

## **City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting**

Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2023 - 5:30-7pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom and In Person at Main DPW Conference Room

### **Attendance**

CPP Members: Vinita Bhaskar, Cindy Carpenter, Sara Cohen, Paula Cortes, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Sandra Fairbank, Ahron Lerman, Ruth Loetterle, Tracey Orr, Cynthia Smith,

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Ellen Coppinger, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Erik Thorkildsen (CDD), Michael Orr (DPW)

Guests & members of the public: Gretchen Friesinger

Meeting notes submitted by: Cynthia W. Smith

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### **Agenda Items:**

- Review and approval of previous meeting minutes
- Presentation by Michael Orr, Recycling Director

#### Outreach Efforts

- Arbor Day efforts
- Other events this year
- Coordination with other groups from neighboring towns

#### Updates from City Staff

- Updates from City Arborists
- Updates from CDD

#### Public Comment

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### **1) Review prior meeting minutes**

December 2022 and January 2023 Meeting Minutes reviewed and approved by majority

### **2) RECYCLING PROGRAM AT DPW -- Michael Orr, Recycling Director**

- Summary: MO summarized the various recycling programs he oversees for the City including:
  - Composting
  - Trash Reduction
  - Recycling
  - Food Waste Programs
  - He explained that the City does not do Commercial waste removal for large businesses. This is handled by other private business entities.

- Reason for a robust recycling program include:
  - Environmental
  - City cost savings
  - Lack of capCity (Landfill sites for dumping of wastes are increasingly less available in US)
- The Recycling group prepared a Master Plan in 2017 which serves as guidance for their work.
- Trash Reduction Goals:
  - 30% Reduction – by 2020
  - 50% Reduction – by 2030
  - 80% Reduction – by 2080
- The City is making progress in achieving its overall goal of Zero Waste per the Master Plan.
  - 2018 -2019: Progress
  - 2020: COVID impacted some of the progress. Curbside Compost was begun and expansion of Small Business waste reduction.
  - 2021: Mid-COVID: Resumed Curbside Compost Pickup
  - 2022: Ongoing progress: 15.4 lbs./household on average
  - 2020 Goal of 16 lbs. per household on average has been achieved.
- Trash Breakdowns by the Numbers:
  - 45% Trash
  - 29% Compostables (Opportunity to do more here)
  - 13% Recycling
  - 13% Other
- City Yard Waste Program takes place in Brockton, MA
  - Huge Operation also used by several other cities and towns, etc.
  - You can get on their mailing list to get more information
  - Each spring 30 tons is given away to Cambridge residents
  - Material is clean, fully composted, and screened by a machine
- Food Waste Program
  - Both Households and Businesses are involved
  - Helps with Rodent Control
  - Bins have latches and locks
  - MA is the 1<sup>st</sup> to have Food Waste Ban which results in 1 ton/week
  - Food waste goes to Charlestown, MA (Anaerobic Digester)
  - Sent from there to North Andover, MA.
- How Does Recycling Work?
  - Collected by City
  - Brought to Casella
  - Sorted at Casella
  - Re-sold

**CPP Questions and Comments related to Michael Orr Presentation:**

Several questions about recycling of various things were made by CPP members:

- Clean Pizza boxes can be recycled
- Some amount of residue allowable on other recyclables
- Caps should stay on bottles

- Only rigid plastic can be recycled (styrofoam and non-rigid plastic not recyclable by City.
- Cardboard coated milk container boxes are considered trash.

Questions regarding Yard waste produced:

- 1,500-2,000 tons annually marketed and sold by City
- City sent 70 tons to the Food Project in Lincoln, MA
- 60% Goes to Anaerobic Digester

