

Setting up a Multi-Family or Apartment Building Recycling Program

A 7-Step Guide

There are **seven basic steps** to planning and implementing a successful recycling program in an apartment or multifamily complex.

#1 Designate a coordinator.

The coordinator can be anyone who wants to get involved. A landlord, property manager or maintenance person is often the best choice. These individuals are familiar with the waste management system and the residents, and are in the best positions to communicate with both haulers and residents to find out what will work and what will not. If there is a tenant association, a committee could also be involved in reviewing plans, implementing the program, and promoting participation.

#2 Determine method of sorting and containers needed.

The next step is to determine how materials will be sorted and the number of containers needed to handle the quantity of recyclable materials that will be collected in your building. The materials you collect may depend on how much storage space is available, or what materials available haulers pick up. Often residents are required to separate their recyclables into at least two bins: mixed paper and commingled containers. Commingled collection combines plastic, aluminum, and steel/tin food and beverage containers into a single bin. Listed below are conversion factors for two common sizes of wheeled carts/bins that are commonly used in multi-family programs.

Size of wheeled cart or toter	Approximate weight of material each cart or toter will hold		Estimated number of units each cart or toter will serve ⁽⁺⁾
	Mixed paper	Commingled containers	
64 gallon size	127 lbs	57 lbs	3-4 units
96 gallon size	190 lbs	86 lbs	4-5 units

(+) Estimated number of units served is based on an apartment with two people filling the equivalent of one 18-gallon container emptied weekly. Different people generate varying amounts of material based on their purchasing habits. Some programs may collect every two weeks. As a result, the number of containers needed will vary.

#3 Arrange for pick-up.

Generally, multi-family recycling programs may not generate large amounts of revenue for building owners, but if structured properly, a building's trash disposal costs can be reduced. Recycling companies may pay to collect or receive paper and/or commingled containers or will charge less to accept these materials than will a trash hauler disposing of them in a landfill or combustion facility.

Plan the storage and collection system.

#4

Identify a location for the collection and storage systems. Be sure to take into account the wheeled cart or toter size needed, and consult with your maintenance staff and hauler to select carts or toters that are compatible with current waste collection procedures and practices, (i.e., material transfer and loading).

Haulers are usually able to provide necessary equipment, but it is possible that you will have to purchase the building's collection containers and/or storage equipment. If residents are directed to deposit their trash in outside containers (dumpsters, barrels, or totes), dedicated recycling containers should be located in the same general area. In buildings that use trash rooms or chutes, every effort should be made to position the recycling collection containers near trash collection locations. Your maintenance staff may need to transport recyclables to a central location for pick-up. If paper will be stored inside for more than a day, check with your local Fire Department for any specific requirements.

Be sure that the containers will be ready for use before starting your education and promotion efforts. After the program begins, you can expect bins to be full during the first few weeks, because some residents will start storing up materials as soon as they first learn about the new recycling program.