

Madison Heights
Michigan

RECYCLING RIGHT

Staff Guide for Madison Heights Multi-Family Recycling

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Purpose

This document provides guidance through the planning, implementing, and evaluating stages for a multi-family (properties with 5+ dwelling units) recycling program. It is designed for City of Madison Heights' staff who work with solid waste haulers and engage with multi-family property managers and residents, and multi-family property staff who coordinate the recycling campaign launch with the City of Madison Heights and engage with property residents.

This document is intended to be used as reference by local governments in Michigan who want to create and launch a similar program for multifamily properties.

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Objectives

While navigating this document and implementation plan keep these objectives in mind:

1. Provide convenient, on-site recycling access at multi-family properties.
2. Increase the volume and quality of recyclables collected from these properties.
3. Reduce contamination by standardizing education and bin setup.
4. Generate local data and lessons to inform long-term policy, funding, and potential ordinance design.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Madison Height's Department of Public Services (DPS) Director	• Negotiate contract with waste hauler • Inform Priority Waste of new pickup stops along route • Order recycling carts from Cascade Carts Solutions • Coordinate minor cart repair – part replacement
Multi-Family Recycling Program Coordinator at DPS	• Monitor property recycling-pilot interest forms • Provide information and implementation guide to properties • Provide educational outreach material and support property through implementation • Walk through property with property staff • Define capacity needs for each property using the calculator in the program design – capacity section • Update DPS director about any major changes or concerns regarding the multi-family recycling program
Property Management	• Distribute recycling interest survey among residents • Fill out Multi-Family Recycling interest form • Walk through property with the program coordinator • Inform property staff of new program and launch • Communicate issues, needs or feedback to program coordinator • Inform DPS if recycling carts are damaged or need replacing • Contact Priority Waste regarding missed collections or issues present with the recycling pick-up in general
Property Staff (maintenance / leasing)	• Work on enclosures, etc. if needed to place recycling carts before program launch • Place carts and signage as agreed with the program coordinator • Conduct education campaign using materials provided by the program coordinator • Monitor and maintain recycling carts and /or recycling areas
Hauler (Priority Waste)	• Recycling pick-up / hauler **Note**: if stops are missed or if a property has collection complaints they should reach out to Priority Waste directly
Cart Manufacturer (Cascade Cart Solutions)	• Honor carts' 10-year guarantee

Background: Solid Waste Operations in the City of Madison Heights

Cities across the country use different methods to collect residents' solid waste. Some provide the service directly through city owned trucks and city employees, while others contract the service to private haulers. Since 1998, the City of Madison Heights has contracted waste collection to private companies, primarily because providing the service in-house is highly prohibitive. Until last year, the city operated under a "Cart +" model, meaning residents could place solid waste bags at the curb or inside carts for collection.

After the city's waste hauling contract with Green for Life (now Priority Waste) expired, Madison Heights entered a "Cart only" contract with Priority Waste in April 2025. Universal garbage and recycling carts were distributed to 10,300 single-family homes throughout the city. There is still however, an opportunity to expand recycling programs to multi-family properties. Although multi-family residents (properties with 5+ dwelling units) represent large shares of cities' populations, they often lack the on-site recycling access that single-family homes enjoy.

In August-September 2026, the city launched a multi-family recycling pilot program. This program builds upon from previous studies and experiences in the Midwest and across the country mainly seeking to support cities, multi-family properties, and their staff in implementing such a program. In the future, the city can also support properties that want to opt-in the program by sharing past experiences with properties interested in enrolling and potentially sharing grant and micro-funding opportunities for properties who might need infrastructural modification to achieve program implementation.

The city pays for curbside waste & recycling pick-up and multi-family recycling pickup service by allocating funds generated through millage rates. As this service is funded through the Solid Waste tax, multi-family properties that participate in the recycling pilot program will not incur additional service costs. Participation in the program enables properties to take full advantage of services already funded in part through their property taxes. This guide will help city staff support properties in assessing key aspects regarding their recycling container placement / enclosures, communications, and FAQs to decrease planning costs and implementation time.

Evidence from other multi-family recycling programs, such as Houston's, show that program success will largely depend on how the program is designed and enforced. Avoiding missed collections, minimizing illegal dumping, and increasing diversion with minimal contamination depend on the program being complemented with a robust education outreach campaign for all stakeholders involved (city personnel, property staff, and residents). Other multi-family recycling programs in the country have shown that targeted outreach to property residents is more effective than generic citywide campaigns. It follows, from the Houston and Minnesota programs that strong participation, weekly checks, and consistent follow-up helped build momentum for broader policy action.

How Does Madison Heights Benefit from Multi-Family Recycling?

Environmental Benefits

Southeast Michigan's landfills are operating with only a few decades, or less, of permitted capacity remaining. As population and economic activity grow, every ton of material buried in a landfill shortens that remaining lifespan. If existing landfills reach capacity, future disposal will become more expensive and may force communities to consider new landfill sites or long-haul transport of waste. Beyond the environmental implications, cities must also consider the economic consequences. Evidence shows that property values tend to decline near landfills; if new landfills were sited near Madison Heights, this could directly affect city finances by reducing property values and, therefore, taxable value.

