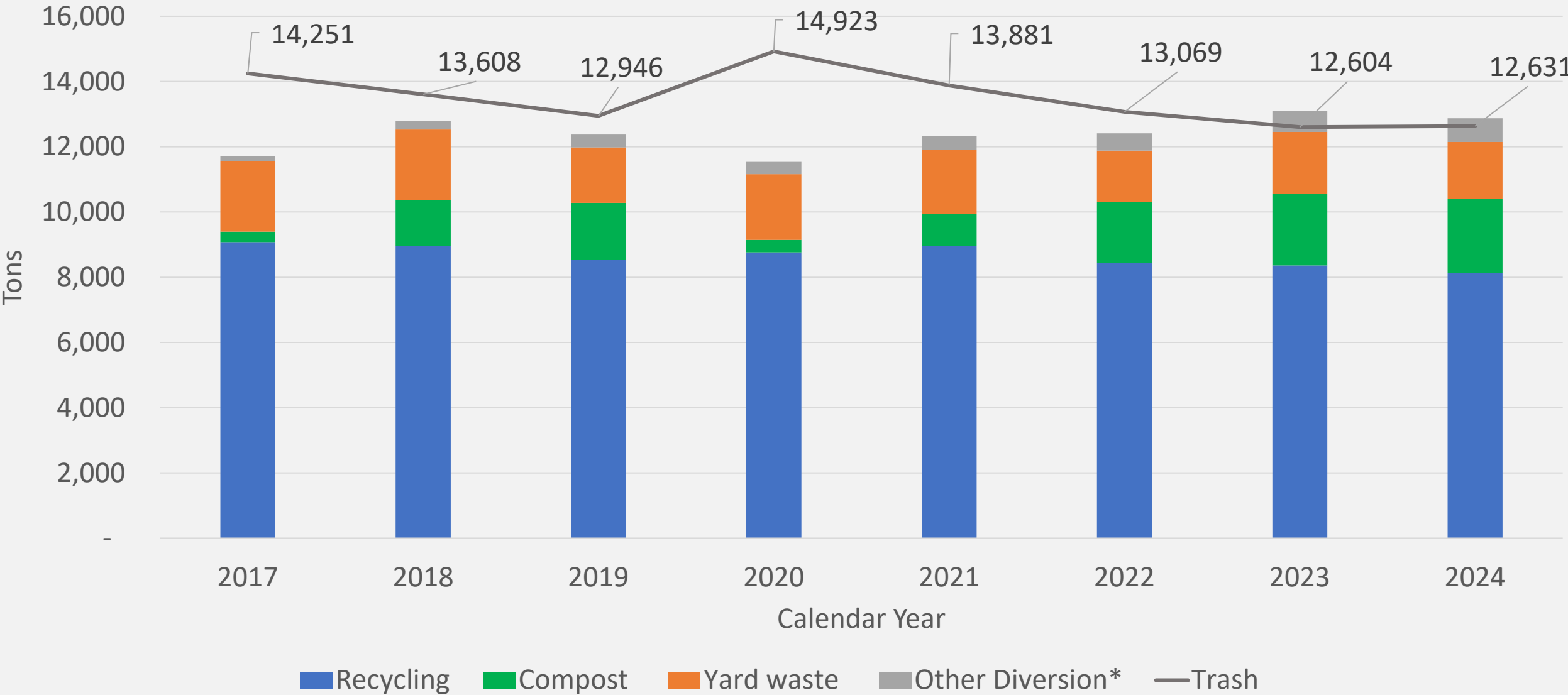
DPW staff, volunteers and Recycling Advisory Committee members celebrating 5 years of citywide curbside organics collection



