



# City of West Haven



## Co-Collection Program

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **Why now?**

There are a number of reasons we need to move now:

1. This is a one-time Grant opportunity participating with 18 other Connecticut towns, and we all must go together. This \$1.3 million grant is available now and will not be available in the future. The window to accept the grant is closing. We won this grant through a competitive process.
2. If we don't accept state aid now, we will have pay for the costs ourselves if we choose this program in the future.
3. There is a trash crisis in Connecticut and New England. Shipping trash to Pennsylvania – when we can turn it into green energy and compost here – is costly and bad for the environment.
4. Over 30% of the State's trash disposal capacity permanently disappeared in July when the incinerator in Hartford closed, leaving 35 towns stranded, having to truck their waste to Pennsylvania, or beg for tipping access at the three remaining incinerators.
5. 70% of trash in Connecticut is burned in old facilities, like the one in Bridgeport that West Haven uses. These old plants could close for the same reason the Hartford incinerator closed (old age) making the situation even worse.
6. Trash disposal fees are expected to grow from \$67/ton to \$120/ton now, with prices rising in the near term to upwards of \$200.00/ton, according to the State of Connecticut.

#### **What if we delay the pilot?**

As a region and a State, we have been delaying, which is why we're at this crisis point. If we delay further, we will lose \$1.3 million in State money, trash costs will increase, and we will have to cut the budget elsewhere or raise taxes a full mill to pay to the tipping fee increase.

#### **Is this program permanent?**

No. It's a nine-month pilot program. The City can cancel it at any time. If it is successful, the City can opt to adopt the program for the foreseeable future.

**Will I get fined if I don't sort my food waste?**

No. You will not be fined if you don't participate. During the pilot, we are providing you with three free bags per week (a \$1.14 savings per house per week) and ask that you use them as directed in an effort to be fiscally responsible and friendly to the environment.

**Will you be tracking my trash with a bar code?**

No.

**Do I have to use an APP on my phone to participate?**

No. The app is an optional communication tool about trash, trash days etc.

**Won't my food waste stink or cause problems?**

You already have food waste in your house or trash can. The pilot will allow you to divert *existing* food waste from your trash. We're just asking you to put it in a different bag. Both bags go in the same can.

**How hard will it be to do this?**

It should be very easy. You generate the same trash and put it in the same trash cart on the same day of the week. You will get your bags at the same stores where you get trash bags today. The only difference is that we're asking you to put food waste in a green bag so we can make green energy and compost from it.

**Isn't it difficult to sort my food waste?**

Not really. In fact, it's even easier than recycling. If you could eat it but didn't, put it in the green bag along with your fruit and vegetable scraps/peels, bones, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells, food soiled napkins, etc. Otherwise, put it in the orange trash bag.

**How much will this cost the City?**

It won't cost anything. The City is receiving a grant of \$1.3 million that will pay for everything. The City will save money for each pound we move from trash to food scraps.

**Where does the City get the authority to do this?**

City Charter – our "Constitution" – gives the Commissioner of Public Works the authority to implement this pilot, which is being sponsored and overseen by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. City ordinance 119 requires the City to collect trash from 1-3 family residences. It leaves the means and methods up to the Commissioner.

**What happens if the pilot doesn't succeed?**

Nothing. Food waste will still go to the trash. The pilot can only make things better by helping us make green energy and compost with food scraps, and position us for lower disposal fees.

**Will Pennsylvania even accept our waste?**

Perhaps, but there has been legislation introduced in Congress by Pennsylvania Senators in the past that would allow receiving states to regulate or tax out-of-state waste, putting further pressure on landfill tipping fees.

**What if we don't make changes?**

Trash is expensive and is only getting more expensive – the cost to use the Bridgeport incinerator is going from \$67 per ton to \$120 per ton in the near term, to upwards of \$200.00 per ton (Per CT DEEP forecasts) soon thereafter. We don't have surplus money to pay these costs. The City will be forced to cut services that residents want, or raise taxes in order to pay for burning or burying valuable food waste.

**Will this cost me money?**

It shouldn't. The State is providing you three free bags each week – two trash and one food waste. (\$1.14 value per week) Additional trash bags can be purchased at stores for \$0.50 per bag. The three free bags per week should more than offset any cost you might incur during weeks when you have excess trash due to parties or other events.

**Where do I get the bags?**

Stop and Shop, Shoprite, and several ethnic markets to be identified throughout the City. We can also mail them to you.

**West Haven is a diverse community. How are you making sure the pilot works?**

The pilot was designed to address our specific needs. We will be providing outreach to help residents understand the program, in English, Spanish, Chinese and Turkish. Food waste is easy for residents to understand – if you could eat it, put it in the green bag along with your fruit and vegetable scraps/peels, bones, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells. The food waste will also be screened to take out any contaminants that residents throw in the green bag.

**Are we the only ones doing this?**

No. 18 other cities and towns requested grant funding and are receiving similar grants. The City of Meriden has already completed its first pilot and is planning to implement another round of pilots.

**Can I use a garbage disposal on my sink?**

Yes, but bear in mind that sending your food waste through the pilot gives it a second life as compost and electricity. Putting food down the drain adds to our sewer plant operating costs.

**Why can't we compost it here?**

You can. You can home compost now on your own, or the City may evaluate composting food waste here in West Haven to save the trip to Southington. We have already conducted a food waste composting pilot, and it works!

**What if I have a hardship and can't participate?**

The vast majority of the time, residents will be able to fit their trash in the free bags they are provided. The Commissioner of Public Works will make provisions for opting out of the program for people who still have a hardship.

**Where does the food waste go?**

For this pilot program, the food waste will be shipped to Quantum Bio-Power in Southington.

**Why are bio-digesters cheaper than incinerators?**

The cost to tip food waste at bio-digester plants is trending down, and new bio-digesters are being built. The cost to dispose of waste at incinerators is going rapidly up due to reduced capacity in the industry.

No one is building new incinerators either. With bio-digesters, there is no costly ash waste to be sent to landfills as there are from incinerators. Bio-digesters make money by converting food waste to renewable natural gas, selling heat or electricity, selling renewable energy tax credits, and selling compost output, as well as tipping fees from users.

**Will our hauler want more money?**

Haulers always want more money, but this program actually cuts the hauler's cost, as the transfer station they will be delivering to is a shorter round trip for their trucks. The routes and weight are the same. The hauler has agreed to participate in the pilot.

**Who separates the bags?**

A State arranged contractor, paid for with the Grant, sorts the bags and reloads them into larger trucks, making the process more efficient.

**What do I do with dog poo and cat litter?**

In the trash.