Additionally, greater diversion means less landfill use and lower lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions. Recycling keeps paper, cardboard, metals, and plastics out of landfills and returns them to Michigan's economy as feedstock for manufacturing. When residents and multi-family properties recycle more and contaminate less, limited landfill capacity is preserved and the need to permit new landfills in already burdened regions is reduced. This is why Michigan's statewide recycling goal of 40% by 2030 is more than a number. Working towards this goal in the coming decades means less pressure is being placed on local landfills, more material is going to Michigan manufacturers and end-markets, and ultimately a more resilient, circular economy for the state is being built.



Photo by author, Arbor Hills Landfill, Northville, MI.

It is worth noting that other multi-family recycling programs in the U.S. have led properties to downsize their garbage collection containers. As recycling service is often cheaper per yard than garbage disposal, this has often translated into reduced waste management bills. Madison Heights collection bill does not depend on tonnage so even though this is not currently the case for the city, staff should be mindful of this fact when renewing or negotiating contracts with waste management contractors.

Michigan Green Communities Challenge

The Michigan Green Communities (MGC) Challenge recognizes local governments for sustainability actions through bronze, silver, gold, and platinum certification; Madison Heights is currently certified as a Silver participant. By making recycling available and more consistent throughout the city, Madison Heights will strengthen one of the core measures of sustainability programs: the size and effectiveness of residential waste diversion. Madison Heights' multi-family recycling pilot would represent meaningful progress towards the Gold MGC challenge certification by expanding recycling access and increasing diversion across a larger share of the community.



Sustainability Goals Alignment

Cities can significantly increase diversion tonnage by collecting recyclables from multi-family properties. A pilot launched in Minneapolis found that participating multi-family properties diverted tens of thousands of pounds annually and maintained high participation after the pilot. Oakland County is developing a Materials Management Plan that replaces its traditional solid waste plan with a broader system focused on reducing landfilling while expanding recycling and strengthening circular-economy strategies. The county's framework also calls for tracking of metrics such as recycling rates, organics recovery, greenhouse gas emissions, and economic development benefits.

Local recycling programs, such as this pilot, can directly contribute to county goals when they increase diversion and improve access to collection. This program can also help advance Madison Heights' sustainability goals and align with Michigan's 2050 Healthy Climate Plan by increasing waste diversion, reducing contamination, and generating data that can inform future materials management strategies. For example, Minnesota has used outputs from their pilots to support new ordinances to serve their residents more equitably by requiring standardized recycling services. Ordinances originating from these pilots have prioritized the "four Cs": convenience, clarity, color-coding, and capacity.

Creating Community with Multi-Family Properties

Studies and previous pilots across the country have shown that when cities extend convenient recycling service and education to multi-family properties, recycling participation rises and contamination drops. In some cities it can drive city-wide policy changes or ordinances, not only improving the city's aesthetic but also providing many of its residents with access to, what nowadays many consider, a basic service. Providing more equitable recycling options, through multi-family recycling, in denser and often more diverse neighborhoods, helps closing the access gap between single-family and multi-family residents.

In other jurisdictions, property owners and management usually have little incentive to provide this amenity for their residents as hiring a recycling pick-up service comes at a cost to the property. It may require maintenance staff dedicating some time to keep track of the recycling containers, monitoring contamination, and ensuring the infrastructure is appropriate, straining their resources. Additionally, it is usually the case that these properties have space constraints, closed enclosures for garbage disposal containers, and a culture where residents don't perceive the space as their own. Combined, all these factors may lead to heavy contamination and lack of ownership over what's being put in the recycling stream.

By providing a clear framework and support for multi-family properties interested in the program, the City of Madison Heights can help align recycling requirements and service levels for residents in single and multi-family properties in its jurisdiction. The multi-family recycling pilot presents an amazing opportunity for the city to build strong relationships with these properties by inviting them to participate in a program that comes at no additional cost. Participation in the program enables properties to take full advantage of services already funded in part through their property taxes. This provides an opportunity for property managers to offer an attractive amenity to residents at no additional direct cost, while maximizing the use of publicly funded services.

Multi-Family Recycling Program Coordinator

Implementation of this project requires clear communication and coordination between the city, interested properties, and other contractors. Madison Heights' Department of Public Services (DPS) will designate an employee who will take the lead in communicating, coordinating with property managers, and monitoring the program; this employee will report to the DPS Director. Overall, this employee will act as main contact for participating properties and other contractors that should be involved or notified in the process (e.g., Cascade Cart Solutions). This employee will also be responsible for upkeep of the implementation plan guidance, this guidebook and any other related documents, forms or materials. This employee will collect and report data when available. Finally, the program coordinator will engage in property walkthroughs, monitoring cart maintenance, and ensuring program continuity.

Context Matters for Other Cities

Cities often operate in varying design frameworks for waste / recycling collection, it is key for cities who want to launch a similar program to assess their own framework as it can greatly influence properties' management interest in recycling pilots. In some communities, a single contracted hauler provides collection for multifamily properties under a citywide contract. In other communities, multifamily buildings are treated as commercial accounts. The nuisances behind each city's program can have a big impact in the service provided, container type used, signs, education and others.

