

Recology San Mateo County provides collection services for refuse, recyclable materials, and compostable materials under a ten-year franchise agreement with the City which began January 2011. Under the franchise agreement, Recology submits its rate proposal to the City Council for approval annually. Recology’s rates are strictly limited, and may not exceed a maximum rate that is based on a set formula provided in the franchise agreement.

Historically, your garbage rate has been tied to the size of your black garbage cart using a progressive rate structure. Using “progressive” rates means that the larger your garbage cart, the more you pay – so a resident using a 64-gallon cart would pay more than a resident with a 32-gallon cart. However, garbage rates cover much more than just what goes in your black garbage cart.



**What do the Rates cover?**

The garbage rates cover the costs for the following items, in most cases:

- Weekly garbage, recycling, and compost collection
- Curbside used battery & cell phone recycling
- Curbside used motor oil & oil filter recycling
- Twice annual bulky item collection
- Disposal fees at the landfill
- Processing fees for recycling
- Processing fees for composting
- Street sweeping
- County and local fees
- Household hazardous waste fees

**And you thought the garbage rate was simple?**



The progressive rate structure has been very successful in encouraging residents to recycle more and downsize their garbage cart size. However, a common misconception is thinking that the “cost to provide service” (the actual cost of the truck, the driver’s time, etc., and all the other items listed above) is significantly lower for those with smaller garbage carts.



However, this is simply not true. The size of your black garbage cart has little impact on the cost of all of the other services being provided. In addition, the cost of providing the garbage collection service itself is mostly fixed because the cost for the truck and labor, etc., is all set well in advance. Regardless of the size of the garbage cart, it still requires a driver and truck to collect it; the only expense that changes with the size of the cart is the cost of disposal and processing the materials.

**GARBAGE RATES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

**With the new CartSMART services, I down-sized my garbage cart but my rates went up. Why am I paying more for doing the right thing?**

If you down-sized your garbage cart you are in fact paying a lower rate compared to a larger cart size. There are many factors that go into whether garbage rates fluctuate each year. The City sets garbage rates to cover the total cost of collection each year and even doing the right thing has a cost to it. There are fixed costs regardless of cart size that must be paid.

Recycling and composting more does reduce disposal expense at the landfill, but on average these **disposal expenses only comprise 20%-25% of total collection costs**. There remains the cost of collection vehicles coming by your house to service your black, blue and green carts.

**Where does the money for recyclables go?**

The money received from marketing the recyclables is used to help keep the tip fees for solid waste and organics lower than they would otherwise be. This has a positive impact on garbage rates and is why it’s important for residents and businesses to recycle.



**Billing & Questions:**  
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