Questions re: How to sign up for Recycling Newsletter

- [https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001yXRI0zz83tU\\_akvi8IJbsiFKUj4mhEmlx1yW7DcUnQMrw5jnY1tpZTZ1w81ZLsCsoQWTBapgwrtarwbWrbdtH8W9uDRW0u9SIpO480a5UfCSIY5I5FzrgAVzsDk3HDvI\\_8mHy-FY4vv0Ps0PQ4P8YnjhCW33BUP5Fe0h1ojO4JoA%3D](https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001yXRI0zz83tU_akvi8IJbsiFKUj4mhEmlx1yW7DcUnQMrw5jnY1tpZTZ1w81ZLsCsoQWTBapgwrtarwbWrbdtH8W9uDRW0u9SIpO480a5UfCSIY5I5FzrgAVzsDk3HDvI_8mHy-FY4vv0Ps0PQ4P8YnjhCW33BUP5Fe0h1ojO4JoA%3D)
- Several Questions & Comments re: How Safe the Leaf pickup material from the street is and how often the material is tested? The material is tested at the University of Maine. The lead and arsenic levels found in material are within state standards so the material is tested and used as part of the composting material at Brockton operation.

Question regarding some of the Costs associated with recycling and trash:

- City pays \$110/ton for Recycling
- City can sell recycled material for \$55/ton
- City pays \$123/ton for disposal of trash.

Question regarding the Recycling Tours of Casella Operation:

- The Casella operation is in process of being upgraded. They are increasingly using more Robotics. Tours are available:

<https://www.casella.com/blog/casella-hosts-educational-and-fun-family-event>

Question re: How to best get the word out on the Recycling Operation

- Takes a lot of passionate people. Outreach to Community is one of the most persuasive ways, especially the Newsletter. The Newsletter has been going for 2 decades now.
- Comment re: how well run the Recycling Operation is with the City and applause to department.

Question re: Who uses Casella operation beside City of Cambridge?:

- Boston, Somerville, Medford, also use the Casella operation. We are 5% of operation.

Question re: the collecting and recycling or removal of Technical stuff

- City provides stickers for electronics that can be put on TV's etc. on the street for pickup. Staples pickups up certain things for safe disposal such as batteries, etc.

Questions re: the City Arborist recycling of dead trees and leaves etc. for their own use?

- Yes, the DPW chips trees for it's re-use.

Question/Comment re: rodents being a significant problem both for residences and businesses.

- Yes, the City is trying to make inroads in this issue.

Question re: whether Michael can distribute the presentation?

- Yes, he will provide a link

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### 3) Update from City Arborists (Abby Bentley)

Abby provided a brief update to the Tree Planting by the City. She shared that the tree planting operation has been closed up for the winter and will not commence again until spring. They are in the process of confirming Spring Planting Sites for both the City staff planted trees (mostly bare root) and the Contractor planted trees (mostly B&B trees).

- Question by Ruth L. regarding the proposed North Mass. Avenue project and whether the City would consider expanding the areas for tree planting related to the improvements in this area?

City explained that N. Mass. Ave. project planting is fairly limited in this location for the upcoming project. This is because there will be a future Mass. Ave. Phase IV project in the future that is in the process of being reviewed by City CDD and Traffic Department. Any considerations for having additional street trees beyond those under consideration in these locations will happen in the future project. Abby Bentley said the City is already trying to maximize street tree pit size for the trees being installed here in the spring.

- Question/Comment was made regarding the Back of Sidewalk Street Tree Planting Program? And whether there is any information available for dissemination?  
City explained that Green Cambridge has agreed to take over the planting of the trees on private property. You can go to their site to get some information. The bare root trees will be procured by the City. The Canopy Crew and Green Cambridge will coordinate the planting of these trees with the private property owners. Andrew Putnam clarified that copies will be made available in pdf and jpg (coming soon) for circulation. The Green Cambridge Canopy crew and Recycling Dept. have nice graphics. Sophia requested the Cover page.

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#### 4) **Updates from CDD** –Erik Thorkildsen, Planning Board Update

Summary:

1. February 14 Planning Board Meeting will focus on an update to the North Point project previously reviewed by our group.
2. There are several petitions to be reviewed by Planning Board at the upcoming March 1, 2023 meeting:
  - A. North Mass. Avenue Density
  - B. Revisions of Zoning related to Residential Zoning Districts.
  - C. Leighton Street Plaza Project - Erik provided graphics related to this project for commenting.
    - Total permeable area should be increased if possible. Erik clarified that the City staff who reviews the project provides background and suggestions to the Planning Board. Erik clarified that the Board is free to adopt or not but generally speaking, they listen to the suggestions made by City staff and seriously consider.
    - Paul Cortes made the comment that the project has too much plaza and pavement area and not enough shade. Erik said the permeable area required is generally spelled out in zoning for new projects. For existing projects involving a renovation, it's a bit more of a gray area.
    - Ruth L. and others made some general comments about the plant species on the Planting List. Generally the comment was that the project designers and landscape architects should consider the use of more native plant material. ( For instance there was a question about the Karl Forester grass and also selection of

trees ('Freemanii' Maple that are not native and also would not grow to be large and thus not provide sufficient shade.)