1. **Municipal-arranged Collection**: the local government is responsible for waste and recycling collection. For example, the local government can provide this service to residents directly if it owns waste collection trucks.
   Otherwise, the service may be provided by a private hauler that in under contract with the local government, as is the case of the City of Madison Heights and Priority Waste. This type of service could be funded through taxes (millage rates), utility bills, grants or others.

   Other local governments might not have a contract with the private hauler but instead could provide licenses to multiple haulers to operate within their jurisdiction. The collection bills in these cases usually goes directly to the customer receiving the service.

2. **Property-arranged Collection**: residents or property management contracts individually and directly with a hauler that is authorized by the local government to provide the service. Rates may vary by hauler and in this case the customer is billed directly as well.



The city should assess some features of their program which include but are not limited to:

- Current service providers: list the main haulers operating in the area and whether its municipal arranged or property arranged collection. If launching a pilot for multifamily properties in a city with property arranged collection, program take-up could significantly depend on rates being charged by haulers. If this is the case, it would be worth exploring if collection bills for the property can be reduced by introducing recycling; by recycling smaller dumpsters for trash could be used reducing fees.

- Service characteristics: describe how frequent collection for trash and recycling is and container types to be used.

- Data and reporting: define whether the City receives tonnage and contamination data that could help estimate benefits from such a program. Reach out to haulers to determine if multifamily tons are distinguishable from other customers.

- Education and outreach: does the city have recycling education material? Summarize existing materials, languages the material is available in, and any existing challenge such as high contamination, lack of signage, or any other gap that could be addressed through education.

This assessment provides the foundation to understand what areas the program design should primarily target. It also helps identify where outreach and infrastructure improvements are needed the most. If a lot of infrastructure improvements are necessary, the city could look for grants targeted for recycling initiatives.

When a city is considering launching a recycling pilot for multifamily properties it should take time to consider how these characteristics of their waste management program can impact the success of the pilot itself. Time should be devoted to understanding how the city's ordinances, laws and other legal frameworks may interact to boost or harm the program being proposed. It may also be worth considering whether a specific ordinance should be revised to strengthen language, requirements or address gaps in service before moving forward with launching a pilot.

Consider the impact of imposing recycling on multifamily properties instead of launching a "voluntary" pilot program in your city. Property managers may be more open to the idea if they are not being forced into a costly program. Think of ways the city could incentivize program take up, for example by providing some benefit to properties that enroll in the program.

Property Onboarding Process and Participation Schedule		
Before Program Launch		
Note: The 3 steps before the recycling program launch can vary greatly timewise. Properties may take anywhere from 4-10 weeks to get to program launch.		
	Program Coordinator	**Property**
Step 1 – Program Enrollment	• Receive information after filling out the interest form in the city's website; store each property's information in multi-family database • Share Memo of Understanding and engagement survey template • Provide program information – program overview and education material on recycling and contamination provided for property managers and staff to understand process and logistics • Collect relevant documentation and finalize property enrollment on program	• Complete online survey to opt in Madison Heights' recycling pilot for multi-family properties • Review program overview • (**OPTIONAL**) Distribute survey to gauge residents' interest in recycling program • Sign Memo of Understanding • Gather / review data on resident demographics to determine if translations are necessary
Step 2 – Property Walkthrough	• Property assessment and walkthrough • Use information from engagement survey, unit occupation and capacity calculators to estimate launch capacity for recycling program • Contact Cascade Cart Solutions and place cart order based on estimated capacity • Contact waste hauler and inform them of new recycling pick-up stop at property, confirm weekly schedule and confirm starting date • Provide educational outreach material	• Coordinate and go on walkthrough with program coordinator to assess property • Confirm with program coordinator tentative start date for recycling pick-up • Distribute program information and fact sheets to property staff
Step 3 – Educational Campaign Launch	• Confirm property staff has informed residents of recycling program about to start • Confirm property is working on customizing outreach material • Deliver carts to property • Confirm signage and carts have been placed in convened locations one week prior to pick-up start date • Confirm with hauler service start date	**2 weeks before pick-up start date** • Launch program information to residents – "Recycling Welcome Letter" email, text message, residential app, etc. • Customize and place orders for resident educational material (magnets, printed material (e.g. new tenants' postcards), and / or any other material such as totes) **1 week before pick-up start date** • Signage and carts placed

