



# CASE STUDY: CITY OF CAMBRIDGE MATTRESS RECYCLING PROGRAM

Mattresses are made up mostly of recyclable materials. Once disassembled, more than 75% of their components can be recycled. Mattresses discarded in the trash are notoriously difficult to manage. They are expensive to transport, take up a lot of space in trash trucks and landfills, are hard to compact, and get caught in equipment at waste-to-energy facilities. MassDEP's Mattress Recycling Incentive (MRI) grant program provides funding to municipalities to aid in the collection, transportation, and recycling of residential mattresses and box springs.



**Population:** 110,400

**Households:** 50,000

### Services Provided:

The City of Cambridge provides weekly curbside collection of trash and recycling to 44,700 households, which includes multi-family buildings, apartments, and condos, with up to 9 units. The curbside mattress recycling program is FREE to residents, via appointment. The mattresses are collected by UTEC and the components are separated, recycled, and sent to market.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

- The City of Cambridge launched residential mattress recycling in April 2019, becoming the first MassDEP grantee to implement a curbside pick-up program.
- Cambridge contracted with UTEC, one of four mattress recycling vendors on state contract FAC90, to collect residential mattresses curbside and take them to their recycling facility in Lawrence, MA.
- Residents schedule a FREE pick-up online through [Cambridge's website](#).
- MassDEP pays the \$16 per-piece mattress recycling cost under the grant agreement.
- In order to keep costs down for its residents and encourage participation, the City of Cambridge pays for the curbside pick-up service, currently set at \$30 per mattress.

### 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 the recycling.

*Remember:*



No Bagged Items  
No Garbage



No Plastic Bags,  
Films or Wrappers

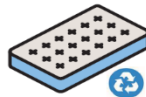


No Tangles  
(no hoses, wires,  
hangers or electronics)



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](#).

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](#).

## PROGRAM RESULTS & OTHER BENEFITS:

- Prior to receiving the MassDEP grant, mattresses and box springs from Cambridge residents were sent for trash disposal.
- With more than **\$149,000 in grant funding from MassDEP**, the City was able to implement an easy and convenient outlet for residents to recycle their mattresses and box springs.
- Curbside pick-up eliminates the need for residents to self-transport these large bulky items to the DPW's recycling center. It also eliminates the need for setting aside limited storage space for placing mattress collection containers within the City.
- While the cost to the City is high (about \$45 per mattress), this free service for residents has helped to bolster participation, which in turn will help Cambridge achieve their Zero Waste Goals.
- Since the program started in April 2019, **9,335 mattresses have been recycled**.



## PROGRAM CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED:

**Education is key.** Residents were used to setting out a mattress with their regular trash so when the recycling program started, many did not set up an appointment. They simply placed their mattress curbside. Without scheduled appointments, UTEC didn't know where to send their trucks, resulting in missed pick-ups or unplanned overages.

- The City of Cambridge began leaving stickers on the mattresses to educate residents about the new program. At the beginning they were tagging 5-10 mattresses per day for not being scheduled properly, but now it is down to less than 5 per week.
- Scheduling pick-ups on days that are DIFFERENT than normal trash collection days has been helpful in maintaining enough space on narrow city sidewalks.

## POST GRANT:

- The City of Cambridge has continued its curbside collection program for mattresses after grant funding ended on January 31, 2021.
- The City supports extended producer responsibility (EPR) initiatives for mattresses similar to what has been done in California, Connecticut, and Rhode Island and has been an advocate for advancing research on this effort in Massachusetts.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Cambridge:** Michael Orr, Recycling Director, 617-349-4815, or [morr@cambridgema.gov](mailto:morr@cambridgema.gov)  
[City of Cambridge Curbside Collections Webpage](#)

**MassDEP:** Rachel Smith, Regional Planner, 617-292-5704, or [Rachel.Smith@mass.gov](mailto:Rachel.Smith@mass.gov)  
[MassDEP's Mattress Recycling Webpage](#)

**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection**

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This information is available in alternate format by calling our ADA Coordinator at 617-574-6872