Cambridge Trash Goals



Residential Waste Collected by Calendar Year

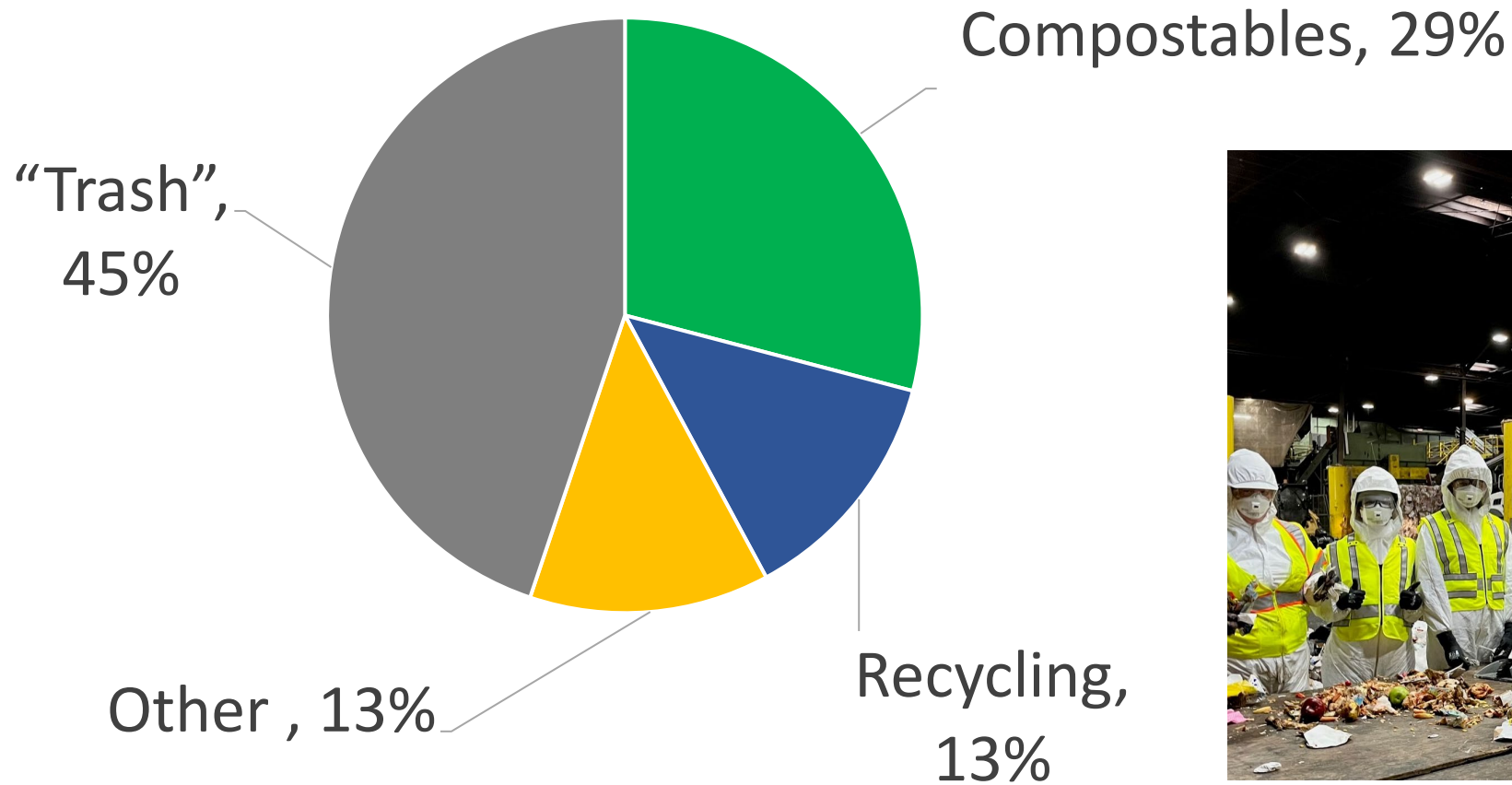


*Other Diversion= E-waste, metal, mattresses, and textiles.



What is in Cambridge's Trash?

