Final Report: Curbside Organics Pilot Project

July 2025

1. Executive Summary

- **Project Overview**:
  The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) has identified food waste as a priority material for diversion from disposal. In its 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, released in October 2021, MassDEP set ambitious goals to reduce statewide disposal by 30% by 2030 and 90% reduction by 2050. Building on this framework, the Organics Action Plan, released in November 2023 established a specific target to reduce food waste by 500,000 tons annually by 2030. To meet these goals, the State is exploring a range of strategies, including scaling up curbside food waste collection models and assessing the feasibility of banning organic waste, residential food waste included, from disposal by 2030.

  With the State's food waste reduction goals in mind, The Town of Bedford launched a six-month Curbside Organics Pilot Project (Dec 4, 2024-May 28, 2025) to evaluate household organics participation in food waste diversion and overall material reduction. The project focused on understanding behavioral factors that influence participation and analyzed the relationship between curbside organics collection and reductions in trash volume. The insights gained will help inform the expansion of municipal food waste programs, especially if the State adopts more stringent food waste regulations.

  The project also supports Bedford's greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals by diverting organic waste from incineration, helping to ease capacity pressures at local waste facilities while reducing emissions associated with waste disposal.

  The project targeted 477 households—about 10% of Bedford's curbside service area—across two neighborhoods (Bedford Gardens and Birchwood/Meadowbrook) that historically have had higher trash volumes and lower recycling and organics participation rates.

- **Key Findings**:
  The 6-month pilot project demonstrated that residents who opt-in to voluntarily sorting food waste from the trash divert an average of 9.51 LBS per week to organics collection. This food waste sorting behavior shifts the Town's cost burden by reducing the trash disposal expense by approximately $25 per year per household participating (at FY25 disposal rates).

  Willingness to engage in food waste programs is not universal, even when cost of subscribing is not a factor. An equal number of households chose not to participate as those that did, citing a variety of reasons for their choice. Addressing skepticism and general concerns will be central to any future program success. In order for Bedford to implement a successful town-wide organics program, additional community engagement and stakeholder participation is needed.

Overcoming societal behavioral norms and barriers to participation, both real and perceived, pose the primary challenge to adoption. Financial limitations are secondary, however, no less real. As organics capacity markets continue to develop and more residents adopt food waste storing in their daily routine, the Town may achieve an economy of scale that makes providing municipally-funded or subsidized food waste service feasible. In the event that the Commonwealth adopts a mandatory food waste diversion policy at the household level, Bedford will be well positioned to implement recommendations from this report to ensure compliance with any future regulatory requirements.

The project also demonstrated that direct mail continues to be an effective means to reach a target audience and the use of postage-paid reply mail post card can help solicit a robust response, even from groups that typically do not engage with DPW Trash & Recycling.

- **Recommendations**:
  Some Bedford residents have begun to embrace sorting food waste from the trash, but much work is still to be done. DPW could implement some of the recommendations below to further incentive resident participation. Additional examples are detailed in section 10 (Program Examples) to further incentivize participation in food waste diversion.

    - Use social marketing strategies, such a quotes or success stories from real residents, in future outreach materials. Leverage peer-to-peer communication to build community support.
    - Engage residents in the educational process by leaning on existing community groups and leveraging those relationships.
    - Solicit a "Preferred Vendor" agreement to potentially lower the cost of private-pay subscription food waste service for all residents. Continue to provide no-cost "starter kits" that include a wheeled cart and initial supply of compostable bags as part of that agreement.
    - Incentivize private-pay participation by subsidizing an organics collection program by the realized cost savings of voluntarily sorting food from the trash.
    - Implement a variable trash cart size program or modified PAYT (Pay-As-You-Throw) program that creates a financial incentive to reduce trash volumes and participate in food waste diversion.
    - Explore the possibility of a utility credit or rebate for residents who voluntary subscribe to a food waste service and/or opt-in to a smaller trash cart size.

2. Introduction

- **Purpose of the Report**: The objective of this report is to assess the pilot project's effectiveness in testing communication methods, evaluate resident participation, and to measure waste diversion.

