

Background and insights about garbage, recycling, and composting in San Francisco and the rate proposal

Recology, San Francisco's employee-owned recycling company, provides services at the City's direction. Our core mission is to provide the best customer service possible. Change is constant in our modern world, and the employee-owners at Recology work as a team to maintain a simple objective every day – take excellent care of our customers. We work to ensure all homes, apartment buildings, businesses, schools, and other properties get the services they need.

And our employees work side-by-side with city and county officials to identify and complete the steps necessary to help the City meet all its environmental requirements and objectives. Recology sees a world without waste. In pursuit of that goal, Recology designs and provides programs to make recycling easy and convenient for customers, which is key to helping increase recycling and reduce landfill disposal.

Today, the typical single-family household in San Francisco pays \$35.18 a month for weekly collection of three 32-gallon bins – trash, recycling, and composting. This fee also pays for a host of other collection and disposal services, including bulky item collection and the Household Hazardous Waste Program. [Click here](#) to view a comparison of residential refuse rates in nearby cities.

The last major upgrade to San Francisco's curbside collection program occurred in 2001 and 2002. The proposal currently before the City seeks funding for key programs such as:

- New wing on transfer station to receive compostable material.
- Redesigned routes including re-purposed and new trucks, and new sized trash and recycling bins
- New 5-year labor agreement
- Increased landfill disposal costs.

The proposal asks the City to approve the following rate increase schedule for standard residential service:

| Date: | Increase: | Monthly rate: |
|--------|-----------|---------------|
| 7.1.17 | \$5.70 | \$40.88 |
| 7.1.18 | \$1.80 | \$42.68 |
| 7.1.19 | \$0.00 | \$42.68 |
| 7.1.20 | \$0.27 | \$42.95 |

The proposal also seeks annual cost-of-living adjustments directly related to providing trash services based on a City-approved formula.

Recology submitted a draft proposal to the City in December. The formal proposal is now before SF Public Works, which is holding public hearings in March and April. Rate setting is a thorough and transparent process in San Francisco. Ratepayers can:

- Ask questions of the City and Recology.
- Attend public hearings.
- Give input to the Ratepayer Advocate.

The SF Rate Payer Advocate and company representatives are attending community meetings to inform people about the rate application, including proposed facility and service

improvements.

Reducing waste and recycling and composting are the right things to do. The proposal also continues the approach of providing incentive to customers for reducing the amount of trash they generate. San Francisco has a pay-as-you-throw system. So customers who reduce the amount of trash they produce by eliminating waste and reusing materials can typically lower their monthly disposal cost. Conversely, customers who produce more trash, and therefore need, more service, pay more.

Apartment buildings and commercial customers can qualify for diversion discounts by increasing their participation in recycling and compost collection programs and reducing their trash. In this way many apartment buildings and commercial customers should be able to offset much of the proposed increase.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors set a goal of achieving zero waste, which means sending nothing to landfills or incinerators. Many cities around the world have also set zero waste goals and are enhancing source reduction, reuse, recycling and composting programs to make additional progress. The rate proposal before the City of San Francisco includes programs and facility improvements to help San Francisco make additional progress toward achieving this environmental goal.

Recycling keeps materials out of landfills, saves trees, creates local jobs, and turns discards into sources materials that be made into new products. Composting does all of that and more.

Recology worked with San Francisco to successfully institute the first mandatory curbside compost collection program in the nation. Through the green cart program, we collect food scraps and yard trimmings separately from other materials and turn them into nutrient-rich compost that is applied to local farms and orchards. Applying compost feeds microbes in topsoil. Healthy soil is fundamental to growing healthy fruits and vegetables that come back to our tables.

We coordinates with local neighborhoods, businesses, and organizations to encourage and inspire people to be more attentive to recycling and composting. Delegations from more than 100 cities in 85 countries have toured Recology in the last five years to see the facilities we operate to manage the City's discards. Many cities and universities have replicated the recycling and composting programs established in San Francisco. We tour more than 5,000 people a year through our recycling plants. Half of these visitors are students. We are often told these students go home and teach their parents how to recycle and compost.

One of Recology's unique initiatives is the Artist in Residence Program. For 25 years the company has paid artists to make art from trash. The program is an unexpected and highly effective way to get people to think about their own trash and recycling.

To learn more about Recology, visit Recology.com and click on "Our Bigger Vision" at the top of the home page.

For more information about the programs and services we provide in San Francisco, please go to www.RecologySF.com and enter your zip code and hit "Enter" on your computer key board.