

Case Study

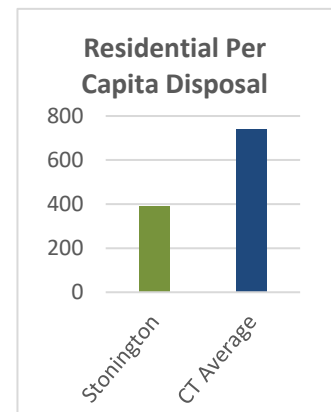
Stonington's SMART Program

“Stonington’s program allows people to control their own costs for waste disposal. Costs are no longer based on general property tax, but rather on what a resident actually generates” according to Solid Waste and Recycling Director, John Phetteplace.

Background

Save Money and Reduce Trash (SMART) Programs aim to encourage waste reduction using financial incentives. Stonington’s SMART program covers both household and commercial waste utilizing town-issued bags and dumpsters, both priced by volume.

Population:	18,755
Households Served:	7,442
Services Provided:	Residential and commercial collection and drop-off at town Transfer Station
Program Duration:	September 1992 – Present, Commercial began in 1997



Highlights

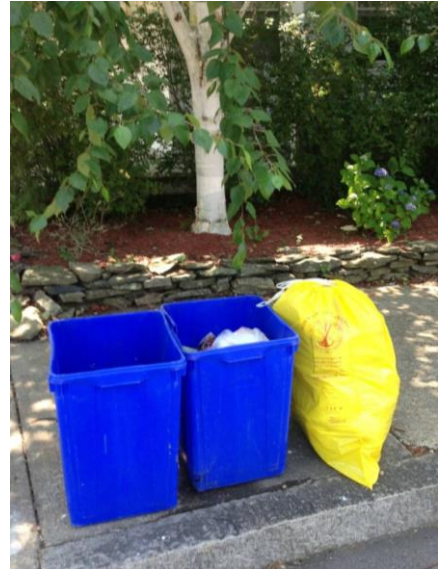
- Stonington has achieved over **\$7 million in avoided disposal costs** since program inception.
- Stonington residents generate **389 pounds of trash** annually per capita.
- The unit-based fees cover approximately 98% of the solid waste program.
- The town’s recycling rate increased from 27% to 40%.

Overview

- Residents and commercial entities purchase bags for trash disposal: \$0.75 for a 15-gallon bag and \$1.25 for a 33-gallon bag.
- Commercial dumpster charges are calculated on a volume basis using 90-gallon to 10-yard containers and compactors.
- The revenue generated from the program helps defray program expenses including collection costs and the disposal tipping fees charged at the regional trash-to-energy plant.
- In establishing unit-based pricing, Stonington’s goal was to incentivize residents to recycle more, generate less trash, and to achieve greater equity by charging those disposing of a large amount of trash more than those disposing of less.

History

- The Town of Stonington had entered into a long term trash disposal contract with Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority and needed to find a way to pay tipping fees for the new facility. Residential taxes would have increased by 1.5 to 2 mills if something drastic was not done to create revenue. Stonington's Board of Selectmen voted to adopt a residential unit-based pricing system in 1991. The program was challenged to a referendum which passed by a two-to-one margin after 24 public hearings and a town meeting.
- In 1997, Stonington elected to implement unit-based pricing for all commercial entities as well.



Implementation

- The bright yellow SMART bags, marked with the town name and logo, are supplied by Waste Zero, which manufactures and ships bags for a reasonable cost. Stonington pays for the bags and distributes them to various locations in town including Town Hall, small and large food markets, gas stations, and hardware stores. The retailers sell the bags to the general public in exchange for increased consumer foot traffic. The retailers do not receive any markup from the bags. The town retrieves sales revenue from the retailers.
- The commercial program uses containers and charges by volume from 90-gallons to 10-yards and compactors.
- Municipal contracts provide manual curbside service to residents and commercial customers. Residents and commercial entities may also drop-off trash in the yellow bags at the town's Transfer Station where there is no annual permit fee.
- The brightly colored bags help enforce the program by acting as a visual signal for acceptable trash at the Transfer Station.

Additional Waste and Recycling Services

- Stonington's SMART program also provides for free recycling curbside and at the Transfer Station for all recyclables such as mixed paper, corrugated cardboard, metals, plastics #1-#7, and glass in one container. There is no charge for tires and propane tanks.
- There is a fee for discarding bulky items and appliances at the Transfer Station.
- Household Hazardous waste from Stonington is accepted at any Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority Household Hazardous Waste event.
- Leaves and brush are accepted at a designated composting area of the Transfer Station at no additional cost to residents and at \$60 per ton for commercial customers.
- A swap area is available for second-hand items that are in good working order so they may be reused.

Contact Information

Solid Waste and Recycling Director: (860) 535-5099

Website: <http://www.stonington-ct.gov/>