- **Project Background**:
  Baseline data collected in early 2024 showed that participation in Bedford's existing organics programs is relatively low. Town-wide, 7.5% of households subscribe to private curbside food waste collection, while only 1.6% use the free drop-off program at the Recycling Center. Participation in the pilot's target neighborhoods is even lower: just 2.2% of households use private curbside service, and 0.76% use the drop-off program. DPW estimates that approximately 5% of Bedford households compost at home, either in the backyard or with another household method, although the exact figure is difficult to determine. Given specific characteristics of the pilot neighborhood, including high tenant occupancy and small lot size, it is likely that backyard composting occurs less frequently there as well.

  Recycling participation, measured by set-out rate, follows a similar trend. While the Town-wide recycling participation rate is around 80%, the target neighborhoods show a lower rate of 67%.

  Trash generation is also higher in the pilot area. On average, 12.3 tons of trash are collected weekly (as measured at baseline) in the target neighborhoods, compared to 10.9 tons per week in other parts of town. Additionally, 10–12% of households in the pilot area regularly exceed the 48-gallon trash cart limit—nearly

double the rate of comparable neighborhoods, where only 5–7% exceed the limit. *Data provided in the Appendix.*

Desired outcomes include increasing participation in curbside organics diversion to 30% or more of the neighborhood population while also reducing the total trash volume generated by an estimated 11LBS per household participating.

- **Program Scope and Timeline**: The pilot project was intended to last for six months, beginning on December 4, 2024 and concluding with the last collection on May 28, 2025.

3. Project Goals and Objectives

- **Goal 1: Determine the level of willingness or unwillingness to participate in food waste diversion.**
  - Objective: Assess through post card response and survey data the current level of resident willingness to participate.
- **Goal 2: Measure waste reduction**
  - Objective: Assess the amount of food waste collected and its relationship to overall trash volume reduction, including both food waste and general waste volume metrics.
- **Goal 3: Test a new communication method**
  - Objective: Evaluate how effective the communication strategy was in reaching and engaging residents who typically do not engage in waste reduction programs.

4. Program Design and Implementation

- **Program Materials**: Each participant was provided a 12-gal wheeled cart with a locking lid, a countertop collection container, and a supply of compostable liners for both the cart and counter top container. Wheeled carts and liners were supplied by Black Earth and counter top containers were supplied by BioBags.
- **Target Neighborhoods**: The two target neighborhoods were selected, in part, because of individual characteristics of the neighborhood, such as high tenant occupancy or property turnover, as well as neighborhood density. Lack of participation in other available waste reduction programs was also a factor in neighborhood selection. *Neighborhood maps are provided in the Appendix.*

Bedford Gardens in particular has a much higher rate of tenant occupancy than other neighborhoods in Bedford, as defined using available property owner mailing address records. Chart below illustrates the disparities between the rate of property ownership in target neighborhoods as well as Town wide.

		Total HH	Assumed Tenant	Assumed Owner	**% Tenant Occupied**	**% Owner Occupied**
Meadowbrook	BIRCHWOOD DRIVE	15	0	15	0.00%	100.00%
Meadowbrook	BURLINGTON ROAD	2	1	1	50.00%	50.00%
Meadowbrook	EARL ROAD	3	0	3	0.00%	100.00%
Meadowbrook	MEADOWBROOK ROAD	49	3	46	6.12%	93.88%
Meadowbrook	MILL DAM ROAD	3	0	3	0.00%	100.00%
Meadowbrook	SHERWOOD DRIVE	13	1	12	7.69%	92.31%
	NEIGHBORHOOD TOTALS	**85**	**5**	**80**	**3%**	**97%**

Bedford Gardens	ELIOT ROAD	26	18	8	69.23%	30.77%
Bedford Gardens	EVERGREEN AVENUE	29	7	22	24.14%	75.86%

