

# WEST HARTFORD SMART EXPERIENCE



## CONNECTICUT FACES A TRASH CRISIS

HOW WE CAN SOLVE IT TOGETHER

# WASTE REDUCTION INITIATIVE

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- 2016 - Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) updates State Solid Waste Management Plan
- New goal: divert 60% of all solid waste generated in the state after January 1, 2024
- Accomplish this via source reduction, reuse and recycling
- If West Hartford continues its current waste management practices, it will be unable to meet these state-mandated reduction and recycling goals by 2024.

# INTRO TO SAVE MONEY AND REDUCE TRASH (SMART)

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- In 2016, West Hartford received grant to explore SMART.
- SMART is a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) system: an innovative way to pay for waste collection and disposal services. It is designed to motivate people to recycle more and think of ways to generate less waste overall
- West Hartford contracted with Waste Zero, a national leader in municipal waste reduction, to propose and educate the public about a more equitable system of solid waste finance to reduce waste and increase recycling
- Initial analysis showed a SMART program can reduce trash by 44%



# SMART CONVERSATION

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- 2016
  - Conducted a survey about local and State waste process
  - Held small focus groups with survey respondents
- 2017
  - Held 3 well-attended public forums on the SMART concept

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATION FINDINGS

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## What did West Hartford Residents Think?

- Mixed results
  - 1/3 agreed with the SMART concept PAYT
  - 1/3 agreed state has a waste management crisis
    - **BUT** wanted other solutions to reduce their waste **NOT PAYT**
  - 1/3 suggested the DPW Director be fired for suggesting the idea PAYT
- Social Media hijacked the narrative of SMART's benefits
- Lack of Trust
  - Is this really a Crisis?
  - WASTE ZERO produces the trash bags, leaving the impression this was beyond just waste
  - Savings goes back in to the system, it doesn't go back to the resident

# ACTIONS TAKEN POST COMMUNITY CONVERSATION BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

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- Weekly Recycling Collection Trial: FY 2018 - 2019
  - Anticipated volume increase never materialized
  - Increase in “Wish-Cycling”
  - Put-out rate lower than projections, failing to justify collection cost. Program discontinued.
- Implemented Food Scrap separation in West Hartford school lunch programs. Program currently active.
- Formal recommendation to implement SMART presented
  - Lack of community support
- Hired a dedicated Recycling Coordinator – PT with FT responsibilities
  - Education-Education-Education
- Bi-Weekly Yard Waste collection added Spring 2019

# NEW INFLUENCES TO CONSIDER

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- New: Recycling Processing Fees
  - No longer generate revenue from mixed materials
  - \$84 per ton mixed materials processing fees = \$650,000 in new fees annually
- Reduced Mixed Material Volumes
  - What's In / What's Out efforts to reduce contamination rates
  - Local education lead by Town Recycling Coordinator



# LESSONS LEARNED

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- Top down approach failed
  - Lacked top state and local “Influencers”
  - Relied on “go it alone” or “pioneer change agent” at the local level
- Political and community buy-in process flawed
  - Moved ahead with the SMART conversation without strong buy-in
  - Lacked a consensus on the theories of SMART
- Fiscal Accountability
  - Out of pocket expenses increase not decrease
  - The term “Savings” is flawed
- The Fear of Change
  - Resident loss of convenient and un-checked disposal options
- Enforcement
  - No clear answers
  - Fear as to what enforcement of garbage collection looks like - outcomes





# Q&A

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