- Kevin Beutell, DPW's landscape architect also commented and clarified that the City prioritized "survivability" in species selection as a major priority over planting Native species at all costs.
- Another issue is that the landscape is mostly all over deck so clarification of soil depths was needed but generally speaking Larger tree species were favored if possible.

6. Re: CPP commenting, a question was asked about the mechanism for making and incorporating comments. Erik said generally that CPP can make comments to him and he and City staff can incorporate our comments into the memo that they provide to the Planning Board members. Ruth said she would provide Erik with 2 or 3 sentences.

7. Cynthia made a comment about the increasing of Density in Development. CPP has discussed previously the impact zoning and zoning changes can have on the Street Tree canopy and City landscape. The suggestion was made as to whether someone from the City staff could come before our group to discuss City Zoning and Zoning changes that are being considered in the City and how our group can advocate for maintaining a robust street tree and tree canopy as it relates to this issue.

8. Erik said that he would 1) incorporate our comments in his writeup and 2) try to get appropriate staff from the Zoning department to come before our group at a future meeting to present what is upcoming and under consideration by the City as it relates to Zoning and potential Zoning changes.

**Items for further/future discussion:** (topics tabled for this month or proposed for next month)

The CPP Outreach Committee is working with City staff to plan various participation activities related to Arbor Day which is the last week of April. More to follow on this item.

The CPP Committee welcomes new members to be added. The City was asked to review the status of various members and their term limits.

**Public comments:**

No public comments were made.

**Next meeting:** Our next Zoom meeting will be held on March 8, 2023 at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.

Gary Chan will be presenting an update on the Open Space Study the City has been working on over the last 6 months.

Attachment: Trash, Recycle, Compost & More by Michael Orr

City of Cambridge

# Trash, Recycle, Compost & More

February 2023



CAMBRIDGE  
DEPARTMENT  
OF PUBLIC  
**THE  
WORKS**



# About Cambridge, MA waste

- Total: 51,000 households
- City collects trash/compost from 32,500 HH
- City collects recycling from 44,500 HH
- Food waste collection available to all residents in either drop-off or curbside program
- City doesn't collect business trash, but has program for small businesses to recycle and compost for free with City



# Zero Waste Master Plan Goals

- Began process in 2017
- Goals:
  - Provide mechanism for achieving the City's trash reduction goals.
  - Assist City in its operational planning for future
  - Assist in planning ahead for increasing trash disposal costs
- City's trash reduction goals established in 2009:
  - 30% reduction by 2020 (2008 as baseline)
  - 50% by 2030
  - 80% by 2050



# Zero Waste Master Plan Progress

2018

- Expand **Curbside Compost** to residents (up to 12-unit bldgs)
- Begin **Small Business Recycle Pilot**

2019

- Begin **Mattress Recycling** Program
- Improve recycling through **Recycle Right** campaign

2020

- Expand **Curbside Compost** to all buildings on City trash program
- Expand **Small Business Recycle Program**
- **Extend Yard Waste** Collection to December 31

