

Survey Responses to New Household Waste Collection Service

This survey, designed by Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN), was recently circulated to the CAN membership and to other non-CAN residents of Cambridge. It seeks to assess how well the new household trash collection service provided by Chesapeake Waste is going, and asks for input on ways in which it might be improved.

Survey results

As of November 13, 2017, we have received a total of 96 responses to the nine questions posed. The results are as follows:

Q1. In an effort to become more efficient and cost effective, the City contracted with Chesapeake Waste (CW) to collect household waste starting July 1. The three-year contract included collection on the same schedule as before (twice weekly), with one 96-gallon tote provided to each residence, and collection of only what would fit in that one tote. On a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied), how would you rate the new service?

1 - Not Satisfied	2 - Needs improvement	3 - Okay	4 - Better	5 - Completely Satisfied	Total
9	13	32	17	24	95
9.47%	13.68%	33.68%	17.89%	25.26%	

Q2. Given that you are limited to one tote, is the provided 96-gallon tote too large, too small, or about the right size for your twice-weekly trash collection needs?

Way too small	Too small	Just right	Too big	Way too big	Total
1	10	44	29	10	94
1.06%	10.64%	46.81%	30.85%	10.64%	

Q3. Is the provided 96-gallon tote a manageable size for you to handle?

No problem	Difficult but manageable	A smaller tote would be better for me, even if I am limited to just one tote	Total
51	30	10	91
56.04%	32.97%	10.99%	

Q4. Should you be required to remove your tote from street view when it's not being collected?

Yes, it should be required	No, it's not a problem	Total
71	23	94
75.53%	24.47%	

Q5. Are you aware that you can ask the city to pick-up bulk items that won't fit in the tote? Bulk Trash Collection is provided by appointment only. To schedule an appointment, contact the Dept. of Public Works at 410-228-1955, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Bulk Trash will be collected on Wednesday's except for the last Wednesday of the month, for those residents who have scheduled an appointment.

I didn't know that. Thanks for the information.	I was aware of that	Total
16	79	95
16.84%	83.16%	

Q6. The following questions concern possible changes in the collection service. Would you consider making one of the twice-weekly collections for household waste and the other for recycling? There would be no change in cost to you. The same tote would be used, so you would have to separate the material during the week and then transfer it to the provided tote on the appropriate pick-up day.

No. I need twice-weekly household waste collection.	Yes. Separating household waste and recycling material could work for me on a weekly basis.	Total
29	62	91
31.87%	68.13%	

Q7. If one of the weekly pick-ups for recycling wouldn't work for you, should the City provide a recycling collection service, with additional pick-ups twice a month? If yes, at most, how much would you be willing to pay a month for this additional service?

No	Yes, but only if it is less than \$5 a month	Yes, but only if it is less than \$10 a month	Yes, but only if it is less than \$15 a month –	Yes, but only if it is less than \$20 a month	Total
31	20	20	10	14	95
32.63%	21.05%	21.05%	10.53%	14.74%	

Q8. Should you be able to exchange your 96-gallon tote for a smaller one, knowing that you are limited to what will fit in that one tote?

Yes	No	Total
78	15	93
83.87%	16.13%	

Q9. Comments:

There are lots of elderly neighbors on my street that really can't handle the big totes -- and that are not "computer" proficient that you will not hear from with this survey! They are not happy with the giant trashcans and as a neighbor who helps them - me either!

I have two concerns. First, the City chose to fix something that I didn't think was broken, and increased the cost of the service by \$3.00 per month. I am not sure how this works - raising the fee while saying they are doing this to save money. Second, I am concerned for the safety of the men working on the trucks. They do not wear safety equipment while working in the streets among traffic. I don't see any sort of a personnel safety program. Further, I hear these men receive low pay and have no employment benefits. I think the City made a "bargain with the devil" in this change of services.

We really need some kind of recycling pick up. We also need some kind of yard waste pick up plus composting program.

All of these years one of the best things Cambridge had going for it was a really good garbage collection. The only problem was the people who would not put the garbage can out of sight Now that is just larger with advertising. We DO need recycling!

I am mostly happy with the service, except for bulk pick up. It often requires multiple calls and multiple weeks before pick up actually happens. They are nice re scheduling but unreliable.

These giant bins are pretty darn ugly, but the uniformity of service, equipment and truck containment of its contents is a definite improvement.

I am assuming the recycling would be sorted by Chesapeake Waste. I would like to know more about how that could be done. I am currently sorting my own and taking it to the recycling location on Siding Road in Cambridge.

Please add recycling!

I voluntarily recycle glass, plastic, cardboard, paper, and newspaper at the recycling station on Chesapeake Rd. about every 2 weeks. Would all of the recyclables go into one bin unsorted if the city picked up?

Great service. See evidence of less trash after pick up in neighborhood.

Not having yard waste picked up on 2 regular days is inconvenient When the City is called to come they rarely make it on the designated day and 3 Wednesdays a month is unacceptable Ches Waste should pick up bagged yard waste the same days they empty the totes!! We are getting less service and more inconvenience and cost under this new plan!

