

# 2020 Teaneck Garbage Pickup Study

Every week, a typical resident in Teaneck will see garbage trucks from several different companies rumble by. A typical garbage truck weighs 18 tons and uses roughly 43 gallons of diesel fuel per day. This has impacts on air pollution and carbon emissions, while degrading the town's streets. A truck may travel every street in the town while only collecting garbage from every fifth or sixth house.

Because of this waste, the Environmental Commission asked graduate students at Fairleigh Dickinson University's School of Public and Global Affairs to investigate options for Teaneck's garbage pickup system. This work, which started in January 2020, was done as part of PADM 6606 (analytic decision-making) and was supervised by an experienced researcher/consultant.



**GARBAGE COLLECTION  
NOW VS. FUTURE**



Teaneck does not provide garbage pickup for residents; instead, the township has a list of 14 providers, with no public information on pricing. Residents contract with one of these companies, which typically offer choices of once or twice weekly pickup, of one, two, or unlimited cans; most have some

provision for picking up “bulk” trash such as old dishwashers, carpets, or furniture.

The class chose to investigate three options for pickup in addition to Teaneck’s current system: single-vendor (e.g. Roxbury), dual-vendor (e.g. Washington Township), and government-sourced (e.g. Hackensack).



BLUE DIAMOND DISPOSAL
Purchase your own trash cans.
Limit of 5 containers/bags per collection.
\$1.7 Million/8,391 households = \$212.60 per year (about \$18 per month)
Past 5 years, they have charged the town \$1.7 million per year.
In 2011, it was estimated that it would save the town \$3.5 million over <u>5 year</u> contract.

Roxbury uses one vendor (Blue Diamond) which charges the town \$18 per household; in 2011, the town estimated it would save \$3.5 million over the course of a five-year contract with Blue Diamond. The contract appears to have worked out, since it has been renewed. There are limits on pickups; each house has twice-weekly pickup, with a limit of five containers or bags per collection. The cost is \$1.7 million to the town per year, for 8,391 households—\$212.60 per year, or around \$17.72 per month.

Washington gives residents a choice between Waste Management and Buldo, but in addition to requiring roughly twice as much fuel usage and truck travel over

the roads, this costs residents more. Waste Management will pick up two cans' worth of trash, twice per week (four cans/week), for \$26.65 per month. Buldo charges \$23/month, with a \$16.50/month + \$1/bag option for people who generate very little trash. Waste Management, incidentally, charges substantially more than this for the same service in Teaneck.



WASTE MANAGEMENT OF NORTHEAST NJ	BULDO SANITATION, INC.
2 Customer Supplied Trash Cans \$26.65 Monthly	<p><b>Using your own bags:</b> \$23 a month (or \$69 a quarter)</p> <p><b>Using PURPLE bags:</b> \$16.50 a month (or \$49.50 a quarter) Bags cost ~\$1 (large, batches of 10)</p>

Finally, there is the option of creating a sanitation department. Based on Hackensack's practices, the cost of buying equipment to start the department would be \$2.7 million. This includes six trucks—five operating ones and one "spare" to allow maintenance and repair time for the others. There would also be \$2.8 million per year in labor costs. The total would be around \$5.5 million (\$5,440,000), but the trucks would be newer and less polluting than typical garbage trucks currently plying Teaneck streets. The town could also pay extra for more efficient vehicles.

Normally, the trucks would be purchased with a bond issue, but simply charging the cost to each household separately would result in a \$400 per household cost for the first year (around \$33 per month, which is around the median for a typical Teaneck household now). However, after the first year, the cost would be \$212.83 per person, or \$17.73 per month.

A single-vendor contract with a private company is likely the best option for Teaneck. There are practical issues faced in creating a new department, most notably the lack of space to store and work on six new garbage trucks, and opposition by some on Council and in the population to municipal pickup. Some have the attitude, proven wrong by other towns, that a municipal garbage program is always more expensive than private pickup because of pensions and perceived “laziness” of government employees. It does appear that a well negotiated contract with a private vendor provides nearly the same benefits as a municipal service.

The group also surveyed Teaneck residents. The group was unable to have the survey publicized in town mailings, “Tid-Bits,” or the Teaneck Shuls mailing list, but did attempt to reach residents through several Facebook groups and advertisements in Google AdWords. In the end, 131 residents were surveyed. The survey form itself was designed to be produce

unbiased information and did not mention the drawbacks of the current system.

One key part of the results was that residents currently pay an average of \$34/month (the median was \$32/month), considerably more than residents with less “free-for-all” systems. While some residents paid relatively little, others paid much more. The lowest cost paid by any resident was more than Blue Diamond charges Roxbury residents.

How many options for garbage collection contractors would you prefer? (Municipal pickup would come under “one option.”)



Support for the idea of a single vendor included a preference for having bills included in taxes (70% of respondents wanted this, 12% did not, and 18% did not care), and a full 52% (more than half) of residents wanting a single-option system. Only 21% would opt for the current system. 13% had no opinion, and 13% supported two or three options. Finally, 51% of people found the number of garbage trucks going through town bothered them or bothered them a little. 30% said there was unreasonable noise.

There is not a great deal of love for the existing system. Only 15% of residents were extremely satisfied with garbage pickup in Teaneck; 22% were extremely dissatisfied. 21% were somewhat satisfied; 28% were somewhat dissatisfied. Similar results came when we asked if people liked the current pickup system; 19% said they definitely like it, and 34% said they definitely do not like it.

**How much do you like the current garbage pickup system  
(where you choose from a list of contractors?)**

**DEFINITELY LIKE**

**SORT OF LIKE**

**no opinion**

**SORT OF DISLIKE**

**DEFINITELY DO NOT LIKE**

There is a clear environmental impact to the current system; as numerous trucks pound potholes into the roads, increasing repaving costs, they also belch diesel fumes into the air and produce an extra 900,000+ pounds of airborne carbon. This waste is a by-product of a system that produces no clear benefits for residents, while adding to their costs.

There is a clear, desirable path for action with Teaneck's waste pickup.