# Recycle Division Progress

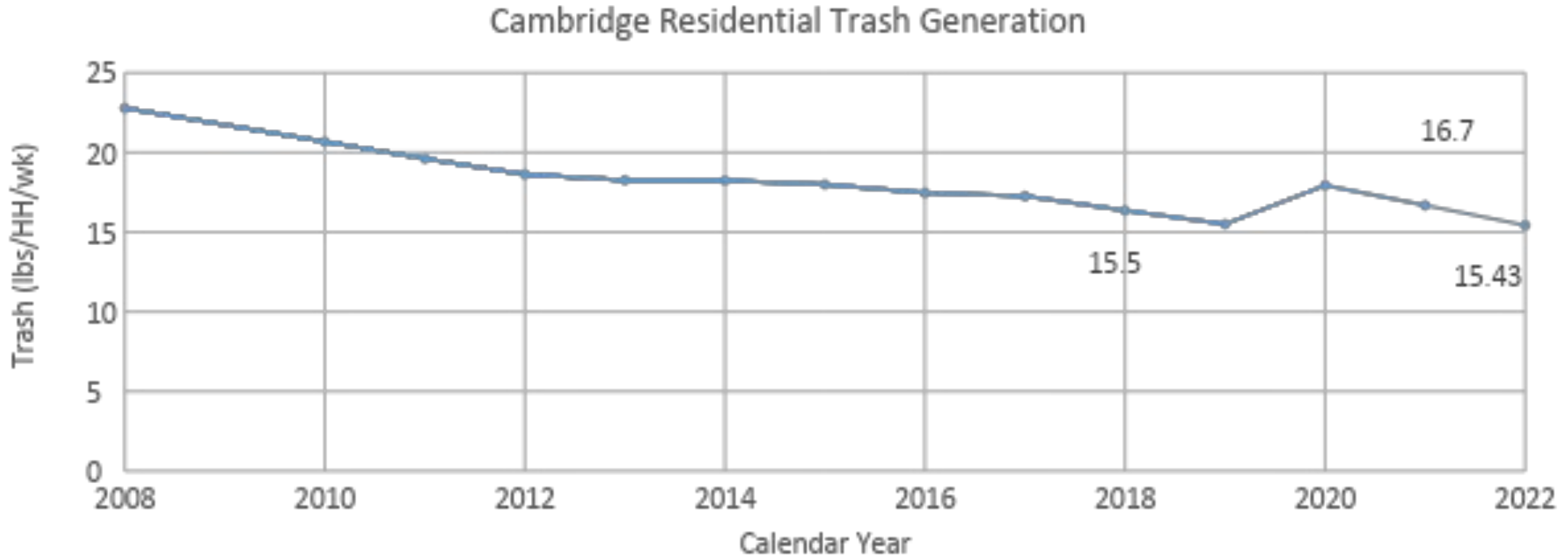
2021

- Resume & expand **Curbside Compost** to more residents
- Start **Small Business Compost Pilot**
- Start **Textiles Recovery** program

