

## City of Fort Collins

Population: 140,000

### Summary:

Fort Collins has always operated under a fully privatized, “open subscription” trash collection system. To address citizen interest in creating recycling opportunities, the City began requiring trash haulers to provide curbside recycling in 1992. The City next amended its trash hauling license in 1995 to require all residential haulers to apply variable, or Pay-as-you-throw, rates.

The purpose of the volume-based rates is two-fold: they are more equitable since individual households generate widely varying amounts of weekly wastes; and, volume-based trash rates encourage residents to recycle, conserve resources, and reduce wastes. The PAYT ordinance continues to be the City’s most important tool for achieving community goals for recycling and waste diversion, and Fort Collins has passed amendments several more times over the years to close “loop holes” in the ordinance.

### PAYT Ordinance:

Fort Collins’ Solid Waste Collection and Recycling Services Ordinance (Article XV, Section 15nof the Municipal Code, which can be found on the City’s website at <http://fcgov.com/recycling/ordinances.php> ), requires all residential trash haulers to:

- charge for trash collection service based upon the weekly trash volumes collected from customers who live in single-family residents or apartment complexes of  $\leq 8$  units
  - Each 33-gal. unit of trash must cost the same amount as the rate set (individually by haulers) for the first 33-gal. unit
  - Homeowner Association contracts must also receive PAYT rates
- offer weekly curbside recycling as part of their basic trash collection service at no additional charge to residential customers
  - the list of materials that must be collected is updated yearly by the City Manager
- provide biannual reporting to the City on volumes of trash and recycling collected, and number of customers who participate in curbside recycling
- distribute educational information at least yearly to their customers about trash service levels options and recycling services
- provide access to their record-keeping by City auditors to verify compliance.

Trash haulers may, but are not required to, establish a flat monthly fee, in addition to the volume charges, to cover fixed operational costs. However, the flat fee may not exceed 50% of the total trash bill, and both the flat fee and the volume-based rate must be shown on customers’ bills.

Fort Collins haulers can employ a variety of volume-based rate systems, including prepaid bags or tags, and a pre-paid volume subscription system (i.e. up to 30 gallons per week, up to 60 gallons per week, up to 90 gallons per week, etc.) Under the

subscription system, if a household exceeds its maximum service level, the hauler must charge for the excess waste volume. Failure to charge for excess waste, or for violating any other element of the PAYT ordinance, could cause a hauling company to lose its municipal hauling license.

**Results:**

Over the past 15 years, the City's data collection capability has improved and the information reported by the private haulers has been an important source of those data. Early measurements suggested that in the mid-90s, Fort Collins' waste diversion level was around 17%. After the PAYT ordinance was passed, the diversion rate quickly surpassed original goals of diverting 20% and since then, customers' participation in curbside recycling has continued to range between 85-95%.

In 1999, the City adopted new goals to divert 50% of the entire community's waste stream (including commercial sources) from landfill disposal by 2010. However, Fort Collins has not been successful at taking its diversion rate past about 27%. A Strategic Plan for 50% Waste Diversion was prepared in 2006 that recommended, among other things, that the PAYT ordinance be expanded to include commercial waste customers. These recommendations continue to be discussed in the community, and are also being evaluated as part of new strategies to help the City achieve its Climate Protection goals.