



SAVING FOOD SCRAPS FROM THE LANDFILL!



Our new orange leak-proof Food Scrap Collection trucks take our food scraps to the Monterey Regional Waste Management District in Marina to be transformed into valuable biogas and compost. This prevents our food waste from being buried in the landfill - where it does not decompose due to lack of oxygen - and emits methane gas, a toxic contributor to climate change.

Reducing Food Waste

The latest State regulation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Senate Bill 1383, requires us to take significant actions to reduce food scraps and other green waste going to the landfill. Our robust Business Food Waste Collection Program, established in 2016 has been preventing 3,200 tons of food waste from being buried in the landfill each year.

By 2022, we will be extending the food scraps collection service to all Watsonville residents. Our first step toward meeting that goal was the launch of a residential pilot program at Northgate Apartments and Meadows Manor Mobile Home Park in November 2020.

This program will highlight the challenges that we will need to address before rolling it out to the rest of the city.



The 1383 State mandate also requires us to establish an Edible Food Recovery Program by 2025 to prevent “wasting edible food” from stores, restaurants, and schools by working with local partners, such as our Food Bank, to help redistribute it.

What's the Scoop on Our City's Landfill?

Since closure of our landfill, we have been hauling our waste and recyclables to Monterey Regional Waste Management District in Marina, which has increased our

disposal costs by about \$180,000 each year, or \$1 Million over the next 5 years.

In hopes of reducing these costs for our residents, staff are exploring the option of opening a fourth phase or area in our landfill, which could handle Watsonville's garbage for another 10-15 years. This project would cost about \$4 Million. Originally, the project appeared to be too expensive, but with the increase in costs of hauling our waste to Marina, we have decided to reevaluate. We expect to complete a feasibility study in the next few months; and, if determined to be cost-effective, staff will begin design work immediately and plan for the construction of landfill Phase 4 in 2023.



After 15 years of operation, the City's closed landfill Phase 3 will have a temporary soil cover until a \$3 Million permanent cover will be required to be installed in 2023.



Recycling Challenges

The majority of recycled materials were once sent to China for processing. However, China and many other countries have severely limited what they will now accept. A few years ago the City was paid for its recycled materials and these stricter recycling policies are now incurring additional costs.

When recycling is contaminated with food or trash, it gets treated as “mixed waste” (garbage) and buried in the landfill. This results in additional contamination fees to the City of up to \$300,000 per year. To address this problem, our team has engaged in significant public outreach efforts, along with conducting recycling audits to inform our businesses and residents about how to properly recycle.



Dirty or “contaminated” recyclables are treated like trash and incur additional costs to the City.

Food Scrap Collection, Recycling, and So Much More!



Our team works with local businesses to prevent abandoned shopping carts by requiring their retrieval within 24 hours and addressing graffiti issues within 48 hours as part of our City's Beautification Initiative.

Our Waste and Recycling Drop-off Center has added staff, equipment, and service hours to receive hazardous waste every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday. It also offers free disposal of bulky items to prevent illegal dumping on our streets.

Our two street sweepers work daily to remove dirt and toxins from our 10,000 miles of streets. They keep Watsonville clean, protect our water quality, and comply with the State's stormwater regulations.

Our Trash Has a Cost

The cost to comply with the new food waste mandate (SB 1383) is expected to be between \$500,000 and \$1 Million per year. Program costs include the purchase of additional garbage trucks, food waste carts, hiring additional staff, and training.

These changes and new mandates are increasing our operational cost. These costs are currently being factored as part of the Solid Waste Enterprise rate study, and recommendations will be proposed on how to fairly and sustainably adjust our utility rates to generate the funds needed over the next 5 years. We are committed to providing the best possible service at the lowest cost while addressing these new State regulations.