2022

- Launch **Standard Trash Carts**
- Expand **Small Business Compost Pilot**

# Zero Waste Master Plan Goals



**Goal:**

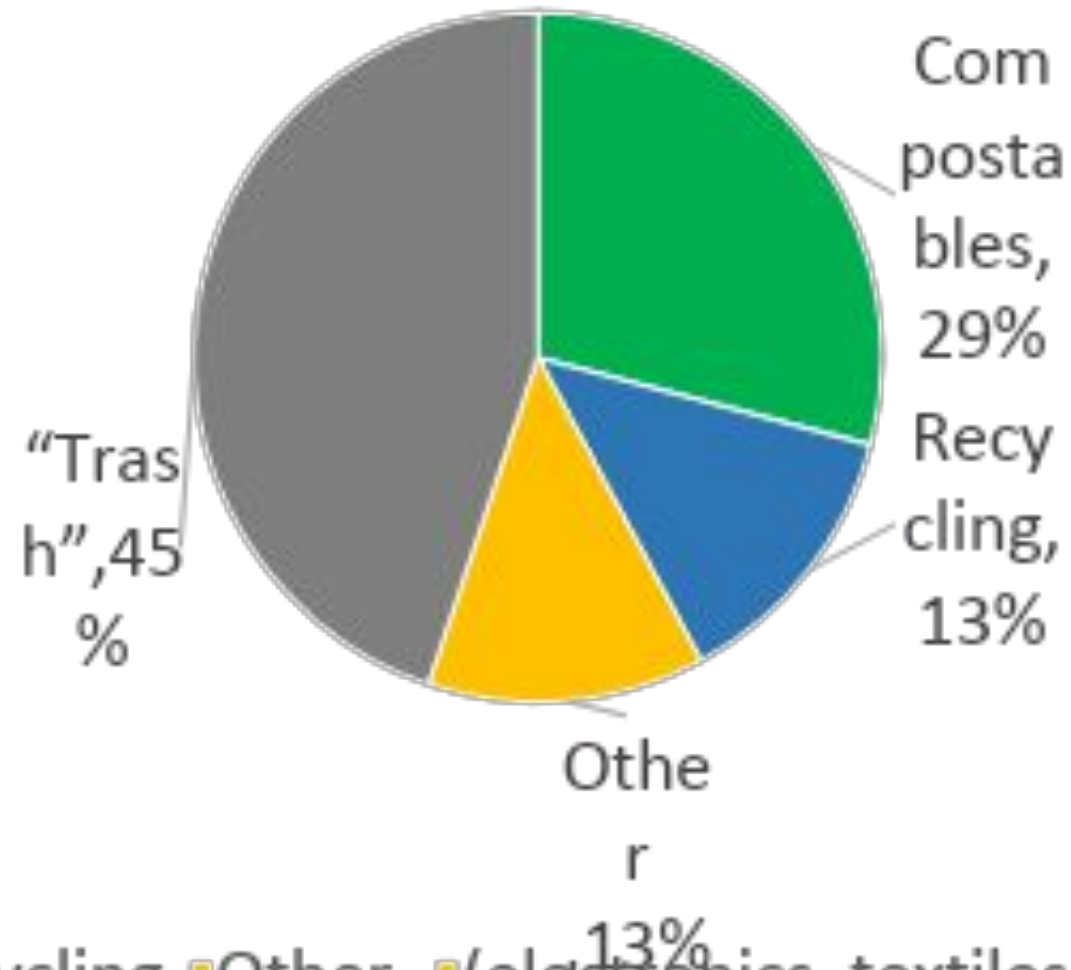
2020: 16 pounds/household/week

2030: 12 lbs/HH/wk

2050: 4 lbs/HH/wk

# What's in Cambridge's trash?

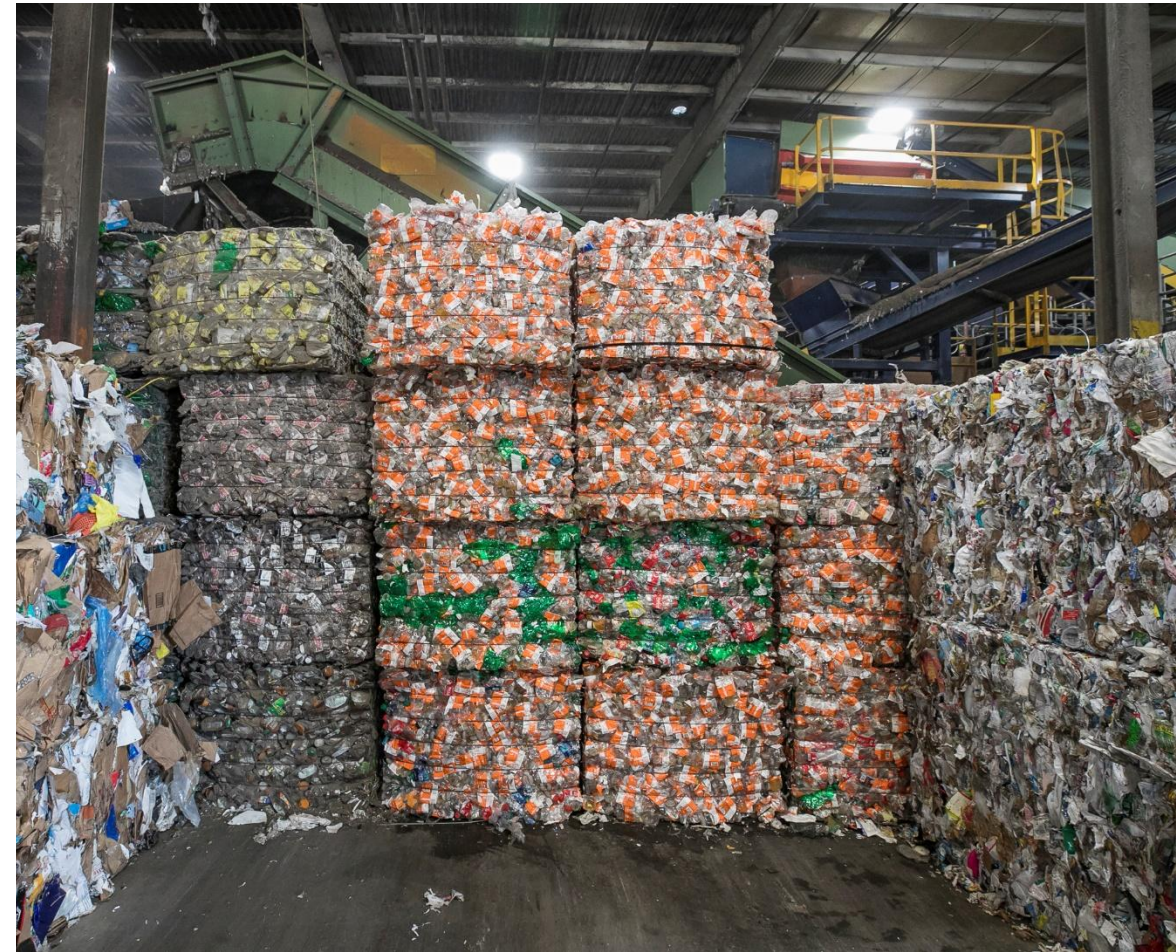
## 2022 Trash Characterization



■ Compostables ■ Recycling ■ Other (electronics, textiles, scrap metal) ■ "Trash"

# How does recycling work?

- Hauler collects from households, 200 businesses, apprx 8500 tons per year.
- After collecting curbside, the materials are brought to Casella, where they sort them into commodities
- Items are sold to recyclers who will use the paper, glass, plastic, or metals in new items





# Common recycling questions answered

- Pizza boxes: Accepted!
- Put caps on all containers before recycling
- Common mistakes (see image)
- To determine whether a plastic item is accepted, it must be both:  
**RIGID & CONTAINER**

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



# Finished Product from Casella







# About Cambridge's Organic Waste Management

1991: Yard Waste is banned from trash disposal in MA

- 2,000 tons of yard waste composted annually.
- Marketed and sold in New England to farms/gardens.
- 2020: Cambridge and Save That Stuff pilots program to send 70 tons to The Food Project in Lincoln, MA to compost & grow food.

2007: Cambridge begins school & drop-off compost

- Until 2018, food waste sent to Rocky Hill Farm
- Now, all food waste sent to Anaerobic Digestion (AD) at the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District (GLSD).

# Yard Waste

- Annual distribution of finished compost
