



RECYCLE COMPOST

NYC, many others copy SF compost program

Following San Francisco's lead, dozens of cities and hundreds of universities are instituting urban compost collection programs, but few expected New York City to come to the party. Then, on June 16 Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced plans to expand and eventually require food scrap compost collection at locations across the City.

While discussing the plan, officials also signaled interest in the zero waste movement. "You want to get on a trajectory where you're not sending anything to landfills," Deputy Mayor Caswell F. Holloway IV told *The New York Times*.

San Francisco aims to achieve zero waste by 2020, a goal set by the Board of Supervisors. The green bin program is a major contributor to San Francisco's landfill diversion rate of 80 percent, the highest in the nation.

Replicating the San Francisco program just makes sense. Food scraps collected from San Francisco are turned into nutrient-rich compost and applied to local farms. Compost made from food scraps collected in New York City can be applied to upstate farms that grow fruits and vegetables sold at the 19 farmers' markets located throughout the City.



Photo by Erika Matthais

Bloomberg's announcement generated a lot of New York media coverage and press calls to San Francisco seeking reaction and insights. Reporters speaking with New York residents were surprised by the overwhelming support for the program and within two days declared "people like it."

The Times reported that test compost collection programs have shown an "unexpectedly high level of participation." More than one headline read like this one:

"Take it from a composting veteran, it is easier than you think."

That attitude will feel natural to experienced composters who live and work in San Francisco. We may still have a few compost holdouts, but in total our city gets a little closer to zero waste every day. And in that context it was nice, at least for a few days, to read headlines like "New York City amps up food recycling, while San Francisco shows the way."

Throw away less, recycle more to manage cost

Recology understands the importance of controlling costs for our customers by always looking for ways to operate as efficiently as possible.

San Francisco refuse rates have remained unchanged for three years while operating costs, such as fuel and labor for the three-bin program, have increased significantly. Rising costs combined with increased servicing of public litter cans and more timely collection of abandoned waste mean that residential customers are going to pay a little more for refuse collection, recycling, and disposal.

In setting rates, the City of San Francisco provides financial incentives to customers

who reduce the amount of trash they send to landfill. One way to reduce waste is to buy only what you need. Another is to reuse or donate things instead of tossing them. A third is to be more attentive to recycling and composting and thereby reduce the size of your garbage bin.

Historically, the City based program costs for residential service (recycling, compost, and trash) totally on the volume of the black bin. That can't work in the long run because black bins are getting smaller as we recycle and compost more and send less to landfill.

A new Rate Order issued by the Department of Public Works will change the

way residential and apartment customers are billed. The order includes charges on the blue and green bins at residential properties, something businesses already pay, and "diversion discounts" that reward customers who recycle and compost more of their waste. Those who do often find they can reduce the size of their black bin, a key to managing disposal costs.

Information about the new structure is posted on SFZeroWasteRates.com. The site includes rate calculators that customers can use to determine costs and recycling discounts associated with different bin sizes and service options.

In 11 years San Franciscans have cut the amount of material they send to landfill by 50 percent. Still, more than 1,200 tons of refuse a day go to landfill disposal. Most of that material could be recycled or composted and so should go in the blue and green bins.

Recology and the City aim to make recycling and composting easy and convenient for customers. Remember that all your refuse goes somewhere. Please take simple steps to reduce waste, reuse materials, and recycle and compost.

As San Franciscans we share a common goal — to achieve zero waste by 2020. We can't get there without you. To see our video spot on zero waste go to RecologySF.com/zero. The take away? "If less is more, then zero is everything."





How to recycle mattresses and other big stuff

The San Francisco Department of Public Works and Recology are taking extra steps to help keep our wonderful City clean. Part of that effort is [RecycleMyJunk.com](https://www.recyclemyjunk.com), the appointment-based collection program for old mattresses, furniture, and other large or bulky items.

San Franciscans living in single-family homes, apartments, and condominiums are entitled to RecycleMyJunk pickups at no additional charge. RecycleMyJunk is funded through regular monthly refuse rates.

Program guidelines are listed on the website. To request a collection, call Recology at 415-330-1300. Please call several days in advance of the day you will need a pickup. Our customer service representatives will schedule a collection day most convenient to you.



By participating in this program, you will help keep your neighborhood clean and help protect the environment. More

than 60 percent of the material collected through the RMJ program gets recycled.

Nice to know

RecologySF.com website redesigned

We updated our website — [RecologySF.com](https://www.recyclemysf.com) — to make more information about recycling, composting, and zero waste available to our customers. We also improved the navigation tools to make it easier for people to quickly find information they need.

We aim to put timely and relevant content on the site and improve communication and functionality. Please let us know what you think via the “contact us” page on [RecologySF.com](https://www.recyclemysf.com). Thank you.

What plastics go in the blue bin?

To help San Francisco make additional progress toward achieving zero waste by 2020, please recycle all plastic bottles, cups, and tubs by placing them in your blue bin.

Please do not place plastic bags or other film plastics in your blue bin. Flimsy plastics, such as plastic bags, can jam recycling equipment. When in doubt use this test: Hold a piece of plastic four feet above the floor. Drop it. If it bounces or makes a noise, it's hard plastic and goes in the blue bin. If it floats down slowly and lands softly, it is film plastic. Clean plastic bags, a form of film plastic, can be placed in designated barrels at local grocery stores.

Recycle construction debris and spring cleaning junk

If you are doing a remodel or spring cleaning, call us at 1-888-404-4008 and order a debris box. We will deliver it directly and pick it up when full. We recycle the contents of debris boxes inside a special recycling facility called the iMRF that Recology operates at the transfer station in San Francisco.



Recycling and zero waste videos

Often short videos on specific subjects can be entertaining and informative. To provide more information about zero waste, why it's important, and how to recycle and compost, Recology has posted a video suite online. One video in the suite features the garbage art exhibition at the SFO Museum. The exhibition is very popular with travelers. Each video runs about two minutes. Check them out on the home page at [RecologySF.com](https://www.recyclemysf.com).



Optical scanners improve plastics recycling

To improve efficiencies in sorting plastics tossed in blue bins, we installed optical scanners at Reycle Central, the 200,000-square-foot recycling plant we operate on Pier 96 in San Francisco.

The new equipment automatically separates PET (clear water bottles and clamshell containers) from HDPE (more dense plastics such as motor oil and detergent bottles).

Plastics are then baled and shipped to other plants where they are remanufactured into new plastic containers or products.

Another great reason to compost — higher yields

A new study reports that farms using compost can produce significantly higher yields of crops than conventional farming with chemical fertilizers.

Plant and Food Research undertook the \$600,000 field trials to develop guidelines for farmers in Canterbury, which turns 50,000 tons of green waste into 25,000 tons of finished compost annually. The study concludes that adding compost increases the yields of arable crops by up to 14 percent and forage crops by up to 50 percent.

Compost made from food scraps and garden cuttings was found to increase soil health, resulting in better crop yields with fewer nitrogen fertilizers, as well as redirecting materials that would have entered landfills.

Plant and Food Research scientist Abie Horrocks said the research suggests farms close to populated areas and near municipal composting facilities would benefit the most from using compost.

