

Tool Kit for a Successful Recycling Program

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Financial Benefits of Starting a Recycling Program

1. Decreased Trash Pickup Costs

Many recyclable items are the bulky materials that take up so much space in your trash dumpster—think Amazon boxes, plastic packaging, bottles. Moving these items to recycling will free up space in your trash, and mean you need trash pickups less frequently, cutting waste removal costs in the long run. It might even make enough of a space difference to enable you to switch to a smaller (and more economical) dumpster.

2. Creates an Additional Revenue Source

Recyclable materials can often be sold. Plastic, metal, glass and even cardboard can be an extra source of income. Especially if you manage large rental properties, this can be a practical way to off-set some of your operating costs.

A simple way to make this work is to provide color-coded recycling bins for the materials you want to separate for sale. Research market rates in your area so you can focus your efforts on the most valuable items.

3. Saves Space in Landfills

Diverting recyclable materials from landfills saves limited landfill space and prevents pollution. It's also important for keeping waste disposal rates down. When landfills are full, the disposal rates go up for everyone as they're forced to use alternatives. Recycling as many materials as possible in your apartment complex helps ensure that the cost of disposal does not increase as quickly in the future.

4. Attracts New Tenants

Recycling is a great benefit to offer tenants. It looks good on your marketing materials, and is an effective way to show applicants that you care about where they live.

Attracting tenants who care about the environment increases ROI and keeps your buildings and units in better condition. Tenants who want to live in a place that takes care of the environment take better care of the place they live.

Problems and Solutions

PROBLEM: Limited Space

Most families who own homes have the option to store the recycling bin in a garage or by the side of the house. Tenants at apartment complexes don't have these storage options. Unless there is provided storage, tenants may only have room for their household belongings. Even a small recycling container may take up too much room for many tenants.

Solution: Make Recycling Accessible

To solve this problem, provide recycling containers in easily accessible places where tenants go regularly. People are more likely to recycle if the recycling containers are nearby. Some good spots include:

- near the mailbox
- near garbage dumpsters
- in laundry rooms

Wherever you choose to place the recycling containers in your apartment complex, make sure the bins are clearly marked. Indicate on the bins what materials are allowed to reduce confusion among tenants and their guests.

When you place recycling containers in high-traffic areas, you make it easier for tenants to recycle and for you to collect recycling containers. You can save time and money by simplifying the recycling process.

Provide the option for tenants to have small recycling bins in their apartments if they feel they have the space to do so. Some recycling centers also provide bags that tenants can use if they are limited in space. These recycling bags are usually collapsible and easy to store.

PROBLEM: Constant Overturn

You may feel that starting a recycling program is a lost cause because of frequent tenant turnover. You can solve this problem by providing every new tenant with a recycling program information sheet. Keep new and current tenants motivated to recycle by sending regular updates on company social media accounts, emails or newsletters.

Solution: Share a Recycling Guide

In addition, hang instructional posters around the complex and near recycling bins. These posters should instruct new tenants what items can and cannot be recycled. For instance, most recycling centers allow metal, wood, paper, plastic and cardboard to be recycled—and not only that, but put in the same container!

These posters should also contain information regarding which materials belong in which containers if you have more than one recycling bin available. You can distribute this flyer to any new tenants in order to better educate them upon arrival.

PROBLEM: Disinterest

Your recycling efforts may be ineffective if tenants are disinterested in your recycling programs. Recycling is a trend that continues to grow, and while we are already seeing lasting impact based on new recycling practices, we still need to work to generate common interest. And the perfect place to start is at the comfort of your apartment complex.

Solution: Spread Awareness

To solve this problem, consider hosting special recycling events every few months to keep tenants interested. At the event, remind tenants what items to recycle, where recycling bins are located, and how beneficial recycling is for the environment.

You may want to use these events to collect recyclable materials that are collected less often as well, such as hazardous materials or batteries. After you have collected these items, take them to your recycling center or local hazardous waste facility.

Through your recycling program, you and your tenants can reduce waste and positively impact the environment.

Benefits of Recycling for Tenants

1. Provides an Eco-Friendly Amenity

Our society is more environmentally-minded than ever, and many residents have grown to expect apartment recycling programs. In fact, many prospective tenants say they'd prefer to live in a complex that offers recycling, making this amenity a potential deciding factor during their apartment search. Starting a recycling program can help your property stand out from the competition, making it easier to fill empty units.