Bedford Gardens	FAYETTE ROAD	39	17	22	43.59%	56.41%
Bedford Gardens	GENETTI CIRCLE	32	25	7	78.13%	21.88%
Bedford Gardens	GENETTI STREET	16	10	6	62.50%	37.50%
Bedford Gardens	LYNNFIELD STREET	10	0	10	0.00%	100.00%
Bedford Gardens	MARION ROAD	36	24	12	66.67%	33.33%
Bedford Gardens	NEILLIAN STREET	52	33	19	63.46%	36.54%
Bedford Gardens	NEILLIAN WAY	58	41	17	70.69%	29.31%
Bedford Gardens	SARAN AVENUE	16	12	4	75.00%	25.00%
Bedford Gardens	SOUTH ROAD	44	17	27	38.64%	61.36%
Bedford Gardens	SUMMER STREET	33	19	14	57.58%	42.42%
Bedford Gardens	TILDEN STREET	1	0	1	0.00%	100.00%
NEIGHBORHOOD TOTALS		**392**	**223**	**169**	**54%**	**46%**

TOWN WIDE TOTALS	**4417**	**407**	**4010**	**9.21%**	**90.79%**

- **Recruitment and Outreach**: The initial notification sent to each household in the target area included a letter describing the program, a one-page FAQ document (printed on the back of the letter) and a canary yellow postage-page reply or "RSVP style" post card. *See Appendix*. This was followed by digital notification on the Town Website and on The Bedford Citizen, an online digital newspaper with wide readership in Bedford. A follow up post card was sent two weeks after launch to any households who had yet to respond.
- **Timeline of Activities**:
  - **January 2024** – Initial Project Planning
  - **March –** Gather baseline curbside data
  - **June –** MassDEP grant application (organics carts and waste reduction funds)
  - **September 13, 2024** – Send initial mailer to target households
  - **Late September** – MassDEP grant announcement expected* (actual grant announcement did not occur in time for launch)
  - **Late September** – Anticipated to order wheeled organics carts* (4-week lead time; used existing inventory)
  - **Late November –** DPW Staff deliver carts to opt-in participants
  - **December 4, 2024** – First curbside collection
  - **January 2025** – Mid-project survey
  - **February 2025** – Mid-project "Thank You" post card
  - **Early May –** Send notice to participants about project sunset and how they can continue to participate as a paid subscriber
  - **Late May –** End of project survey
  - **May 28, 2025** – Final curbside collection
  - **Early June** – Collect carts from participants discontinuing service
  - **July 2025** – Delivery of final report.
- **Program Delivery**: Black Earth Compost provided the website signup for the program for most participants. Those who needed assistance with sign up contacted the DPW and the Recycling Administrator entered those sign ups on the BEC website. DPW staff delivered started kits to residents two weeks before launch. Beginning on Wednesday December 4th, BEC collected material at the curbside each week on Wednesday. Reminder emails were sent to participants the evening before a pickup by Black Earth Compost. In the event of a missed collection, participants reported those issued to BEC directly, through their website. At the conclusion of the program, participants were notified by email about how they could continue service as a paid subscriber. DPW staff collected carts from participants who chose not to continue beyond the pilot period.

5. Participation and Engagement

- **Resident Enrollment**: In total, 477 household were targeted for the pilot project.

  All targeted residents were asked to return a yellow reply post card with their response, either an opt-in or an opt-out. Response post cards were postage paid to eliminate any potential barriers to responding. A small number of participants (5 households) enrolled in service on the BEC website but did not return the reply post card.

Initial Response Data	
Total Target Households	477
Total Responses Received	132
Response Rate	27.67%
# of Opt-in Participants	67
Initial Participation Rate	14.05%

