

Waste, Recycling and Organics Services Survey and Data

Zero Waste Amherst
March, 2023

On-line ZWA Survey of Amherst Residents

Conducted from January 1 to February 28, 2023

Shared via:

- Networks/email lists of 14 supporting organizations
- Next Door Amherst
- Amherst Neighbors
- Neighborhood Associations
- Faith organizations
- Social media
- Outreach to Town officials and committees

Information was self-reported by Amherst residents. Pricing options and other data were not available from USA Waste and Recycling.

Survey Results (510 respondents)

88% single and 2-4 family homeowners (450)

6% condo owners (31)

5% renters (24)

Current Homeowner Waste and Recycling Management:

69% USA Waste and Recycling customers (310)

52% Transfer Station annual pass holders (232)

21% both USA and Transfer Station (93)



Hauler Service



Survey Results

| Trash Cart Size | % of respondents | average annual cost |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Small | 32% | \$540 |
| Medium | 47% | \$548 |
| Large | 21% | \$551 |

USA Waste and Recycling Data

| Cart Size | Annual Cost | # customers | % customers | Total annual \$ |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Small | \$504 | 700 | 22% | \$352,800 |
| Medium | \$528 | 800 | 25% | \$422,400 |
| Large | \$552 | 1500 | 47% | \$828,000 |
| "Boutique" | \$1,000+ | 200 | 6% | \$200,000+ |
| Totals | | 3200 | | \$1,803,200+ |
| | | | | |



Pick Up Frequency

- **Trash**

- Weekly* 97%
- Biweekly 3%

- **Recycling**

- Weekly 6%
- Biweekly* 94%

*Default frequency for all cart sizes



Takeaways

- The average cost per household of residential hauler services is ~ \$550 annually.
- There is no meaningful price incentive to reduce trash disposal based on cart size.
- There is no meaningful price incentive to reduce trash disposal based on pick up frequency.
- There is no incentive to reduce trash disposal because weekly trash pick-up is provided for all customers regardless of individual contract.



Hauler Curbside Organics Pick-up

Of the 310 respondents who are USA customers, only 5 responded that they purchase the additional curbside compost pick up.

Takeaway:


Provision of curbside organics pick up option at extra cost has not been used by a significant number of customers and therefore has not significantly reduced waste.



90% of customer comments were negative.
(152 of 169 comments)

| Reason | % of commenters | # of commenters |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|
| Too expensive, frequent increase | 44% | 74 |
| Want less trash pickup | 18% | 30 |
| Don't like it being a monopoly | 12% | 20 |
| Unaware of composting option | 8% | 14 |
| Don't like/trust single stream recycling | 6% | 10 |
| Want more recycling pickup | 5% | 9 |
| Reliable, efficient, convenient | 10% | 17 |

Comments about Hauler

- 
- “I am frustrated that I have so little choice and have to pay more than I need... There should be incentive and reward for making less trash!”
 - “This company gives no discount for seniors ... and charges for bringing to curb unlike Amherst Trucking”.
 - “It's rather shameful that Amherst doesn't provide a trash pick up option given how high our taxes are.”
 - “It's expensive but I'm disabled and can't use the transfer station easily.”
 - “Rates go up every 6 months. I rarely fill my trash container and would throw out even less if I could do curbside composting but I'm not willing to pay them anymore per month.”
 - “I get recycling every two weeks and would be happy to have trash every two weeks as well in order to decrease truck driving hours.”
 - “I love the idea of bundling with access to the town transfer station.”
 - “We were grandfathered for biweekly pick-up, but were not allowed a choice of smaller cart size.”