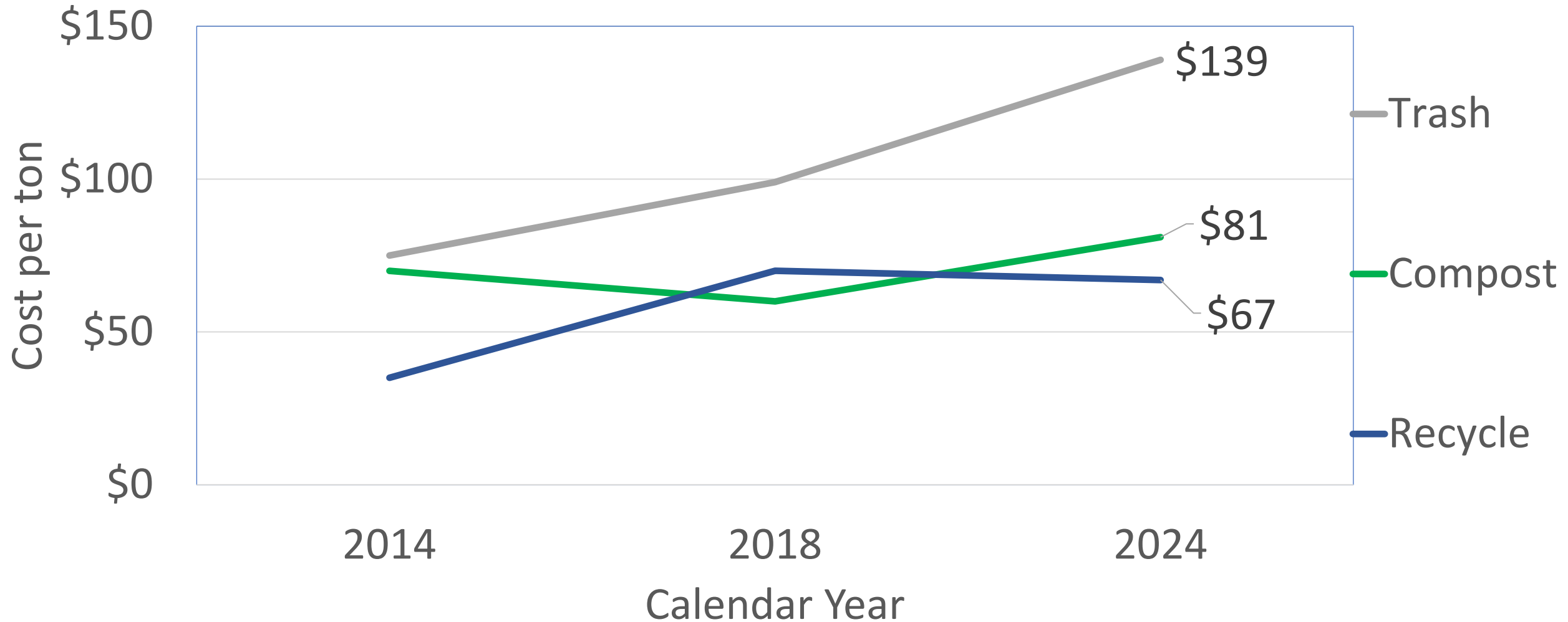
2022 Waste Characterization Study



Other =Textiles, Metal, and E-waste



Disposal Fees for Cambridge Waste



- Recycling has variable price based on market conditions.
- Costs don't include collection expenses.

Source: DPW



Value of Recyclables

Commodity	Est. Percent of Recycling	Approximate Value (\$/ton)	Examples
Papers	61%	\$90	Cardboard, white paper, newspaper
Glass	26%	-\$60	Glass bottles, jars
Plastic #1	7%	\$400	Water/soda bottles
Plastic #2	2%	\$500	Milk jugs, detergent bottles
Aluminum	1%	\$1,900	Soda/beer cans
Steel cans	1%	\$200	Canned food/soup cans
Plastic #5	1%	\$140	Yogurt cups

Only nonrecyclable items in recycling are landfilled.

Source: DPW & Casella



Disposal Concerns for New England

- MA has **highest trash disposal cost** of all states.
- **Limited disposal capacity** → more exporting
 - 2014: 700K tons exported out of state.
 - 2023: 2.7M tons were exported.
- Nearby States have limited capacity:
 - CT exports 40% of their trash
 - ME has banned out-of-state trash
- MassDEP may **ban food waste in trash** statewide by 2030