Since there is a tote out on the street almost every day, I feel like the City is a billboard for Chesapeake Waste--what is the purpose of the name and number on every tote? Could it have just read, "CW," for identification purposes?

We're pleased with the service and have no issues with the change. We would like to have a recycling pickup, also.

The old system was better.

Twice weekly is too often. Bins are too large to clean effectively and are hard to move. More things to recycle would help. Since I compost, almost all my trash is plastic of one sort or another--all not recyclable.

The trucks that come don't always have a working lift claw mechanism. This makes the employees lift these huge full cans themselves. I have heard they are paid not as employees and the hourly rate is low or maybe its a daily rate even any truth to the rumor? Their lift mechanism is antiquated. There are trucks that have the lifts that pick up the can all by itself from the sidewalk. So only requires a drive and maybe a sidekick if the can is not placed correctly. There is more trash on the ground now than ever was with city employees (I know some are the same). I am sure it is because the cans are so huge and life isn't always working. I like the uniformity. But folks put their bulk stuff out all week until collected. Not sure that part is working as well as the city planned.

Thank you for the opportunity to answer these very specific questions. To me, you covered all the bases of my concerns. Thanks especially for opening up the possibility of curbside recycling. That would be great for Cambridge.

When the trash is collected when it's raining, the lid is left open---therefore, leaving water in the bottom of the tote. I'm unable to empty the water due to a bad back and my age.

Recycling would be very useful. I currently drive recycling to either the Cambridge center or others in neighboring Talbot County. Not sure if using the same can would work for both trash and recycling, I would probably at least want a bin or another can. With curbside pickup for household recycling, there is the possibility to convert the current center into a recycling site for unusual items (e.g. Styrofoam, motor oil, batteries etc...).

Please stop putting the can in the drive way after emptying

Curbside recycling would be an extreme improvement to our current waste disposal system

WE NEED RECYCLING! Too few drop off locations in Cambridge - we should have recycling pick up in neighborhoods. Thank you for your work!

If recyclable material was separated out from the garbage, there would be no need for twice/week garbage pickup, which would result in an overall savings. Please assess other neighboring communities to see how they include curbside recycling as an alternative to more frequent garbage pickups. The City doesn't have to do this all on their own. To be a successful recycling community, have the City partner with local community and non-profit groups to provide education on proper recycling techniques.

I am not at all happy with this new service.... I prefer the old way as we had our wonderful trashmen that picked up the cans and emptied them totally. With this service they only grab the bag out of the container and leave anything else that has been thrown in by someone else in the bottom of the can.... this is hard for me as I am a senior citizen and these big cans are too hard for me to turn upside down. Then with the yard waste, I have had problems with them coming to pick it up.....the old way was best, in my opinion.

thank you for considering recycling!! and providing some options for how to do it - awesome!!

The new Trash service does not dump my tote, they reach in and take out any large bags inside leaving me with the dog waste and small yard waste. I am paying for them to empty my trash - all of it.

Would like another tote.

With regard to #8, If the homeowner could only place garbage bags in the smaller can, that would be ok since the trash collectors pull those bags out of the can rather than using the lift. If the lift had to be used the larger can is the only size that fits the truck and lifting it by hand could cause injury to the workers.

Our trash is collected on Mondays and during holidays we do not have trash collection. We need two collections a week due to increased trash. Can the Monday trash collection be reinstated even during the Monday holidays?

I would like curb side pickup of recycling but it needs to be in a separate container than I currently use for my trash. That way I can sort the recycling without handling it twice. I can provide my own container if needed.

We would like to return one of the totes on our property, and have been told there is no way to return it to the city

The requested bulk pick process is very unreliable. Rarely do they pick up when you are told they will. You messed up big time changing garbage collection process. Surely the \$ saved does not contribute significantly to the bottom line of the city budget. Very short-sighted decision.

The whole idea of the kind of containers we have been issued is that they fit nicely onto the autoloaders on the trucks -- meaning that NO ONE IS REQUIRED TO LIFT THEM!!! That is not what is happening. Instead these men who collect the trash are lifting them manually into the truck. This means that in ten to fifteen years (if that) these men will be physical wrecks and dumped on the rest of us to support through disability and unemployment payments. This is false economy - - and from the perspective of a taxpayer --- just PLAIN STUPID!!!! Ironically those who complain the most about the high cost of social services are the very ones foisting this false economy on us! I do not object in principle to outsourcing trash collection. But we should insist the contractors pay proper wages, provide proper benefits, and use machinery that is commiserate with the task. Anything less is completely irresponsible!

The tote is so deep I can't reach in it. Sometimes garbage is left in the can if they just take a bag out instead of dumping the whole tote

We have called for bulk pick-up a number of weeks ago, but it was not picked up and we had to deal with it in other ways, as well as have the stuff on the street for a few days while waiting. We are generally satisfied with the new system, although the large containers are somewhat difficult to store and move.

I don't really care about the last question, but you forced an answer.

separating recyclables would be very difficult in the 96-gal bin. I guess separate containers would be required, what would they look like?

Certain folks would need a smaller tote.

Bulk trash is a real problem I had to wait 3 almost three weeks for a rug to be picked up

My preference would be for 1x/trash, 1x/recycling, per week, with separate containers. For part time residents, using the same container for both, would not work.