Transfer Station

Why do residents choose the Transfer Station?

| Reason | Not USA Customers | | USA Customers | |
|--|-------------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| | n=139 | % | n=118 | % |
| Lower Cost; Prefer PAYT | 137 | 99% | 32 | 27% |
| Take it or Leave It & Book Shed | 97 | 70% | 52 | 44% |
| Enjoy Handling Own Materials | 91 | 65% | 22 | 19% |
| Prefer Dual Stream Recycling | 86 | 62% | 21 | 18% |
| Don't like big haulers | 69 | 50% | 14 | 12% |
| Bulky Item Disposal | 60 | 43% | 87 | 74% |

How is (and was) the Transfer Station used?

| | Current Pass Holders (n=242) | | Previous Pass Holders (n=51) | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----|
| Recycling | 196 | 81% | 29 | 57% |
| Trash | 168 | 69% | 18 | 35% |
| Take It or Leave It | 156 | 64% | 41 | 80% |
| Book Shed | 156 | 64% | 27 | 53% |
| Bulky Items | 140 | 58% | 32 | 63% |
| Yard Waste | 110 | 45% | 15 | 29% |
| Compost | 75 | 31% | 3 | 6% |

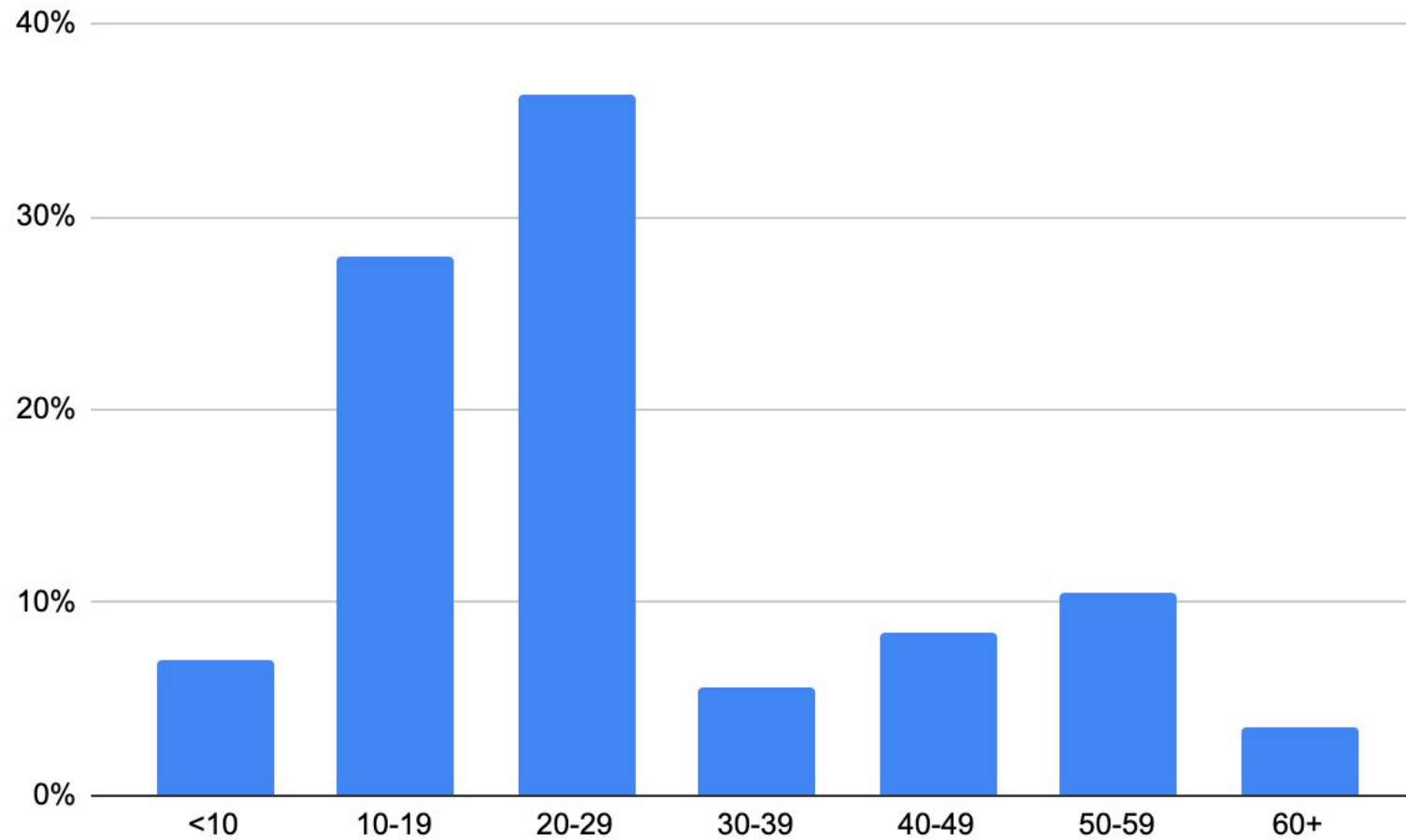


Volume of Use of Transfer Station (non-USA customers)