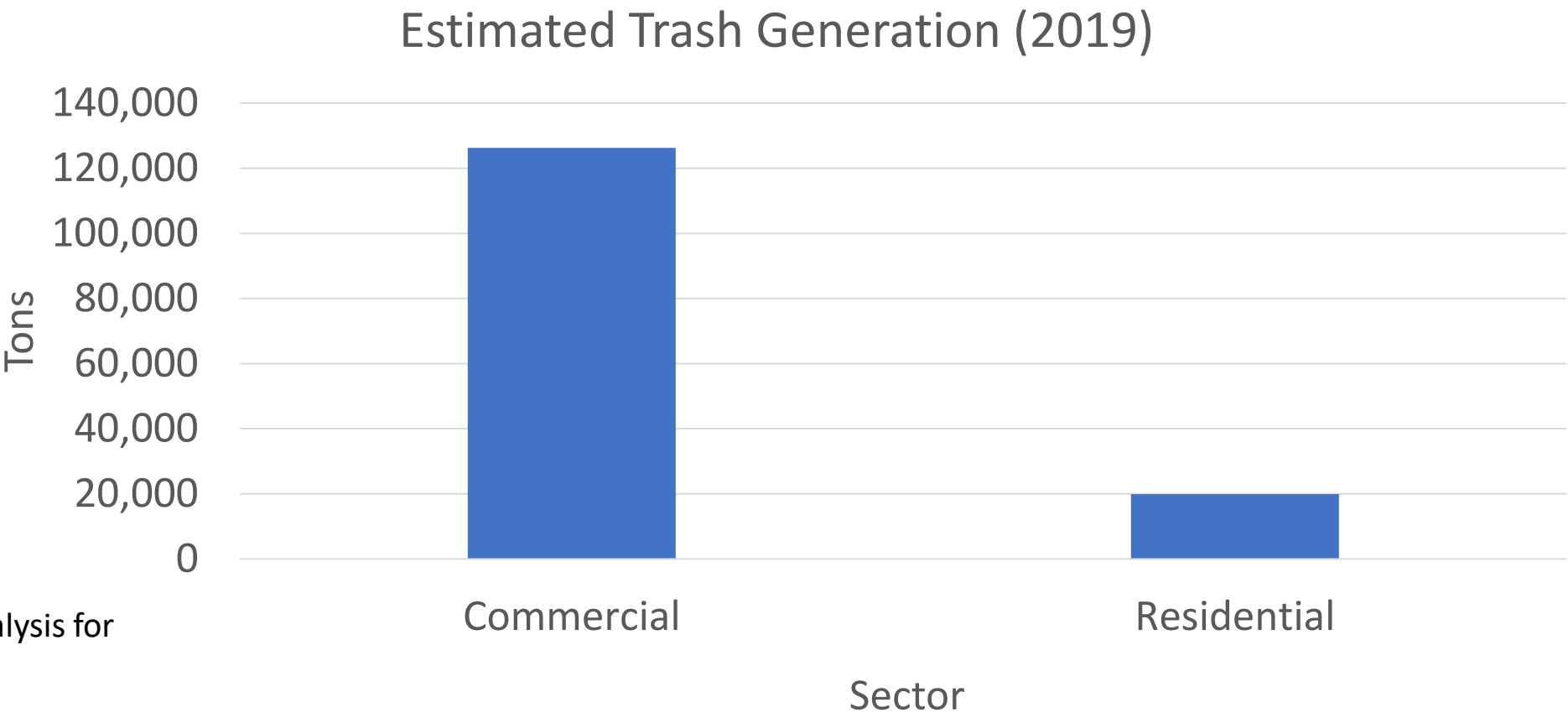


Apprx 33% of Cambridge's trash is incinerated in MA
Apprx 67% of Cambridge's trash is exported to landfill in NH or VA



Citywide Waste Generation in Cambridge

We estimate the following trash disposal volume in the residential and commercial (all non-residential) sectors:



Source: CalRecycle, CDM Smith analysis for City of Cambridge (2022)



Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0



ZWMP 2.0 Process

- **10/2023:** Outlined ZWMP process to Health & Environment Committee
- **2024:** Conducted staff interviews, **engaged with residents**, studied peer communities, **collected data**, and looked at **market conditions** to develop **18 strategies**.
- **10/2024:** Presented Draft Strategies to Health & Environment Committee
- **11/2024:** Gathered Feedback on Draft Strategies from public
- **3/2025:** Published Draft ZWMP 2.0



Short-Term Strategies (1-3 Years)

Strategy #1: Require annual Zero Waste Plans for residential buildings (13+ units) and commercial buildings (25,000+ square feet).



Strategy #2: Require food waste diversion for all residential and commercial buildings. Educate residents and property managers on these new requirements.



Strategy #3: Reduce move-in / move-out waste.

Strategy #4: Reduce waste from food establishments.

Strategy #5: Improve accessibility to the Recycling Center.



Medium-Term Strategies (3-5 Years)

Strategy #6: Enforce food waste diversion requirements for residents and businesses.

Strategy #7: Evaluate a hybrid Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program.

Strategy #8: Provide technical assistance to the commercial sector.



Long-Term Strategies (5+ Years)

Strategy #9: Foster a “Reduce & Reuse” Culture in the Commercial Sector

Strategy #10: Lead by example and continually revisit policies and practices.



Ongoing Strategies

Strategy #11: Host educational events and workshops on reduce & reuse topics.

Strategy #12: Conduct waste composition studies every three years.