- Brockton Yard waste processing site:
- [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1O-9eNrWx6muw\\_hBudChElktMbJp](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1O-9eNrWx6muw_hBudChElktMbJp)





# Food Waste Program (Curbside Compost)

- 2015: 5,200 households
- 2018: 25,000 households
- 2019: 32,500 households
- 2021: 64 businesses
- 2022: 75 businesses

Today: Apprx 40-50% participation rate from residents.











# Food Waste

- MA: First state w/ food waste ban (2014): Any business generating >1 ton/week of food waste must divert it (now the ban is ½ ton per week)
- Connecticut, New York, Maryland, and Minnesota have recently taken action to reduce commercial food waste
- Vermont mandated all food waste diversion in July 2020
- California: Banned food waste from all residents, businesses, and institutions in Jan. 2022!

# Processing organics

1<sup>st</sup> site: CORe in Charlestown

2<sup>nd</sup> site: Greater Lawrence Sanitary  
District in North Andover

## Anaerobic digestion

- Offsets demand for fossil fuel.

**90% of the food scraps, by weight, goes  
toward making clean energy**





## How common is this process?

Co-digesting food waste with wastewater occurs at more than 100 facilities in the US, including Oakland (CA), LA, NYC, Elizabeth NJ, upstate NY, and Hershey PA.

1. In urban areas, AD can be beneficial because it requires less time and space than composting
2. Many urban wastewater treatment facilities already have infrastructure
3. State policy makers recognize the connection between food waste recycling, clean energy generation and reducing GHG emissions.