2. Keeps Your Complex Cleaner

How often are your property's dumpsters overflowing long before trash collection day? For most landlords and property managers, this is a common problem that can frustrate tenants and unintentionally litter your property. An apartment recycling program can go a long way toward reducing or even eliminating this problem. Less trash will leave your property cleaner and more inviting, keeping residents happy and making it easier to put your best foot forward with apartment-seekers.

3. Encourages a Sense of Community Among Residents

When apartment recycling is easily accessible for all residents in a complex, it often becomes a group effort that brings tenants together toward a common goal. This community spirit helps tenants feel more connected to their current home and can decrease the likelihood that they'll move.

Legal Resources

[Iowa's Recycling Law - Iowa DNRwww.iowadnr.gov > idnr > waste > codebasisforrecycling](http://www.iowadnr.gov/idnr/waste/codebasisforrecycling)

[Recycling-in-Iowa](#)

[Recycling_collection.php](#)

STARTING A SUCCESSFUL RECYCLING PROGRAM

Fact Sheet for Property/Apartment Owners, Businesses & Green Teams

1. Coordinate Recycling Collection with Current Garbage Hauler

Your existing garbage hauler can often add this additional service. Not sure who that is? Look for the name on the dumpster or talk to the person who pays the bills for garbage collection.



You might be able to switch to a smaller dumpster or reduce how frequently your garbage is collected (lowering the cost) when adding a recycling dumpster.



3. Streamline Recycling Process with Tenants & Cleaning Staff

Tenants

Coordinate all recycling and waste collection contracts with your tenants to guarantee one on-site recycling provider, which can save money and reduce recycling confusion.



Cleaning Staff

If you contract cleaning services or have in-house staff, make sure they are aware of the second dumpster and where to empty the recyclable items.



2. Determine How Much is Recyclable

As you consider adding recycling, you should determine what type of materials are being thrown away and how much of it is recyclable. Plan to assess your dumpsters or interior bins prior to when the cleaning staff is scheduled to empty them.

Look for these types of materials below. They are recyclable at the two sorting facilities in Des Moines. *NOTE: If you recycle at home, the same rules apply at work.*



Considerations

You may have some recycling programs in place and not realize it. Here are possible ones that may not go into the new process:

Paper/Cardboard: If you are already recycling paper or cardboard, you may be able to throw other recyclable materials in that dumpster. Check with your hauler; it might affect cost.

Document Destruction Services: You might already have a vendor that shreds and recycles confidential documents. This material wouldn't go into the recycling dumpster.

Redemption Programs: Many vending services also take the redemption cans and bottles. These may not be a factor in your waste stream.

TIP: Did you know putting recyclables in a plastic bag ultimately sends them to the landfill? The sorting facility doesn't break the bags open. Keep your recyclables loose in the bin and have tenants and cleaning staff empty the bins into the dumpster or main collection point.



4. Provide Consistent Signage & Containers to Make Recycling Convenient

Color code all exterior and interior containers. This color scheme is common in business recycling:

- Recycling = Blue or Green
- Garbage = Black or Gray

Provide clear, large signage near all interior and exterior containers. Include:

- Illustrations or photos of accepted items & not accepted items
- Consider labels in English and Spanish



Download sample educational posters and graphics at WhereItShouldGo.com/businessrecycling

www.WhereItShouldGo.com/businessrecycling



Metro Waste Authority

5. Regularly Educate Tenants, Employees & Cleaning Staff

Optimize your recycling program by instructing employees and tenants on the best practices for recycling on the property.

- Communicate regularly via email and newsletters.
- Set up a system for educating new tenants and employees.
- Notify tenants of any changes to recycling.



6. Conduct a Waste Audit

Understanding the materials being generated on your property is a key step towards reducing waste and costs. Conducting a waste assessment will allow you to:

1. Determine if employees and tenants understand what to recycle and what to put in the trash.
2. Review the other types of materials being generated on your property.
3. Formulate a plan to generate fewer materials and increase recycling:
 - Ask your recycling provider if they conduct waste measurements or audits
 - Request a free onsite waste assessment from Iowa Waste Exchange (iowadnr.gov/FABA) or Iowa Waste Reduction Center (iwrc.org)
 - Develop a Green Team to conduct your own waste assessment



7. Expand Your Recycling Program

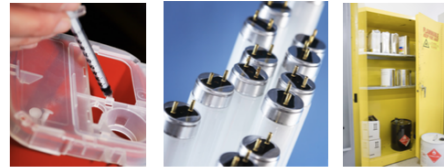
After you conduct a waste audit, ask your recycling hauler about additional or alternative recycling options for regularly generated materials such as scrap metal, computer-related items, electronics and more.



TIP: We offer safe, smart recycling and disposal options in our online Recycling Guide. Search it by item.