Strategy #13: Advocate for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) at the state level with other municipalities.

Strategy #14: Collaborate with recycling facilities to determine if new materials can be diverted or reused from the current trash stream.



Strategy #15: Facilitate community-based programs to complement the City's efforts.

Strategy #16: Continue to expand zero waste efforts with public school students and staff.

Strategy #17: Increase access to waste diversion programs to residents that are less familiar with the programs and provide information in multiple languages.

Strategy #18: Remain nimble and adjust plans as needed.



Implementing Short-Term Strategies

- To implement current Draft of ZWMP 2.0, we've outlined some of the changes to anticipate.



Strategy #1: Annual Zero Waste Plans

- Ordinance 8.24: Refuse and Litter Ordinance Changes:
 - Require multifamily (13+ units) and commercial establishments (25,000+ sq ft) to **submit Zero Waste Plans**. The Plans should include:
 - a. Collection vendor, frequency, and volume for trash, recycling, food waste.
 - b. How are mattresses and textiles managed?
 - c. How are occupants educated to separate food waste and recycling?
- City will develop template for property managers.



Strategy #2: Mandatory Compost

- Ordinance 8.24: Refuse & Litter Ordinance Changes:
 - **All food waste, textiles, and mattresses (in addition to recycling) are prohibited from trash disposal citywide**
- The City provides collection services for these materials.
- NOTE: Textiles and mattresses banned in trash per state law.



Strategy #3: Reduce move-in/move-out waste

- The Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) “**Free Store**” initiative
- **Pilot program in May 2025** to divert move-out waste
- Other avenues include: **Buy Nothing groups**, collaboration with **Universities**, and **mobile Recycle Center**.

August 2024



Strategy #4: Reduce waste from **Food Establishments**

- New Skip the Stuff Ordinance: Food establishments must ask customers to opt-in (not opt-out) to straws, utensils, lids, sleeves, spill plugs, napkins, condiments, and stirrers.
- Numerous MA towns/cities and large cities (NYC, Hoboken, LA, and more) have passed similar laws.



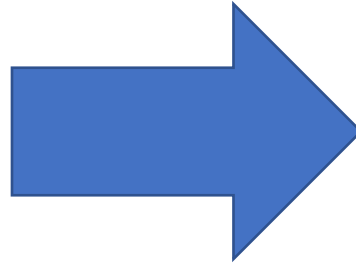
Accessory Disposable Foodware examples



Case Study



Before



After

Burger shop in Oakland, CA saw \$2,100 annual savings with operational change and addition of signage to encourage waste reduction