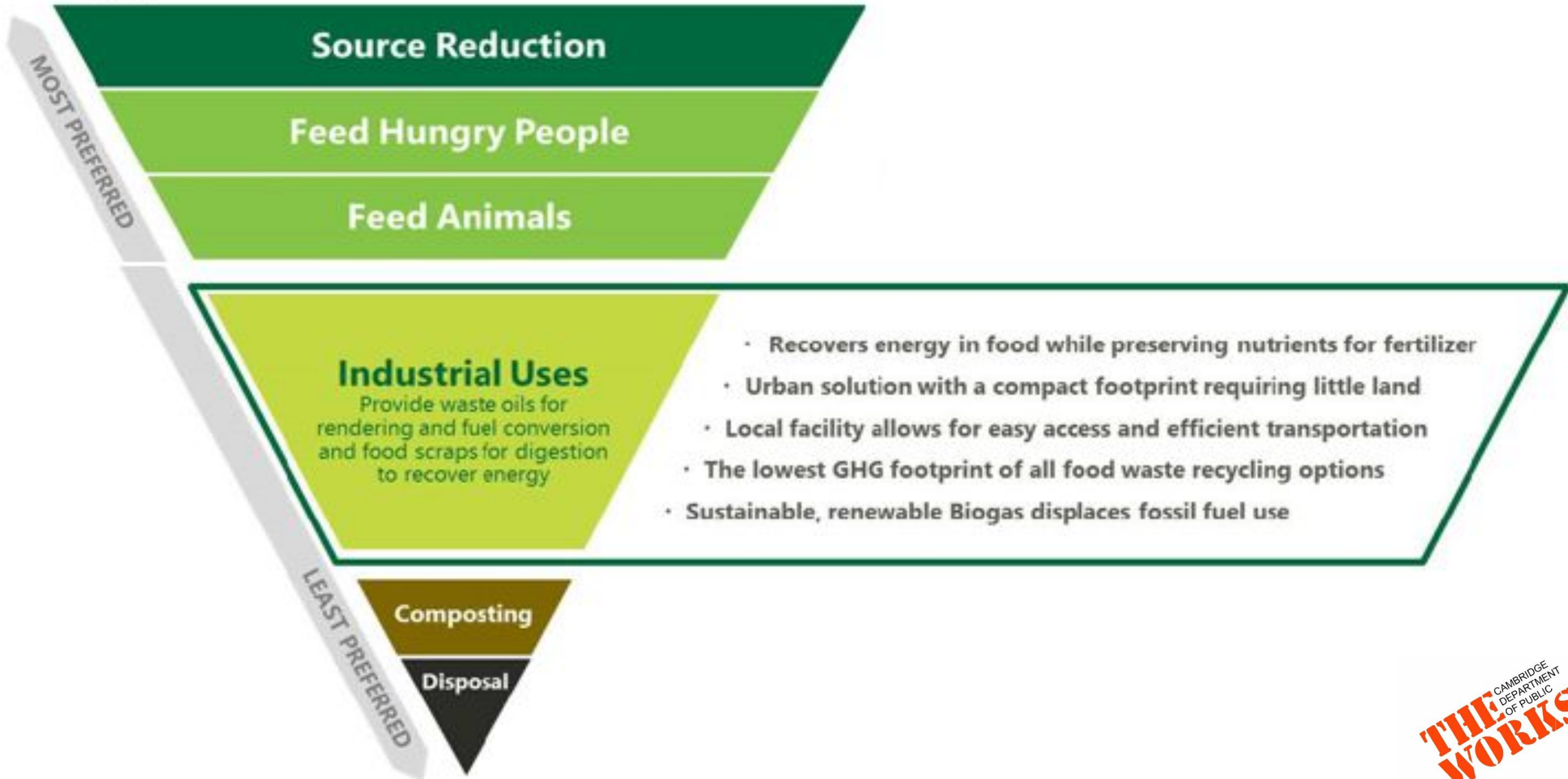
## Trend on food waste management in MA

Processing Type	2016 (tons)	2021 (tons)
Anaerobic Digestion (AD)	48,000	211,000
Compost	80,000	33,000
Other	62,000	78,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>190,000</b>	<b>322,000</b>

