

Boulder, CO

Population: 94,673

Summary:

In 1976 Boulder became one of the first cities in the country to offer curbside recycling to its residents. The original program was ran by volunteers, a non-profit, and retro-fitted school buses. In 1989 the City implemented a Trash Tax to pay for recycling efforts and took over the curbside service with a partnership between the city, a hauler, and the non-profit. Eventually, the city found that the costs of providing curbside recycling were surpassing the funds collected by the trash tax and Boulder decided to change the collection system. The city switched to a free market system with multiple regulated haulers. Boulder implemented a PAYT ordinance in 2001 effectively transforming its waste collection while keeping with the goal of turning the city into a “one can town”. The ordinance required haulers to embed recycling costs for all single and multi family units, set variable rates based on a 32-gallon level of service, and report collection tonnages to the city.

PAYT Ordinance:

Boulder saw the successes of such large cities as Seattle and San Jose and decided to follow their examples in setting up their PAYT ordinance. The Boulder ordinance requires that:

- Haulers provide “unlimited” recycling for all single and multi family residences with costs embedded in the trash rates.
- The city does not set the rates, but the maximum minimum size of container offered must be 32-gallons and the rates must use this base level of volume.
- Haulers can set whatever rate they want for the base level but must charge the same amount for every additional 32-gallon container. The haulers may also charge a fee to cover their fixed costs but this fee must be less than the base rate for the 32-gallon container.
- Haulers are required to submit annual tonnage reports to the city.
- Recycling must be collected no less frequently than every other week.

Results:

Boulder currently has a diversion rate of nearly 50%. In 2001, before the ordinance, Boulder had a city-wide rate of only 17% diversion. The variable rate prices for the different haulers serving the city differ, but are about \$19 for 32-gallon, \$29 for a 64-gallon, and \$39 for a 96-gallon container. Within the first six months of implementation the city went from only 26% subscribing to 1 can to 56% subscribing to the 1 can level of service. The city worked closely with all of the stakeholders in garbage and recycling collection to come up with an ordinance that made all of the parties involved happy. Gary Horton, the CEO of Western Disposal, reported “The ordinance was excellent because it left all the haulers in place and simply required them to embed recycling in the trash service and follow the PAYT rate structure”. Additionally, Mr. Horton said, “everyone was in support of the program; haulers, the city, and environmentalists”. The city is planning on switching to single stream collection in 2008 and to add yard waste and organics collection to reach its goal of zero waste. The ordinance can be seen at:

<http://colocode.com/boulder2/chapter6-12.htm>

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PAYT on the Go in CO