



Watervliet launches Organic Waste Program

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The city of Watervliet has launched its Watervliet Organic Waste (WOW) program to go city-wide encouraging participation from residents. The 20-week WOW pilot program had its first curbside pickup in January with 35 residential homes participating. Due to the success of the WOW pilot program the city launched the program city-wide June 1.

"The Watervliet Organic Waste Program provides a unique opportunity for residents to get involved in reducing the city's carbon footprint," said Watervliet mayor Mike Manning. "Instead of letting the organic waste take up space in our landfill, it can be repurposed and used as a resource for the city and residents."

The WOW program is a green initiative that allows for biodegradable organic waste to be used as a city resource. Rather than sending biodegradable materials such as food to the landfill, city residents participating in the program can recycle their organic waste and biodegradable materials.

Participating residents are given indoor organic waste containers or "kitchen catchers," which allow bag separation from regular garbage. A resident will remove the plastic bag from the indoor container and place it outside in another container for pickup. The city is making containers available to residents as participation increases.

The city of Watervliet is composed of a caring bedroom community that has shown great support for the city's green initiatives and environmental sustainability efforts. With 5,000 housing units in the city, if 75 percent of its households participate in the program the city would realize a savings of \$30,000 annually in tipping fees, in addition leaving a smaller carbon footprint. Residents pay \$51 per ton when dropping garbage off at the landfill. By participating in the WOW Program, Watervliet's residents will have the opportunity to save money by avoiding sending their organic waste to the landfill.

The success of the WOW program has drawn international attention to the City of Watervliet and its innovative uses for biodegradable organic waste. The City of Watervliet hosted several delegates from India, Thursday June 7, at the Watervliet Department of Public Works garage to discuss the WOW program and how the city plans on using organic waste as a renewable energy resource.

These visitors were invited to Watervliet as part of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). The delegation consisted of six leaders in their professional fields that focus on environmental initiatives. This group has come to the United States to participate in a three-week program on climate change and clean energy. In April a group of delegates from Kosovo participating in the IVLP visited Watervliet, this is the city's second international visit this year regarding the WOW program.

All residents are encouraged to participate in the WOW Program. The pilot program removed 5,765 pounds of organic waste from the city's waste stream, each participant diverted an average of 113 pounds of organic waste from the landfill during the test period, which totals 5,765 pounds of waste that was not buried in a landfill.

Watervliet is working to secure grant funding to purchase its own anaerobic digester. The digester can be used to turn biodegradable organic waste such as food into compressed natural gas or CNG. Watervliet used the Albany County Sewer Districts anaerobic digester during the WOW pilot program. The city is currently using the organic waste collected to create compost. The compost can be used in city parks and made available to residents.

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