SOURCE: MassDEP



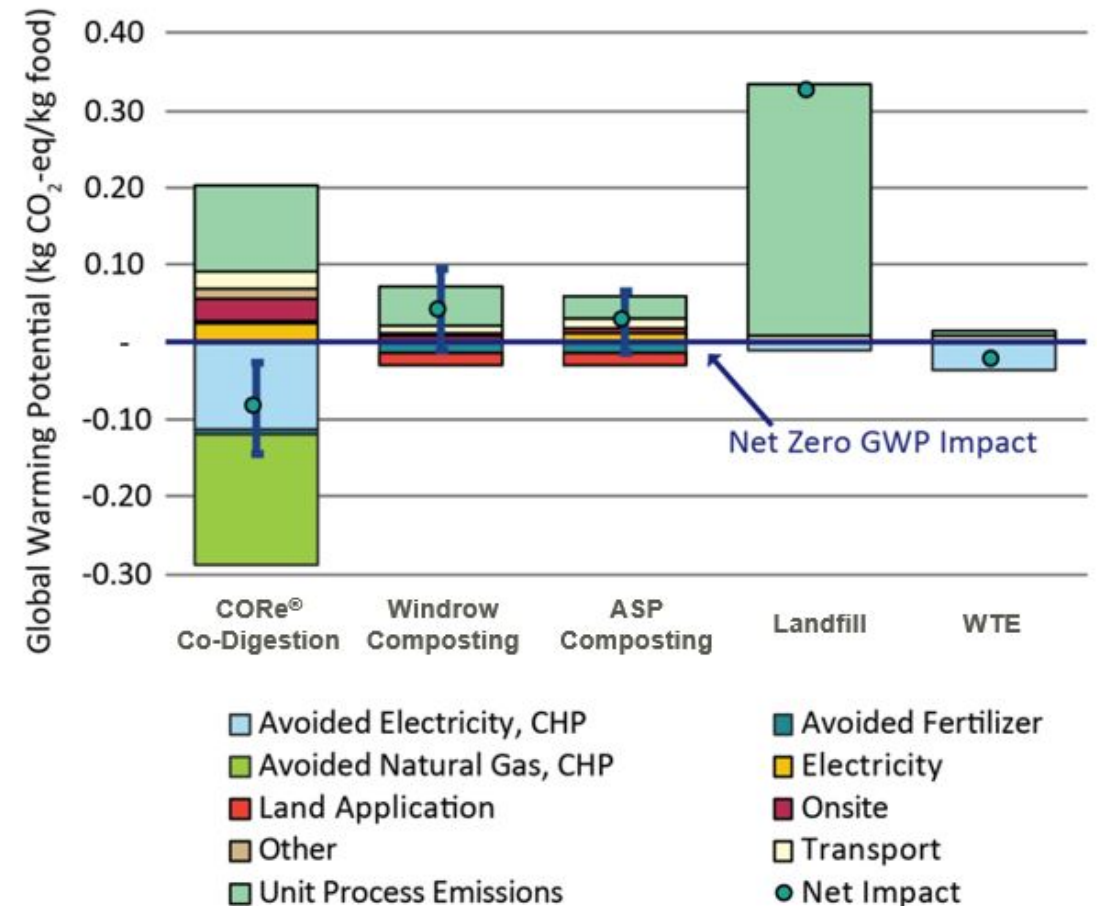
# Food Recovery Hierarchy



# Life Cycle Assessment for Food Waste Anaerobic Co-Digestion

- US EPA consulted with Eastern Research Group to conduct analysis of sending food waste to incineration, landfill, compost, and AD. 194-page report published on EPA website.

## Results of EPA's Lifecycle Analysis



# Separate Your Food Waste

**Food Waste** in the trash is a **primary food source** for rodents. **Separating food waste from trash is critical.**

To make it harder for rodents to access food,

**compost carts have:**

- **thick plastic**
- **locks or latches.**



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*"Would it kill you to compost?"*

Source: New Yorker magazine