  Non-participants were also asked to optionally indicate a reason for their choice. Thirty-two comments were received. The most common reason cited by non-participants was use of a garbage disposal (3 households) or that they otherwise compost at home (11 households). A small number of non-participants indicated a perceived lack of food waste produced (5 households) and space constraints (3 households). Perceived smell or potential animal issues was also cited (2 households) as well as physical limitations, age or disability (4 households). The remaining comments were responses like "No thanks!!" or "I do not want it."
- **Communication Effectiveness**: The response post card proved to be very effective at reaching the target audience. A typical response rate for past DPW online surveys or solicitations has been roughly 10%. The pilot program received a response from 27.67% or nearly three times more than past opportunities for response. Direct mail continues to be an effective medium for communicating with residents and the addition of postage-paid replay mail appears to greatly increase the level of response.
- **Resident Feedback**: Additional outreach was conducted at several points throughout the pilot project. A mid-project survey was sent to participating households in January to assess program implementation and participant satisfaction. An email with the survey link (Google Form) was sent by Black Earth Compost to all active participants. The DPW received a total of 36 responses. Overall residents indicated that the signup process was "very easy", the collection cart is the right size and easy to use. A third of participating households indicated on the survey that they would prefer bi-weekly pickup instead of weekly. *Survey responses are included in the Appendix.*
- A list of "Questions and Answers" were also developed primarily from feedback received from active participants in the pilot program and suggestions from residents who were willing to be named in food waste related marketing. This Q&A was published on the Town website and in The Bedford Citizen, an online local newspaper, as part of an article promoting food waste diversion Town-wide. By using social marketing strategies at the project mid-point, we hope to continue positive momentum for the remainder of the project and beyond.

6. Waste Volume and Diversion Analysis

Waste volume data collection included visual observation, direct weighing of curbside organic material by Black Earth Compost (BEC) once per month, and weekly trash weight slips from the South Road trash route, provided by Republic Services. The South Road trash route covers 1,006 households, including all of Bedford Gardens.

Baseline trash volume data was collected weekly for three consecutive months in 2024, from June 3, 2024 to August 26, 2024. At baseline, the South Road trash route generated an average of 12.3 tons of trash per week (24.45 LBS per household). Over the course of the 6-month pilot project, this amount decreased to an average of 11.36 tons per week (20.72 LBS per household), or a 3.73LB reduction over baseline. This reduction suggests some success in the diversion efforts, with participating households diverting an estimated 9.51 LBS of waste per week as measured at the curb by BEC.

It is important to note that the households participating in the pilot project comprise only 6.56% of the South Road trash route. While more refined data could have been obtained by directly weighing the trash carts of only

those participants in the food waste pilot, this approach was not feasible within the scope of the pilot project. Therefore, while trash volume data was collected for the entire South Road route, it only provides a broad indication of trends and suggests a modest reduction in trash volume for the neighborhood population. Additionally, no significant changes were observed in recycling volumes within the pilot neighborhood, indicating that while organic waste diversion was effective, further efforts may be needed to influence recycling behaviors.

Key takeaways:

- The pilot project resulted in a modest reduction in total trash volume, with a decrease of about 3.73 LBS per household per week.
- Participants effectively diverted 9.51 LBS of organic material per week.
- No notable changes were observed in recycling habits, highlighting the need for further initiatives to promote recycling alongside waste diversion.

This data offers a valuable starting point for understanding how residential food waste diversion can impact overall trash volume, though more targeted data collection and strategies could refine future efforts to address both organic waste and recycling.

7. Costs and Investment

- **Staff Time**: The staff time required to implement the pilot was relatively modest, indicating the program is manageable from a resource standpoint. Approximately 40 hours of administrative time were used to design the pilot, develop outreach materials, and gather baseline data, while cart distribution required about 10 hours total from Highway Department personnel. Ongoing resident support demands were minimal, totaling less than one hour, and final data analysis and reporting took an additional 8 administrative hours. This efficient use of staff time suggests the program could be scaled with similar resource commitments, especially if streamlined processes and templates are developed for broader implementation.
- **Program Expenses**: The direct costs of the pilot program are as follows:
    - Wheeled Carts and counter top containers: $0 (existing inventory used)
    - Cart Cleaning Services: $750 (for cleaning and sanitizing returned carts)
    - Print Materials and Postage: $2,500 (initial mailers, follow-up postcards, and outreach materials)
    - Scale Fees: $450 (for weighing diverted organics material)
    - Compostable Liners: $420 (provided to participants)
    - Weekly Collection Services: $5,264 (total cost for curbside organics collection over the pilot period)
    - **Total Direct Costs: $9,384 ($142/participating household)**

  These costs reflect a lean pilot model leveraging existing resources and focusing spending on outreach and core service delivery.
- **Future Grant Funding Opportunities:** Grant opportunities can play a critical role in expanding and sustaining a curbside organics program in Bedford. For this pilot, the Town applied for a MassDEP grant in June 2024, seeking funding for organics carts and waste reduction initiatives—indicating that state-level support is available for municipalities investing in diversion programs. Although the grant announcement did not align with the pilot launch, the Town has already secured grant funding for an additional 475 wheeled organics carts to expand the program.

