

WRAP



East Hartford Case Study

Launching Plastics Recycling In Our Community

Town of East Hartford, Connecticut

Final: January 25, 2018

Town of East Hartford: Basics

- 2016 Population: 50,237
- Median HH Income: \$52,000
- Small Urban Middle/Working Class
- Curbside MSW Collected: 14,400/yr.
- Curbside Recyclables: 3,300/yr.
- Total Sanitation Budget: \$2.5 million
- Tip Fee Increases Anticipated
- Assistant Director Role: March 2017
- SOW Year1: Sanitation Operational Audit
- Waste Studies: Precursor to New Programs
- Waste Goal: 10% MSW Reduction (1400 tons by 2019)
- Recycling Goal: 12% Increase (400 tons by 2019)
- Educational Goal: Minimal to Extensive
- Overall Goal: Consider all opportunities to keep RECYCLING message in forefront.

Town of East Hartford: Considerations

- 6 years—stagnant refuse & recycling levels.
- Plastic film “wish-cycling” in blue recycling bins—close to 50% did not know recycling-at-retail is possible.
- CT study indicating lack of public knowledge—both variety of recyclable plastics & return-to-retail.
- Recycling plant operational impacts—up to 2 hours daily shutdowns & long-term impact on current \$0/ton fee.
- Opportunity to introduce no cost recycling educational program that can also remind residents of “basic” curbside service requirements.
- The demand for post-consumer plastic feed stock & ability to insure commodity retains market value.
- Positive business-government partnerships for community improvements.

What appeals about WRAP? EASY!

- An established national program, easy to co-brand & fits business-government partnership model.
- Webpage with ready-to-print educational resources & materials, free tip sheets.
- Spanish translation.
- User-friendly webpage for residents to find local drop-offs.
- CT DEEP, active supporter.
- Industry marketing plan leveraged by Town.
- Extensive industry metrics.
- Technical assistance.

Town of East Hartford
WRAP RECYCLING ACTION PROGRAM (WRAP)
Recycling Plastic Wrap, Packaging & Bags



Keep East Hartford
Clean & Green!



What else appeals about WRAP?

Aligned Muni & WRAP Goals

- Being a Plastics CHAMPION allows our Town to continue its commitment to sustainable practices & education without a cost to taxpayers or a direct operational role by DPW.
- It fosters a business-government environmental education partnership.
- While waste tonnage is not reduced significantly, it allows the Town to:
 - Promote elimination of plastic bag use in blue bins.
 - Support recycling plant goals: improve quality of recyclables & reduce operational impacts.
 - Adds a new initiative that refreshes the curbside recycling message & reminds residents to recommit to curbside diversion.



Implementation: Engage Local Business



- DPW Director & Mayor introduction to Shop Rite owner creating credibility.
- As the new DPW Assistant Director, reaching out to network with owner around this project as well two others (employee nutrition training & healthy food during winter operations).
- Provide a one-page executive summary: the WRAP program concept, the “WHY” & plastics industry resources.
- Explain the impact to the business using metrics from ACC—customer appeal, minimal operational impacts, experiences in other communities & expansion of company’s current sustainability efforts.
- DPW support to Shop Rite improvements location in store, constructed new plastics collection container with WRAP signage! Tip sheets for cashiers.
- Owner approval for a direct working relationship with store facilities director for: data tracking, customer education, hauler collection information and audit.
- Hauler contract confirmation.
- The cultivation of a long-term business-local government relationship.

Implementation: Mayor LeClerc's Launch



- Mayor LeClerc: outstanding public relations sensibility & team.
- Mayor's Office launch & outreach communications plan: deliberate effort to leverage ACC Summer 2017 marketing initiatives.
- Communications Plan: Town co-branding, press releases, webpage enhancements, Town Square LED Billboard, Facebook posts, advisories to press, conversations with press in advance, press conference with all stakeholders, community access television program, targeting English & Spanish media, tip sheets at cashier stations, printed WRAP materials offered at DPW Administration and Transfer Station offices, school opening-day presentation to principals with related collateral, exhibits at senior & cultural center, library, outreach to Stop & Shop and C-Town---other grocers.

Results

- Doubled collection of plastics at Shop Rite.
- Two schools signed up for TREC challenge.
- **Clearly more education is required but.....**
- Tonya Randell conducted audit, Nov 2017
 - On the whole material was good quality, 16% contamination.
 - Majority was grocery/retail plastic bags.
 - Fair amount of wrong films—frozen, veggie and fish bags, shiny candy bags, some wet/odorous zip lock bags.
 - Very little in the way of diversity of plastics—bubble wrap, dry cleaner plastic, etc.
 - Store continues to report sustained levels post-local launch.



Lessons Learned & Next Steps

Lessons Learned

- Education needed about diversity of plastics recycled at retail.
- Plastics recycling education contributes to expanding a “culture of recycling” & promotes generator thoughtfulness about proper disposal.
- Plastics are ubiquitous. Diversion efforts a challenge.
- Being a Champion Community for plastic film recycling is easy! My advice to communities, tap in!

Next Steps

- Spring mailing to promote recycling—plastics, textiles, boxboard materials.
- “Caught In The Act.”
- Stickers “no plastic bags in blue bins”.
- Annual “Spring Cleaning” list in local newspaper.
- Follow-up on school TREX challenge.
- Air video produced by ACC on Community Access TV
- Posting of plastics recycling articles on EH webpage.

Contact Information

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