Source: Rethinkdisposable.Org

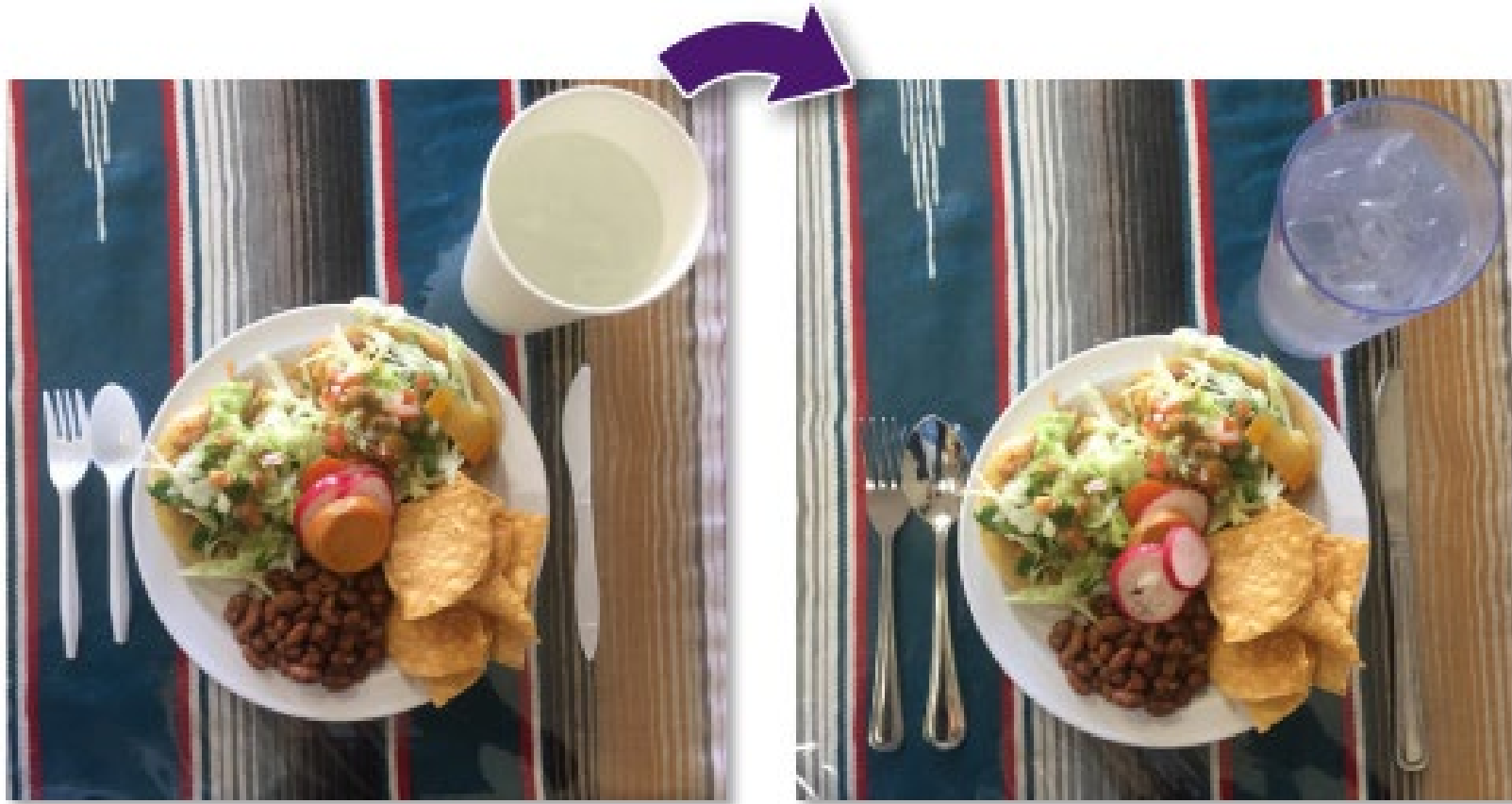


Strategy #4: Reduce waste from Food Establishments (continued)

- Food Establishments must provide recycling bins, if customers are self-bussing.
- In addition to ordinance changes, the City will assist small businesses to reduce waste by encouraging reusables, switching to recyclable products, and generally helping businesses find ways to reduce overall trash.
- If the City finds technical assistance works, we could consider an update to the Ordinance to require Food Establishments (>50 seats) must provide reusable foodware for onsite dining.



Case Study



Mexican restaurant in Los Angeles saw \$400 annual savings (after initial investment paid off) with change to reusables and addition of signage to encourage waste reduction.

Source: Rethinkdisposable.Org



Strategy #4: Reduce waste from Food Establishments (continued)

- California found plastic shopping bags trashed grew from 8 lbs (2004) to 11 lbs (2021) per person per year, despite plastic bag law.
- Ordinance 8.68: Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) Changes:
 - **Retailers may no longer offer thick plastic bags at checkout.** Paper and compostable plastic bags are OK.
 - Must charge \$0.10/bag.
 - Customers incentivized to bring their own bag



Strategy #4: Reduce waste from Food Establishments (continued)

- Polystyrene is not recyclable.
- Currently, food/drinks may not be dispensed into polystyrene containers (cups, clamshells, etc) at Food Establishments.
- Ordinance 8.70: Polystyrene Ordinance Changes:
 - **Retailers may no longer sell polystyrene products** (cups, plates, packaging nuts, coolers, etc)



Strategy #5: Make Recycle Center more accessible

- **Relocating** the Recycle Center within the DPW Yard.
- Pilot Mobile Recycle Center in FY26.



ZWMP 2.0 Next Steps

- Collect feedback from the Health and Environment Committee.
- Adjust Draft Plan as needed
- Forward Final Plan to City Council for formal adoption.
- Draft ordinance changes and submit to City Council.



Draft Timeline

- April 2025: Forward Plan to City Council for formal adoption
- May/June 2025: Present Ordinance changes to Ordinance Committee of City Council
- June/July 2025: Ordinance Committee to send Ordinance Changes to Full City Council
- August 31: Ordinance changes are ordained



Questions?

- Email: Recycle@CambridgeMA.Gov
- Sign-up for Recycle Newsletter:
www.CambridgeMA.Gov/Subscribe