  Additional opportunities may include:
    - **MassDEP's Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP) and Recycling Dividend Program (RDP)**: Offers annual grants to cities and towns for recycling, composting, and waste reduction projects.
    - **Federal Infrastructure or Climate Grants**: Through programs like the EPA's Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) or climate resilience funds, especially if organics diversion is tied to greenhouse gas reduction goals.
    - **Private/Foundation Grants**: Environmental foundations or regional non-profits may offer funding for community-based waste reduction and education initiatives.

Pursuing these opportunities could help scale the program while minimizing local budget impact, especially as the Town considers broader implementation.

8. Results and Findings

Organics Participation Data

All Programs

	Pilot Period							
	1-Dec-24	1-Jan-25	1-Feb-25	1-Mar-25	1-Apr-25	1-May-25	1-Jun-25	1-Jul-25
Pilot Subscribers	65	66	66	66	66	65	0	0
Paid Subscribers	372	358	356	353	350	348	378	382
TOTAL SUBSCRIBERS	**437**	**424**	**422**	**419**	**416**	**413**	**378**	**382**
Drop-off Participants (pilot area)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Drop-off Participants (town-wide)	91	94	95	96	97	99	101	102

In 2015, the City of Cambridge conducted a 600-household curbside food waste pilot, estimating that each household would divert about 10 pounds of organics per week, with a 35% participation rate in the free program and a 70% weekly set-out rate. Bedford's pilot closely mirrored Cambridge's outcomes in terms of waste diversion and participation behavior, achieving an average of 9.51 pounds of food waste collected per household per week and a 65% set-out rate. While Bedford did not meet its goal of 30% neighborhood participation, the pilot still demonstrated significant progress, raising participation from a baseline of 2.2% to 13.83%.

Date	Total Stops	# Marked Successful	% Marked Successful	Gross LB	Tare LB	Net LB	Average LBS per successful stop
12/18/24	64	44	69%	821	327.8	**493.2**	11.21
1/29/25	66	40	61%	607	298	**309**	7.73
2/26/25	66	45	68%	785	335.25	**449.75**	9.99
3/26/25	66	44	67%	731	327.8	**403.2**	9.16
4/30/25	66	40	61%	669	298	**371**	9.28
5/29/25	64	39	61%	669	291	**378**	9.70
Average						**401**	**9.51**

Interestingly, while overall food waste participation is lower among the paid subscriber group (as a percentage of Town-wide participation), the set-out rate observed in the paid subscriber group was nearly 80%. This difference in set out rate between the pilot group and the paid group may be due in part to lack of perceived value or impact among the pilot group, sorting habits that have not yet formed or skepticism about the future of the free program. Paid participants may prioritize participation and be more invested in making sorting food waste routine because they are paying for the service.

Maintaining engagement throughout the program proved to be a challenge. Black Earth Compost (BEC) included participation metrics with monthly weight data, recorded as stops marked successful. From month 1 to month 2, the number of participants in the pilot project that placed their food waste cart at the curbside for collection and the amount of compostable material in the cart each week declined. It is possible this initial decline was due, in part, to the newness effect of the project waning. As a result, DPW sent participating households a mid-project post card, *included in the Appendix*, thanking them for participating and encouraging them to continue on with the effort.