Property Onboarding Process and Participation Schedule		
Recycling Pick-Up Program Launch		
	Program Coordinator	**Property**
Week 1 – 2 – Program Launch	• Monitor start of recycling collection • Confirm with property the program is moving as expected • Ask hauler for relevant feedback	• Baseline recycling container monitoring – Observe volume / contamination in containers • Distribute magnets / tote bags / longer-lived educational materials • Inform program coordinator of progress or issues: if recycling has been overflowing for the first two weeks it is likely capacity will need to be increased
Week 3 – 6 – Resident Education Outreach	• Check-in with property once a week and confirm the outreach campaign is underway • Confirm with property if volume and contamination are being monitored, ask if any issues have surfaced or if additional capacity is needed • Assess hauler feedback • Confirm resident survey for feedback has been distributed and assess data to understand what improvements can be made to the program	• Launch outreach campaign – reach residents with printed or digital material (postcards / door hangers / information cards / etc.) and stagger over 4- week period For example: ○ Week 3: information cards / postcards ○ Week 4: text / email / resident app reminder ○ Week 5: door tag ○ Week 6: text / email / resident app reminder • Monitor volume and contamination before weekly pick-up • Inform program coordinator of status or issues • Continue to inform program coordinator if capacity is an issue, estimate overflowing volume and ask DPS for additional containers (1:1 garbage to recycling capacity at program maturity is ideal)
Weeks 7 – 8 – Post-Implementation Phase	• Continue to check-in with property and ask on capacity or contamination issues • If property asked capacity to be increased, confirm additional carts were ordered • If additional carts were ordered, deliver carts	• Monitor volume and contamination before weekly pick-up • Inform program coordinator of progress or issues • If recycling capacity had to be increased, ensure additional containers were ordered, received and placed
Week 8 and beyond – Sustaining	• Continue to check-in with property and provide support when needed	• Communicate with program coordinator and inform them of any issues or further needs to keep program going

Multi-Family Recycling Pilot Program

City Staff Guidebook

City of Madison Heights

Oakland County, MI

Program Design Considerations

Capacity

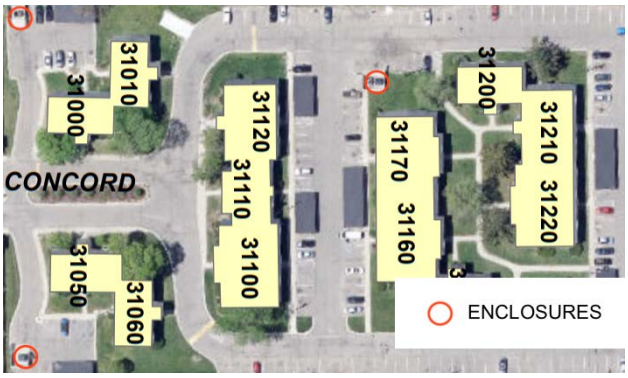
Estimating recycling capacity is key when a property is opting in to the program. Depending on program take-up, the estimated volume should aim to provide roughly comparable recycling and solid waste capacity. For this pilot program, it is suggested that capacity is estimated using

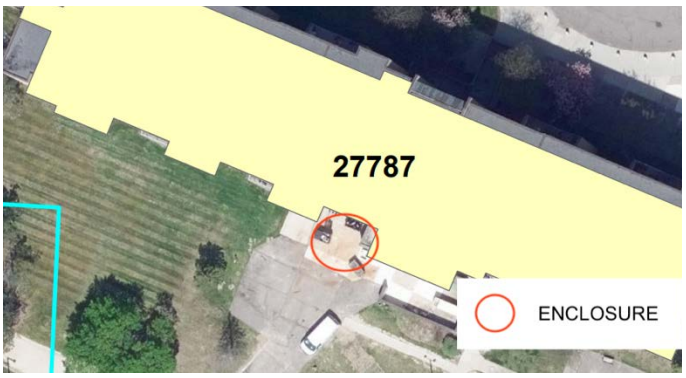
$$\mathbf{11}\ \boldsymbol{gallons\ per\ unit\ per\ week}\ \times\ \boldsymbol{number\ of\ units\ in\ property}$$

paired with lessons learned and observations and scale up initial estimated capacity with time. To determine how to scale up, weekly volume assessment is key. Successful programs across the country were reviewed to provide capacity estimate benchmark suggestions for this pilot.[4,6-9,14,19] Using the monitoring data and feedback from property staff, the program coordinator should consider increasing capacity as residents start recycling more, aiming to reach one of the following benchmarks:

- 11-20 gallons / unit / week; this is what most multi-family recycling programs in the country use as their capacity estimates.[4,6,8,14,19]
- 2:1 solid waste : recycling ratio; some other programs base their recycling capacity estimates on this ratio for each property. [7,9]

Consider building layout (e.g., higher rise buildings with fewer dumpsters / containers vs. horizontally distributed complexes with more containers / enclosures; see images below for examples) and review hauler contract to determine container options; confirm with hauler which containers are acceptable under contract requirements.





If trash is often overflowing at this property before pilot launch, it could present a challenge as residents might use recycling carts to dump garbage instead of recycling. Monitoring garbage and recycling capacity will be key, and consistent resident outreach will determine program success.

Convenience and Access

Consider building layout at each step of the way, as a rule of thumb containers on the property must be conveniently located to increase resident engagement. The easier the access is for residents, the more likely they are to start recycling. Recycling carts should be close to garbage containers but leaving enough space for haulers to be able to pick them up (3 ft. clearance on either side) and for residents to easily recognize the recycling containers are not for trash. Labeling and / or color coding the containers (blue containers for now) is crucial so that residents don't get confused and mistakenly drop trash in the recycling carts. If their budget allows, suggest that the property provides their residents with recycled tote-bags or in-unit bins in which they can collect their recycling and can carry to recycling carts.