Not sure what's happening with your hazardous waste?

Metro Waste Authority may be able to assist you with recycling and disposal options. Visit WheretShouldGo.com and select Business > Hazardous Waste.



Are you ready to tackle food waste?

We offer solutions for reduction, rescue, energy conversion and composting in our Recycling Guide. Businesses struggling to recycle food waste can use our Food-to-Energy Calculator. Simply estimate your annual tons of food waste and it calculates the energy created when food waste breaks down at Metro Park East Landfill.



Find the Food-to-Energy Calculator, as well as resources for food reduction and local food rescue options at WheretShouldGo.com/food

8. Ask Questions & Use Existing Resources

One thing is for certain, recycling changes and evolves. Continue to check back with existing resources to learn if more recycling options are available. The Iowa Waste Exchange and the Iowa Waste Reduction Center can assist if you have large quantities of similar material that your business might generate.

Check with us or the organizations below to determine if you have a waste stream to divert from the landfill.

- Metro Waste Authority | WheretShouldGo.com
- Iowa Waste Exchange | iowadnr.gov/FABA
- Iowa Waste Reduction Center | iwrc.org
- Iowa DNR Recycling Guide | GreenList.com
- Contact your recycling or garbage hauler

Waste Tracking Worksheet

A	Size of Container Waste containers are typically sized in cubic yards (cu. yd.) and rolling carts are sized in gallons (gal.).	_____
B	Number of Containers How many of this size of container do you have? (Complete a separate version of this form for each size container).	_____
C	Collection Frequency Which Days of the week are the containers serviced? Mon. Tues. Wed. Thur. Fri. Sat. Sun.	Number of days per week _____
D	Total Waste Capacity If the containers are 100% full at pick up, then this is also your actual waste generated.	Line A = _____ x Line B = _____ x Line C = _____ x equals Line D = _____
E	Total Cost for this Size Container Check your waste contract to determine the total cost per week or per month for this type of container.	\$ _____
F	Cost per Container	Line B = _____ x Line C = _____ divided by Line E _____ equals Line F _____
G	Average Fullness of Container Visually estimate the fullness percentage of each container before it is picked up and figure out the average fullness. <i>(See worksheet in Appendix: A)</i>	_____ %
H	Actual Waste Generated	Line D = _____ x Line G = _____ equals Total Waste (yds. or gals.) _____

RECYCLING GUIDELINES

for Businesses & Residents in Central Iowa

RECYCLABLE



Screw-Top Plastics (with caps)
& ONLY Yogurt & Margarine
Tubs (no lids)



Paper Food Cartons (no caps)
(not cylinder shaped)



Newspaper,
Glossy Inserts &
Magazines
Mixed Paper (Junk mail, phone books, envelopes)
Cardboard (Break down and cut to fit into cart)



Wire Hangers



Shredded Paper
(Place in a paper sack or box)



Aluminum, Tin
& Empty Aerosol Cans



Glass Jars & Bottles
(All colors)

Don't Bag Recyclables



Keep items loose
in the bin. The
sorting facility
doesn't break
the bags open.



NOT RECYCLABLE



Plastic Bags



Aluminum Foil
& Baking Tins



Compostable Cups,
Plates, Utensils & Bags



Plastic Cups & Tubs,
Lids & Utensils



Paper Cups



Containers for
Hazardous Materials



Food Contaminated
Items (Pizza boxes,
paper plates, napkins)



Plastic & Styrofoam
Food Containers, Lids & Loose Caps



Garbage or
Yard Debris

WE KNOW
where
IT SHOULD

GO


Metro Waste Authority

www.WherItShouldGo.com | 515.244.0021

Urban Ambassadors Contact Information

<https://www.urbanambassadors.org>

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Do you want to be a recycling or compost champion in your building? Whether you're a tenant or a landlord, get additional help and guidance by contacting us using the above information!

Additional Resources and Works Cited

Compost Services

Do you want to take the next step towards zero waste? Consider composting, too! Individuals or entire buildings can compost using these services.

<https://www.mwatoday.com/waste-recycling/yard-waste/grow-gold-compost/>

<http://mwatoday.spinutech.com/locations/metro-compost-center/>

Sources Used for this Tool Kit

<https://www.lrsrecycles.com/apartment-complex-recycling-3-problems-and-their-solutions/>

<https://www.dumpsters.com/blog/recycling-save-apartment-complex-money>

<https://www.cityofirving.org/DocumentCenter/View/14773/Lincoln-Neb-Apartment-Recycling-Case-Study>

<https://dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/pubs/wa/WA1638.pdf>