- **Waste Reduction Results**: The pilot program demonstrated a clear relationship between food waste diversion and trash reduction. As households began separating food waste for curbside collection, the overall volume of trash collected in the target neighborhoods declined. Preliminary data indicate a measurable reduction in incinerator-bound waste, suggesting that diverting organics from the trash stream can effectively reduce total disposal volumes. While long-term trends require further analysis, the six-month pilot shows that food waste diversion is a promising strategy for reducing municipal solid waste.
- **Impact of Communication Strategies**: The program's multi-channel communication approach—beginning with a personalized mailer, followed by a digital campaign on the Town Website and The Bedford Citizen, and reinforced with a follow-up postcard—helped raise awareness and encourage participation across different demographics. The use of a brightly colored RSVP-style postcard made the initial opt-in process simple and visible, likely boosting response rates. Continued engagement through reminder emails, a mid-project thank-you postcard, and clear end-of-program instructions helped maintain participation and minimized confusion. By combining print, digital, and direct outreach, the communication strategy effectively supported enrollment, retention, and overall program success.
- **Lessons Learned**: Key takeaways from the pilot include the effectiveness of direct mail outreach in driving participation and the significant diversion of food waste which led to measurable solid waste reduction. Successful strategies included using opt-in enrollment, clear communication, and accessible signup methods. However, the pilot also highlighted areas for improvement, particularly the need to address behavioral and perceptual barriers to participation. Equal numbers of households declined to participate, indicating that skepticism and lack of engagement remain significant hurdles. Future efforts should focus on broader community education and stakeholder involvement to build support for a town-wide or mandatory organics program.

9. Conclusions

- **Summary of Outcomes**: The pilot successfully demonstrated the program's effectiveness in reducing waste, with participating households diverting an average of 9.51 pounds of food waste per week from the trash stream. This sorting behavior shifts the Town's disposal expense away from traditional waste incineration by an estimated savings of $25 per household annually. The opt-in model engaged a substantial number of residents, showing strong interest among those willing to adopt food waste diversion habits. However, resident engagement was mixed overall, as an equal number of households chose not to participate, highlighting the need for continued outreach and education. Despite this, the pilot showed that with proper communication and support, food waste diversion can be both impactful and feasible at the household level.
- **Feasibility for Expansion**: The pilot program demonstrated that food waste diversion is operationally feasible and cost-effective on a small scale, suggesting potential for scalability to other neighborhoods or town-wide. The consistent weekly collection, successful cart distribution, and measurable waste reduction show that the logistics can be replicated. However, the mixed participation rates indicate that broader adoption would require increased community engagement, targeted education, and efforts to address behavioral and perceptual barriers. Scaling the program would also depend on achieving economies of scale and securing sustainable funding or policy support, especially if participation remains voluntary. With the right outreach and infrastructure, the program has strong potential to expand effectively across Bedford.
- **Potential for Long-Term Success**: The pilot program demonstrates strong long-term potential for integrating curbside organics collection into Bedford's overall waste management strategy. The consistent diversion of food waste and resulting cost savings in trash tipping fees suggest that organics collection can help manage disposal expenses more sustainably. Importantly, these savings could be redirected to offset the cost of food waste

collection service, effectively shifting the financial burden from one waste stream to another. As participation increases and processing capacity grows, the Town may achieve economies of scale that make a subsidized or municipally funded program more feasible. Additionally, if the Commonwealth mandates household-level food waste diversion, Bedford will be well prepared to respond based on experience gained through the pilot. Long-term success will rely on continued education, infrastructure development, and community engagement to encourage broader adoption.

10. Program Examples and Additional Recommendations

Below are several approaches used by local communities in the region to encourage composting:

1. Financial Incentives

- **Subsidized or Municipally-funded Programs**: Some towns offer discounts or subsidies for households that opt into composting programs, making them more affordable for residents. Other cities and towns have begun to integrate municipally-funded food waste programs into their overall curbside offerings.
    - **Example**: **Newton, MA** issued a bid solicitation for a "Preferred Vendor" contract to provide private-pay curbside service to residents. This resulted in a lower negotiated rate for curbside service. The contractor benefits from publicity and increased subscriptions, residents benefit from the reduced rate and the city benefits from reduced disposal volumes without the added cost of providing municipally-funded curbside service.
    - **Example: Lexington, MA** used ARPA funds to begin rolling out municipally-funded curbside compost service. Participation was capped at 2,000 households in year 1; 4,000 households in year 2. Continued costs for this program will be embedded into the solid waste budget for future years.
    - **Example**: Since 2018, **Cambridge, MA**, has provided municipally funded curbside compost service on the same day as trash and recycling. Collection carts are provided by the municipality. Residents provide the compostable liners, just as they would a plastic trash bag for trash.
- **Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) Systems**: Communities with PAYT or HPAYT, hybrid Pay-As-You-Throw (used in communities with containerized waste streams), charge residents based on the amount of trash they dispose of, incentivizing diversion of compostable materials. PAYT can provide a pathway to reallocate municipal funding away from traditional disposal to instead fund food waste diversion.
    - **Example**: **Brookline, MA**, utilizes a PAYT system where residents are charged for trash as a municipal utility, much like water and sewer services, based on the size of the trash container, with composting and recycling being free, encouraging households to reduce waste by composting. Trash carts are offered in three sizes, 35-gallon, 65-gallon and 95-gallon, based on individual household need and the resident is charged based on the cart size selected.

2. Convenience and Accessibility

- **Easy-to-Use Curbside Collection**: Providing convenient curbside collection for food waste can increase participation. Offering various container sizes may also improve engagement, as some pilot-area residents noted that the standard 13-gal food was cart size was a barrier to participation.
- **Flexible Collection Schedules**: Offering different collection frequencies (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly) gives residents flexibility and ensures they can participate regardless of their waste volume. Some pilot-area residents declined to participate, citing a perception that they did not produce enough food waste to warrant participation.

3. Educational Campaigns and Community Engagement

- **Public Education and Outreach**: Many cities and towns run public campaigns to educate residents about the environmental benefits of composting, the types of materials that can be composted, and how to properly separate food waste.

    - **Example**: **Boston, MA**, runs an ongoing public education campaign through its **Zero Waste Boston** initiative**,** which includes workshops, educational materials, and social media campaigns to encourage composting and recycling.
- **Partnerships with Local Schools or Organizations**: Collaboration with Bedford Public Schools has helped increase resident awareness of available composting programs. As the remaining schools implement food waste sorting in the lunch space, Bedford may see additional interest in household composting participation and broader community support.

4. Social Norms and Community Support

- **Community-Based Social Marketing**: Many successful programs use social marketing strategies to influence behavior, such as highlighting local success stories, emphasizing environmental benefits, and showing how easy it is to compost. Pilot-area responses showed an equal number of residents were unwilling to participate as those who chose to participate in the project. Non-participants cited various reasons for their choice, including perceived ease of use, concerns about odor or the possibility of rodent issues.
    - **Example**: **Lexington, MA**, promotes composting through the use of door knockers hung on active subscriber's compost bins, encouraging residents to share the flyer with a friend. *See Appendix.*
- **Neighborhood Incentives**: Bedford could consider a neighborhood by neighborhood approach, celebrating or incentivizing entire neighborhoods to participate. Neighborhoods with the highest diversion rates or most engaged participants could be champions for further participation.
    - **Example: Tyngsborough, MA** used a similar approach during the Recycling IQ program, where streets with the most improvement in recycling contamination were celebrated on the Town's social media page after each weekly audit.

5. Mandatory Participation and Regulations

- **Mandating Composting for Certain Groups**: Some communities require businesses, restaurants, or multi-family residences to participate in composting programs, increasing overall diversion rates.
    - **Example**: **Cambridge, MA**, mandates that all businesses, including restaurants, compost food waste, and has extended the requirement to multi-family housing units as part of the city's broader sustainability goals.
- **Ban on Food Waste Disposal**: Some states have passed laws that ban food waste from being sent to landfills and incinerators, making composting a necessity for compliance.
    - **Example**: The State of **Massachusetts** has passed a statewide ban on the disposal of food waste from generators producing more than 1/2 ton of food waste per week (businesses, institutions, etc.), encouraging them to compost or donate unwanted but unexpired food.