- Ideally, recycling carts should be placed in the enclosures where dumpsters or garbage carts are located if space permits (3 ft. clearance for hauler to pick up carts).

- If space in the enclosures is not enough, as illustrated below, consider placing the carts close to each enclosure in the property (clearance still needs to be factored in).



Photo by author

- If property management is interested in the project, they might be willing to expand the enclosure space, ask if this is a possibility.

- If carts are located indoors or in basement-parking, consider height clearance (6 ft. to ceiling minimum) and whether carts will have to be rolled outside for hauler pick-up.

- If enclosures are too spread out, consider starting with a few "recycling stations" in the property. The recycling stations should be as convenient for residents as possible, placing them at mid-point distances between buildings so residents don't have to debate between walking to the garbage dumpsters or the recycling stations.

- Avoid inconvenient locations in property corners with poor lighting or access, consider if during the winter months the location will still be accessible and suitable for residents.

- Regardless of where the recycling carts or bins are placed, it is key to consider whether snowplows or other large vehicles can safely maneuver around them. If placed outside it is key that containers have lids that close properly to protect recyclables from the weather, particularly rain and snow.

Education and Branding

Residents will have an easier time navigating changes with clear and consistent information. Clearly labeled containers paired with pictorial signage can increase acceptance and engagement. Similar programs in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Minneapolis and Houston have also found that having multilingual material with heavy use of images are a way to make recycling convenient and normalized for residents. Use the branded templates and reinforce recycling conventions (e.g., “empty, clean, dry, loose”) with inclusive language (e.g., “our city / property”).

- Label all recycling containers as such. Consider numbering or stickers to identify containers and keep track of them across the property, especially important if they won’t be placed in an enclosure and there is a possibility residents might relocate them.

- If demographic information is available for property residents, use it and translate educational material if appropriate. Regardless, images are a powerful way to overcome language barriers. Consider demographics when choosing materials (e.g., elderly populations might prefer printed materials vs. digital communications; longer-lived magnets might be preferred to disposable door hangers; etc.).

Monitoring and Data Measurement

The only way to understand how the program is working for a property is by regularly monitoring the recycling containers. Quick visual inspections and / or photographs can help identify unwanted materials (i.e., contamination) and estimate recycling volumes. Tracking contamination can be determinant for program success as it can highlight what information needs to be reinforced through outreach. Monitoring weekly volumes can help identify if more containers are needed in the property or if outreach should be prioritized before scaling up.

Questions to consider:

- Can the city allocate time and resources for an employee to monitor carts once a week before hauler pickup?

- Can property staff allocate time and resources to monitor carts once a week before hauler pickup?

- Can the property negotiate with a handful of residents to become recycling champions and take on the tasks of measurement instead of having property staff doing it? To incentivize residents, the property could potentially offer rent discounts or gift cards for the champions.

- Can the property motivate all residents to engage with the program by taking a picture of their weekly recycling being dumped in the carts? This way neither property staff nor resident champions would be responsible for monitoring. For example, to motivate full engagement the property could offer one-month rent free as a lottery price. All residents who upload pictures of their weekly recycling in the cart without contamination during program launch enter a drawing; at the end of the pilot period the property draws a winner from those residents.

- An agreement should be reached between the city and property, in which the property sends pictures and / or data to the city for analysis on how the program is moving along. It will help determine whether the current recycling volume is sufficient for the property and whether more educational outreach and support is needed from the city.

Why does monitoring and data measurement matter?

Monitoring recycling containers and other data will show which materials are being recovered, whether containers are overflowing or underused, which type of contamination is highest, and which containers show this consistently. Data collected and reported by enrolled properties will help identify specific issues and potential solutions, and through this feedback loop the city can refine outreach material, container selection, and enforcement.

Using this data the city can enhance program design and reduce future costs. Understanding capacity levels and contamination promotes enhanced service (container sizes and placement), which can help avoid consistent overflow and lower operational costs (avoiding iterations of estimated capacity for similarly sized properties). Tracking contamination and volume will also help the city assist properties facing issues and replicate successful setups, increasing recycling rates while reducing landfill disposal and litter.

More importantly, documented improvements and clearly defined challenges or trouble areas give the city credible evidence when seeking grants, adjusting ordinances, or reporting to elected officials and the public. Complaint information, questions and other notes (inaccessible recycling areas, chronic dumping, missing carts, etc.) can be added as qualitative data too.

Periodically, the city can benchmark data across properties or compare each property's baseline to current status, or both. Metrics may include:

- How many properties have opted in to the program?
- Recycling volumes / contamination.
- Effective outreach campaign strategy.
- Is there a consistent container set-up linked to low contamination

Communicating with Property Management or Staff

Madison Heights can identify and invite multi-family properties to participate in the program through a combination of strategies. Properties can review information in the city's website, navigating to the recycling landing page to the multi-family property section which contains basic information of the program and its purpose. A survey is linked to this section where interested properties can provide their information for the city to contact them. Otherwise, if the city has a database with information on all multi-family properties in its jurisdiction, it might try to contact management at these properties directly and provide information on the program. Once properties have enrolled, other properties might become aware through word-of-mouth or referrals.