The bulk trash collection has not been responsive to requests. They need call reminders. Sometimes they do not answer the phone.

I HAVE REQUESTED SEVERAL TIMES A SMALLER TOTE. THE ONE YOU PROVIDED IS TOO LARGE AND HEAVY FOR ME TO MANAGE! Questions 6 & 7 require an explanation. On "recycle" pick up day where do I place my regular trash? You should provide a small separate bin for recycling. I am glad you are surveying! Thank you.

More than likely some households could use a smaller tote as they do not generate as much trash. Definitely need them off the streets after collection.

Often trash is left in the bottom of the tote. It seems the trash has to be a bag to be picked up, but the bag has to be in the tote!

One trash pickup a week is enough for me. I would like single-stream recycling pick up the other day of the week, but using a different container with a different color.

I have needed to schedule for a heavy pick and I the soonest pickup was 3 weeks in advance. This is not practical nor should it be acceptable considering we have less service at a higher cost.

Would very much like to have a recycling option

Appointment sys for bulk trash and yard waste doesn't work efficiently; I have been missed twice even after making appointments. I needed to make 3 calls over 2 weeks to get one load picked up.

Recycling would be great! Removing from street view would be better but not practical /easy for everyone.

Still evaluating the service. The uniform garbage totes are much better than the rag-tag cans that we had before, and there seems to be less overfill getting all over the streets. Need to make sure to use a truck that will actually pick up the totes vs the guys having to heft the larger and heavier totes. Have seen them taking garbage out of the cans so that they can lift them (!)

The 96-gallon totes with large white waste company letters are hard to hide.

We really need some kind of recycling pick up. We also need some kind of yard waste pick up plus composting program. Oak Park IL has such a program and it's great

Curbside recycling saves landfills! We have curbside recycling at our house on the western shore, and our recycling volume is 3 to 4 times larger than our regular garbage volume.

The city trash collection was much better than the current... I've had to complain several times: not all trash emptied (they want you to put all items in a trash bag inside so they only have to remove the bags inside), lids left open... The totes are very large, heavy and cumbersome. Recycling is a MUST in this day and age.

Often, there is trash left in the bottom of the container. It seems they don't use the lift much to empty the container, just grabbing the bags that are in there.

There are lots of elderly neighbors on my street that really can't handle the big totes -- and that are not "computer" proficient that you will not hear from with this survey! They are not happy with the giant trashcans and as a neighbor who helps them - me either!

I am impressed by the high-quality service the pickup people are delivering. They are careful to leave no trash behind.

Thanks to CAN for putting this survey together. I believe compostable yard waste should be collected on an as-needed basis and the material taken to a facility where it could be made into mulch or soil.

Regarding a second pick up that would be for recycling. We actually do not need twice weekly trash pickup. And we would like the second pickup to be for recycling (choice selected) But, trying to keep recycled material separate from trash, having to use the same container for both, would be tough to do. i.e. Where do I put my trash the day I use the container for recycling? If I unload the trash bags from container and leave them in the yard for the day, I may have a varmint problem!

I support recycling. But based on my experience using the recycling bins behind Wal-Mart (and elsewhere), would people understand what can be recycled? Another issue: I suspect neighbors (Oakley Street) take advantage of dumpsters that they are not entitled to use.

I would prefer a separate bin for recycling instead of the same one for both. The idea to expect people to alternate uses of a single bin will surely discourage recycling!

we are completely pleased, always have lots to throw away and we cannot imagine complaints with such an improvement, and LOVE the size of the container. The employees are wonderful and good at their jobs! We love that it wheels back and forth, which makes it completely convenient, before we had to DRAG our full cans, in and out, and when the winds came you would have to chase the cans, down the street, or go for an expedition trying to find it. If you were fortunate enough, one of your neighbors would find it before it got hit by a car. These totes are heavy enough that the wind cannot manage to send it rolling to Water Street. The recent last wind storm is proof of that! It managed to tear down tree limbs, but our trusty tote was steadfast! Love it!

So far, so good. But a little unclear on fitting items such as tree branch bundles into regular pick-up vs. needing to call for special pick-up.

I have complained to both the Contractor and city, These folks have no respect for folks property, are careless drivers, are sloppy We had great trash service with the City , the crews were tidy, respectful and did a great job, can't the City just fire this contractor and go back to our terrific crews we had? They certainly have been a disappointment And Oddie (?) never returns phone calls.

A neighbor told me that you can call the city to pick up yard waste if it doesn't fit in the tote. I never considered yard waste as bulk trash. This could be made clearer on the city website or wherever there's info about trash collection. It would be also nice to see the Chesapeake Waste employees wear reflective vests for their own safety, especially when they're working in the dark.

I am ok right now with the new totes, but winter when it is slippery underfoot will be impossible... as is moving the totes around in winter. I would need to have a pickup from where the tote is stored in deep winter - especially if the tote is placed where it is not visible from the road. Also... you raised price on regular service... I would not pay more for recycling as my income is very very small and fixed. I have to count every penny.

Living in an apartment downtown, we never received a tote.