



TOWN OF HAMILTON

"THREE-SORT" PAYT PROGRAM

In a "Three-Sort" program, residents use separate containers for trash, recycling, and food waste collection at the curb. Dramatic reductions in trash tonnage and increases in recycling and food waste diversion have yielded significant savings for this suburban North Shore town.



Community Population: 8,370

Households Served: 2,680

Services Provided: Weekly curbside trash collection, single-stream recycling, and food waste collection. The Town offers additional waste disposal and recycling services at its Department of Public Works (DPW) site, including collection of mercury-containing products and batteries, white goods, and electronics. In addition, residents can request curbside pickup of bulky items (including mattresses) for a fee.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

- Curbside collection of trash is limited to one 35-gallon standardized cart collected every week. Residents with excess trash must purchase the Town's official overflow bags, which are priced at \$2.50 per 33-gallon bag, and \$1.50 per 15-gallon bag, and available at three local retailers.
- Single-stream recycling is collected weekly, using the residents' own containers. While there is no limit to the amount of recycling generated or number of recycling containers utilized, they each must be no more than 35-gallons in size.
- Food waste is collected weekly in a 13-gallon wheeled cart with locking lid. The material is taken to Brick Ends Farm in Hamilton, where it is processed into compost.
- The program serves all residential dwellings up to four units, and small businesses that wish to participate.

HISTORY:

The Town of Hamilton has been a leader in waste reduction for almost two decades. Below are some milestones in their history:

- **April 2006:** Initiated an "Enhanced Waste Ban Enforcement" program, where the hauler would leave behind any visible recyclables that were included in the trash instead of the recycling bin. The town's trash tonnage dropped 10% during the first year.
- **October 2007:** Instituted fees in conjunction with a "Waste Reduction Program," or Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT), to cover some or all of the costs of trash collection.
- **March 2008:** Limited residents to one bag or barrel of trash per week and set fees for official bags to be used if residents had excess trash.
- **April 2010:** Conducted a food waste pilot program for 600 households in the towns of Hamilton and Wenham, using 13-gallon carts. The Town of Hamilton also negotiated with their trash and recycling hauler to institute a three-sort collection service at little cost above their current program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Hamilton: Timothy Olson, DPW Director, tolson@hamiltonma.gov;
www.hamiltonma.gov/government/departments-public-works

MassDEP: Rachel Smith, Rachel.Smith@mass.gov;
www.mass.gov/lists/pay-as-you-throw-paytsave-money-and-reduce-trashmart

- **April 2012:** Implemented the three-sort program town-wide. The town's trash tonnage decreased by 30% in the first year of this program.
- **May 2021:** Instituted a ban on organic material (i.e., food waste) in the trash, where the hauler would not collect trash when a food waste bin is not also present.

IMPLEMENTATION:

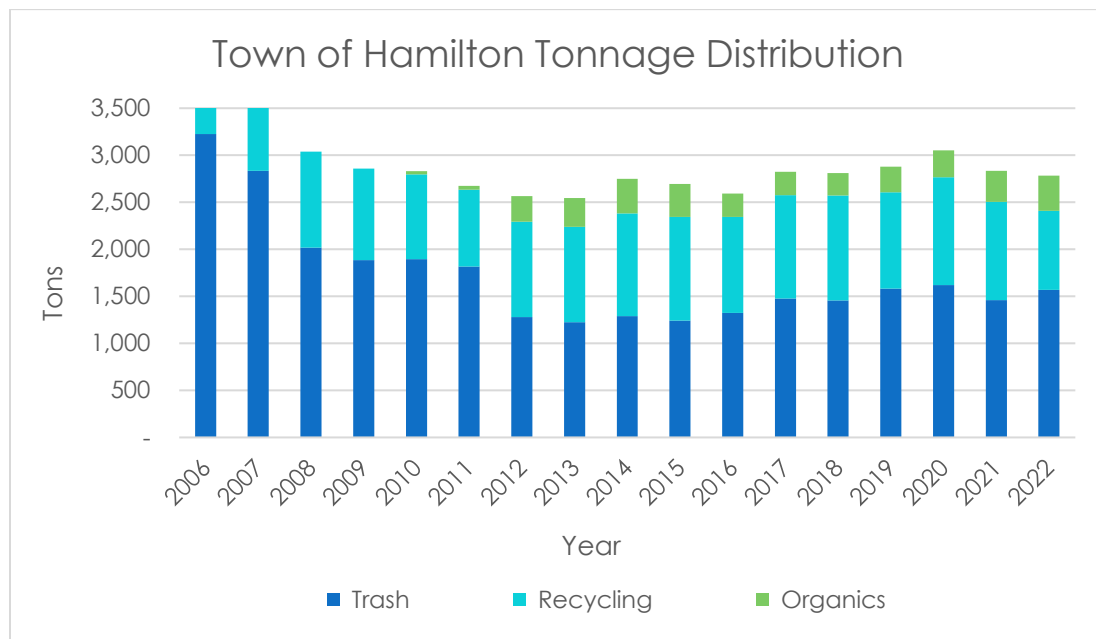
- The Town procured and distributed standardized 35-gallon carts for trash for all eligible households. MassDEP grant funds of \$3,630 helped with the PAYT start-up costs.
- With the help of an additional \$38,360 grant from MassDEP, the Town procured 13-gallon wheeled food waste carts. Funding from these grants were also used to develop an information booklet that was distributed to all residents along with their new carts.
- Hamilton uses funds from the annual Recycling Dividends Program (RDP) grant to purchase trash, recycling, and organics bins for residents in support of the program.

ADMINISTRATION & ENFORCEMENT:

- Revenues from bag sales are deposited into the General Fund.
- The Town coordinates requests for replacement carts.
- The Town has not noted any increase in illegal dumping.

RESULTS:

- With an average of 1,169 pounds of trash per household per year in 2022, the Town of Hamilton remains below the state-wide average of 1,247 for a PAYT community.
- The graphs below present trash, recycling, and organics tonnages for Hamilton over the past 10 years, as well as the average amount of trash generated per household:



- While the initial years following each new program change – enforcement, PAYT, food waste collection – show a marked decrease in trash tonnage generated per person; after a while, the tonnage levels off and even increases.
- New requirements, such as the enforced ban on food waste disposal will likely bring trash tonnage back down, while increasing recycling and food waste diversion.

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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