The enrolled-property database can also be used by the city to contact properties and inform them of major changes (changes in contract with hauler, change in pick-up schedules, routes, etc.). Additionally, it can be used to remind properties twice a year to engage in resident outreach and monitoring recycling stations / containers. A dedicated e-mail, inbox or inbox rule can be created so that all multi-family communications reach the same place for the program coordinator to monitor. This will allow for more efficient communication with properties.

Once a property shows interest in implementing the recycling program, the program coordinator should reinforce program benefits for properties. Share case studies in the reference section for cities who have launched similar programs for properties to explore the benefits of these programs. As an additional benefit, this program will help properties be prepared for future state or local recycling requirements.

Last, the program coordinator must review stakeholder responsibilities with each property while participating in the program. Go over the roles and responsibilities table in this guidebook or have a quick conversation to remind them of their responsibilities and / or commitments when enrolling in this program.



Onboarding

1. Interest Survey: once it has been filled out in the city's webpage, the city will contact the property and convene a short onboarding meeting (virtual or on-site) to cover next-steps and requirements.

2. Memo of understanding: fill out and sign memo of understanding; overview of program.
    - (**OPTIONAL**) Resident engagement survey: the program coordinator can encourage management to send a short survey to gauge resident interest in the program. This will make it easier to estimate appropriate container capacity to launch the program.

3. Site walkthrough: the program coordinator will visit the property to conduct an assessment with management. The main goals of this walkthrough are:

    - Review existing trash / recycling setup, enclosure conditions (if any), space, access, and safety.

    - Observe opportunities and challenges (e.g., room for another dumpster, cart corral, signage, snow-plow clearance).

    - Determine recycling container placement and estimate capacity (according to Program Design Considerations).
        - If results from a resident engagement survey indicate low engagement, it's appropriate to begin with a smaller recycling capacity and slowly scale up depending on resident behavior post-launch.

    - If trash is overflowing and this is a recurring issue, capacity will need to start a bit higher to avoid discouraging residents from participating in the program for lack of recycling capacity. This needs to be paired with an aggressive education outreach strategy to ensure appropriate use of the recycling containers.

4. Contact hauler and define a tentative start date for recycling pick up at this property.

5. Provide educational outreach material to property staff. All property staff must review this information and be able to provide answers for common questions from residents when the program is officially launched.

    - Reinforce use of fact sheets and the three core rules: keep food and liquid out, no plastic bags / bagged recyclables, and recycle only clean bottles, cans, paper, and cardboard.

6. Recycling containers: DPS will place an order for 96-gallon blue eco-carts from Cascade Cart Solutions.



- Please note that as of July 2026, a $500 shipping fee applies to each property owner.

- The property is responsible for placing containers as defined with the city and labeling them, placing signage.

- City staff will inform Priority Waste of how many containers were placed in the property and their locations.

- Confirm with the property one week prior to pick-up start date that containers and signage have been placed and residents have received information of the service.

7. Service: begin recycling pick-up service. The property should distribute educational material and keep the city in the loop on any capacity issues. If a property reaches out, define how many more containers are needed.

    - Check the DPS lot or inventory for cart surplus. If carts are available, coordinate to have them delivered to the property. If DPS procedures require a minimum level of carts on stock, ensure there's sufficient carts left in inventory.

    - Otherwise, contact Cascade Cart Solutions to place a new order. Confirm delivery date and let the property know the order has been placed and estimated delivery date.

8. Outreach: the property should engage in resident education as laid out in the implementation plan. The city staff should corroborate with property staff that the outreach campaign is going as planned.

    - Check-in with city staff periodically to define if service levels / capacity needs further adjusting. Ask if they need help with any other issues or concerns.

Future Considerations

As this program evolves and matures, the program coordinator can start looking into ways of improving the multi-family recycling program. A few things that may be considered:

Program Design – Access + Convenience

- Properties might be willing to expand enclosure spaces if they are not big enough to accommodate the recycling containers along with garbage dumpsters; ask if this is a possibility. If properties need to have containers enclosed but budget is a constraint try working with them to search for grants / micro-funding opportunities from leading organizations, EGLE or other state / federal agencies.

- A cardboard-only dumpster may be considered / placed in a convenient location in the property to avoid smaller carts from filling up too quickly; this will be space dependent and needs to be consulted with hauler and DPS first; ask for quotes and assess.

- If there's not enough space in the property to place recycling carts in communal spaces or if dealing with a large proportion of elderly residents, consider a valet recycling service. The property may consider providing each unit with a small container where they can collect their recyclables. Once a week residents can place their containers outside their unit door; property / maintenance staff will collect all the recyclables in a large cart or dumpster that the hauler can pick-up.



Photo from Multi-Family Recycling Toolkit by The Recycling Partnership

Improving Monitoring



Photo taken from PrairieRobotics.com

The City of Madison Heights might receive grant money in the future presenting investment opportunities that could reinforce the basic guidelines provided here with additional technology. Other cities in Michigan with similar programs have implemented the use of cameras that are able to track cart contents as they are tipped in the collection truck. Prairie Robotics offers AI-powered cameras that can identify contamination in carts and send automated messages to property owners alerting them of inappropriate items in their carts.