| | # trash bags per year (n=131) | # visits per year (n=143) |
|---------------|--|--|
| Mean | 20 | 26 |
| Median | 16 | 24 |

Frequency of trips to the Transfer Station is ~ biweekly.

Number of Visits to Transfer Station (not USA customers)




Number of visits per year



Takeaways

- The majority (76%) of annual pass holders visit the Transfer Station biweekly or less often.
- Take It or Leave It is/was valued by 2/3 of current and 4/5 of previous Transfer Station users.
- About 1/3 of annual pass holders bring organics to the Transfer Station.
- Less than 2% of USA respondents utilize curbside organics pick up.



ZWA Survey results and USA Waste and Recycling data concur:

- Small difference in cost by cart size
- Average annual cost is ~ \$550
- Less than 2% of USA customers use curbside organics pick-up.
- There is pricing variability based on
 - Some contracts being grandfathered in
 - “Boutique” service

There are no discount programs (e.g. no senior discount).



Additional information provided by USA

- Pricing for waste disposal is \$42, \$44, and \$46 per month respectively for small, medium and large carts.
- “Boutique” service starts at \$1000 and is charged to residents who want or need their trash and recycling to be picked up near their house rather than curbside.
- Small carts, previously 32-35 gallon, are now 45 gallon.



South Hadley Residential Hauling Contract

Source: ZWA conversation with Chris Bouchard, DPW Superintendent and Christina Platt, ZWA (1/15/2021) and S. Hadley contract

- Town Contract with Republic services for Trash and Dual Stream Recycling
- Pay As You Throw (pay per bag) fee structure, biweekly pickup

Revenue:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Enterprise Annual Fees (\$125/household x 6,400 households) | \$800,000 |
| Bag sales (\$2 per 30 gal bag; \$1 per small bag) | \$550,000 |
| Total revenues | \$1,350,000 |



South Hadley Residential Hauling Data

Costs:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Cost for collections | \$650,000 |
| Cost for disposal | \$410,000 |
| Total contract cost | \$1,060,000 |
| Total cost including operational staff | \$1,470,000 |

Town provides the following services:

Oversight of curbside pick up trash and recycling

Municipal trash and recycling

Management of Transfer Station and Composting Site



Amherst/South Hadley: Comparison

South Hadley 2022-23 Republic contract

Total contract cost (6,400 households) \$1,060,000

Cost to residents \$125/yr. plus cost of bags

Amherst USA Waste and Recycling Res. Services

Total subscription fees (3,200 households) \$1,803,200+

Cost to residents - Average \$550/yr plus:

 optional Transfer Station sticker @ \$125/yr

 optional curbside compost pick up @ \$180/yr



ZWA Survey of Towns

(18 Massachusetts towns with population of 35,000 - 45,000)

Residents are charged for waste and recycling management via:

- taxes alone
- taxes plus fees paid to Enterprise Fund for PAYT bags and/or additional services over basic
- yearly fee to Enterprise Fund alone
- yearly fee to Enterprise Fund plus PAYT bags and/or additional services over basic
- PAYT bags alone for trash

Seven charge residents via an enterprise fund. The rest include it in taxes or have a mixed arrangement of both taxes and the use of an enterprise fund.



ZWA Survey of Towns with Zero Waste Programs (18 Massachusetts towns with population of 35,000 - 45,000)

Who does the hauling?

1. Twelve provide their hauling in house.
2. Five contract with haulers (Casella, Republic, and Waste Management).
3. One (Amherst) has resident subscription hauling.



Thank you very much!