“Pay-As-You-Throw” (PAYT) Trash Ordinance
Frequently Asked Questions
Updated 11/04/2003

1. What is “Pay-As-You-Throw”?

Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) is a term for “variable rate” or “unit-based” trash pricing. Basically, it means you are charged for the collection of household trash based on the amount you throw away. The less trash you throw away, the less you pay.

2. Why did the City adopt a PAYT trash ordinance?

Fort Collins adopted an environmental goal of reducing our community’s waste stream. It has been proven that when people understand the financial incentive – lower trash bills - they get very motivated about reducing their waste stream. The US Environmental Protection Agency endorses PAYT as the best way for communities to tackle solid waste issues.

- After Fort Collins’ PAYT trash ordinance went into effect in 1996, we saw that a lot more people started using mulching lawn mowers; it made more sense to mulch then having to pay for each bag of grass clippings to be hauled to the landfill.
- Over the past seven years, the number of households in Fort Collins that recycle has climbed to over 90%.

3. Why is the City’s PAYT trash ordinance being amended?

After six years of using PAYT, the City Council wanted to know how to even further increase its effectiveness. The City started by addressing a “loophole” being used by some trash haulers to only selectively apply PAYT in homeowner associations (HOA) accounts.

- At least 10,000 households in Fort Collins are not getting the opportunity to participate in PAYT because their individual choice of trash service level is prescribed by an HOA contract.
- If 10,000 more homes in Fort Collins start using the PAYT system, it will prevent an estimated 15,000 cubic yards of trash from being sent to local landfills each year.

4. Exactly how will the PAYT trash ordinance be amended?

A clarification to the language in the ordinance has been proposed by staff specifying that all single family and two-family residences in Fort Collins fall under unit-based trash rates, including those in group accounts such as HOAs. To further ensure that each household is made aware of their options to save money on their trash bills, haulers will have to:

- list all prices (i.e., for one-, two-, three-can per week service) in written format when bidding for contracts in HOAs and other group accounts, and
- publicize unit-based prices to individual residents who participate in group accounts, allow them to choose their level of service, and then bill according to that service level price.
5. What public input has been received about amending PAYT?

The City invited public involvement during the process of amending the PAYT ordinance, through:

- Maintaining a “listening log”
- Letters sent to all licensed trash haulers to request feedback at a meeting in August
- Group and individual meetings during August and September, including an Open House held at the Lincoln Center
- Ads for "Let's Talk Trash" Open House that ran twice in the Coloradoan during September
- Letters requesting input mailed in October to 140 interested parties, including every property management company in Fort Collins and as many homeowner's association (HOAs) that are listed with the City's Neighborhood Resources Office
- Presentations to the City’s Natural Resources Advisory Board and Solid Waste Reduction committee
- Individual telephone calls to all property management companies during October
- "PAYT Update" letters mailed in mid-October to property management companies, trash haulers, and citizens who have contacted the City with comments
- In-person meeting with representatives from a large property management company
- Numerous phone conversations and individual letters of response to commenters who submitted specific questions
- Draft ordinance language mailed to all licensed trash haulers in early November

6. Is PAYT going to prevent my HOA from entering into a group contract with a trash hauler?

You’ll still be able to enter into group contracts for trash service. However, trash haulers will have to comply with the requirements that were listed in Question 4 above, or else be at risk for losing their license in Fort Collins.

- The City of Fort Collins endorses group trash accounts because of the side-benefits: less truck traffic, pollution, and road damage, and increased safety in neighborhoods.

7. Is my HOA still going to be able to get a special price for me?

It is highly likely that trash companies will still be eager to win group accounts. Although in the future, Fort Collins’ PAYT ordinance won’t allow haulers to offer a single level of service (unless it can be documented that every resident selected that level of service), HOAs may still provide enough “economy of scale” for the hauler to be able to offer lower unit-based prices.

8. Why doesn’t the City just increase the items that can be recycled at the curb to boost recycling and reduce the amount of solid waste being landfilled?

Fort Collins continues to be working on this and seek ways to improve curbside recycling.

- A recent change at the Larimer County Recycling Plant now allows city residents to put magazines and junk mail into their curbside recycling bin.
- Adding cardboard to curbside recycling bins would be nice, but its bulkiness is a problem. In Loveland, curbside cardboard recycling was recently discontinued because the extra collection trips it created was too costly.

9. Where can I find more information about PAYT?

The following websites, [www.epa.gov/payt](http://www.epa.gov/payt) and [www.serainc.com](http://www.serainc.com) contain a lot of useful information about PAYT. Again, the EPA cites variable trash rates as one of the most effective ways to reduce residential waste and to increase recycling rates. You can also find information about City of Fort Collins recycling programs at [www.fcgov.com/recycling](http://www.fcgov.com/recycling).