Other cities have come across issues with public dumping and littering on properties' recycling containers. This has led to overflowing issues and haulers refusing pick-up, in turn leading to properties being fined. Properties close to main roads or with little monitoring have been the most affected by this problem. DPS departments in these cities have been able to acquire and place smart enclosures, as the ones manufactured by metros TOR, over recycling containers which limit access to residents only, avoiding illegal dumping and littering while maintaining ease of collection for haulers. These changes have led to tens of thousands of dollars in savings to single properties in these jurisdictions.



Photo taken from metroSTOR.com

Implementation

Property Onboarding Process and Participation Schedule	
Before Program Launch	
Note: The 3 steps before the recycling program launch can vary greatly timewise. Properties may take anywhere from 4-10 weeks to get to program launch.	
	Program Coordinator Responsibilities
Step 1 – Program Enrollment	• Receive information after filling out the interest form in the city's website; store each property's information in multi-family database • Share Memo of Understanding and engagement survey template • Provide program information – program overview and education material on recycling and contamination provided for property managers and staff to understand process and logistics • Collect relevant documentation and finalize property enrollment on program
Step 2 – Property Walkthrough	• Property assessment and walkthrough • Use information from engagement survey, unit occupation and capacity calculators to estimate launch capacity for recycling program • Contact Cascade Cart Solutions and place cart order based on estimated capacity • Contact waste hauler and inform them of new recycling pick-up stop at property, confirm weekly schedule and starting date • Provide educational outreach material
Step 3 – Educational Campaign Launch	• Confirm property staff has informed residents of recycling program about to start • Confirm property is working on customizing outreach material • Deliver carts to property • Confirm signage and carts have been placed in convened locations one week prior to pick-up start date • Confirm service start date with hauler

Property Onboarding Process and Participation Schedule	
Recycling Pick-Up Program Launch	
	Program Coordinator Responsibilities
Week 1 – 2 – Program Launch	• Start recycling collection • Confirm with property the program is moving as expected • Ask hauler for relevant feedback
Week 3 – 6 – Resident Education Outreach	• Check-in with property once a week and confirm the outreach campaign is underway • Confirm with property if volume and contamination are being monitored, ask if any issues have surfaced or if additional capacity is needed • Assess hauler feedback • Confirm resident survey for feedback has been distributed and assess data to understand what improvements can be made to the program
Weeks 7 – 8 – Post-Implementation Phase	• Continue to check-in with property and ask on capacity or contamination issues • If property asked capacity to be increased, confirm additional carts were ordered • If additional carts were ordered, deliver carts
Week 8 and beyond – Sustaining	• Continue to check-in with property and provide support when needed

Multi-Family Recycling Pilot Program

Property Staff Guidebook

City of Madison Heights

Oakland County, MI

Background

Madison Heights allocates funds generated through millage rates to support community services, including curbside and multi-family recycling collection. The city's contracted waste hauler, Priority Waste, includes recycling services for multi-family properties (properties with 5+ dwelling units). As residential waste and recycling collection are funded through the Solid Waste milage levied through the Property Tax, multi-family properties that participate in the recycling pilot program will not incur additional service costs. This provides an opportunity for property managers to offer an attractive amenity to residents at no additional direct cost, while maximizing the use of publicly funded services.

Across the country, successful multi-family recycling programs have found links between recycling and resident satisfaction. Clean, well identified recycling areas and visible recycling options are now a basic expectation in many residential markets. These programs help reduce garbage volume and reduce overflowing dumpsters, litter, and illegal dumping. This can improve the overall appearance of the property and make common areas more pleasant, which residents often associate with good management and care. Cleaner waste disposal areas can also decrease pest issues and odors, contributing to a healthier environment in the property and potentially reducing bills. Participating in multi-family recycling program can also align properties with Madison Heights' sustainability goals and other local and state regulations.

Multifamily recycling is increasingly marketed as a desirable residential amenity. National renter surveys indicate that recycling is valued by a majority of renters, and some renters report a willingness to pay more to live in communities that provide recycling and other sustainability features. As a result, property owners may view recycling not only as a waste management service but also as a competitive leasing amenity. Recycling programs may also strengthen the relationships between property management and residents. Through clear program instructions and responsiveness to resident feedback, management can signal interest in residents' wellbeing. Over time, this program can become part of properties' identity, which can support community pride and encourage residents to treat common spaces with more respect.

Out of 350 000+ renters who responded to the "Top Apartment Amenities According to Renters" survey in 2020:

79% say recycling is one of the best community amenities[1]
20% say it is a community necessity[1]

92% of respondents of the 2022 AMLI Sustainable Living Index say they recycle[2]

Part A: Is your property interested in becoming part of the program?

Implementation

1. Fill out the survey in the City of Madison Heights website to opt in the program and review program information.

2. (**OPTIONAL**) Send survey to assess resident interest and potential engagement with the program, this will inform initial recycling capacity estimates.

3. Complete and sign Memo of Understanding.

4. Walk through property with the program coordinator to evaluate property waste collection infrastructure, assess optimal recycling container placement and current trash collection volume and service. If trash is often overflowing from your waste collection containers this could present a challenge as residents might use recycling containers to dump garbage; therefore, monitoring garbage and recycling capacity will be key at program launch.

    a. The program coordinator will make recommendations on capacity based on recycling calculators and previous experience of Multi-Family Recycling programs. A mature program should have roughly equal recycling and garbage capacity (e.g., a 4-yard trash container paired with a 4-yard recycling capacity). However, depending on results from the resident engagement survey, the program coordinator might suggest starting with a smaller recycling capacity and slowly scaling up depending on resident engagement after program launch.

    b. The program coordinator will evaluate the property layout and try placing recycling and trash containers as close as possible, considering clearance for hauler pick-up, maximizing convenience. Depending on your property layout or other factors, this set-up might not be ideal and the program coordinator might suggest alternative locations for recycling containers. Nonetheless, avoid isolated locations for recycling containers as this might lead to misuse or low participation. Monitor container placement frequently to ensure the hauler's mapping of recycling containers on the property matches actual placement. Inform the program coordinator of any changes.

    c. Signage placement should be discussed with the city to ensure containers are clearly identified and residents can verify acceptable items for recycling.

5. Get information from the program coordinator confirming recycling pick-up start date.

6. Fact sheets and other educational material provided by the program coordinator should be handed out to property staff (maintenance, janitorial, leasing). It is key that all property staff has reviewed this information and can provide answers to residents when the program is officially launched. Recycling education / training should be made part of onboarding for janitorial, maintenance, and leasing staff. Property staff should be able to identify:

    a. Which items are accepted, common trouble items, and what to do if uncommon items are asked about. Reinforce use of fact sheets and the three core rules: keep food and liquid out, no plastic bags / bagged recyclables, and recycle only clean and dry items.

7. Two weeks prior to the potential start date send initial resident communication ("Recycling Welcome Letter" or email) announcing recycling program and potential service start date. Provide the Resident Recycling Guide to all residents: use property newsletter, resident app, text message service or any other method that is suitable for your property.

    a. Ensure the initial communication includes recycling container locations or link for residents to consult, what are considered recyclable items, and which are not.

    b. If budget allows, prioritize longer-lived educational material (e.g., reusable recycling tote bags and / or magnets) that can be distributed to residents at program launch. If not, plan which educational material will be used as part of the resident outreach campaign. If any material is intended to be printed and distributed, place printing orders so that it is delivered as program is set to start.

8. DPS will deliver the amount of recycling containers as defined by capacity needs during property walkthrough. Property staff will be responsible for placing them in locations agreed with the program coordinator during property walk-through. Committing to these agreed-upon locations is key as this is the information that Priority Waste will receive from DPS. Confirm areas are well-lit and access is appropriate for all residents. Any infrastructure work recommended by the program coordinator should be completed before the recycling containers are placed. Follow-up with the program coordinator to confirm start date; roll out carts one week before collection start date. As recycling containers are placed confirm:

    a. Signage has been placed as close to the recycling containers as possible; carts are clearly labeled.

    b. If necessary, place decals / stickers on the containers; use the City of Madison Heights' templates.

c. If carts aren't placed in an enclosure, consider whether they are secured in place or if a recycling area is created for the carts, binding them together to avoid relocation by residents might be necessary.

d. Consider resident demographics; if appropriate, translate signs and material and post multilingual signs in common areas and in the leasing office.

e. If overflowing is common, in addition to recycling signage the property might consider posting "No dumping / bulky items" signs.

9. Begin recycling collection / pick-up and distribute educational magnets, tote bags or any printed material that was ordered. As collection starts, property staff should regularly monitor recycling containers for two weeks. This will allow the program coordinator and property staff to determine if more containers are needed to increase capacity if recycling bins are overflowing or recyclables are being left outside of containers. Additionally, if high contamination is noted, the education campaign should try and reinforce what to do with trouble items. Check-in with the program coordinator once a week through the implementation period to define if service level / recycling capacity needs adjusting.

10. Launch resident outreach campaign, use educational material templates provided by the program coordinator to reach residents at least once a week. Use postcards, letters, door hangers, e-mails, social media posts or any other communication preferred by your property.



What You Need to Be Looking Out for - Main Challenges at Multi-Family Residential Recycling Programs

Contamination



1. **Tanglers:** plastics bags and tanglers (cords, hoses, clothing, string lights) are among the most problematic items at Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs), the place where your recycling is first taken to. They jam sorting equipment and machinery, slow down sorters and raise processing costs for MRFs. When possible, property staff should remove visible bags / tanglers if safe and emphasize “no bags, no tanglers” in resident education outreach efforts.



2. **Food and liquid contamination:** unrinsed containers, half-full bottles or containers, and food waste can spoil entire loads of recyclables. Staff should reinforce “empty, clean, dry, and loose”.

3. **Why monitoring contamination matters?** contamination (non-recyclable items or extremely dirty items in recycling containers) raises processing costs and may cause recycling loads to be landfilled. Active monitoring and addressing contamination issues in properties have shown measurable improvements in diversion and cost control. The property can benefit from periodically checking inside carts / dumpsters, identifying common problem items by location (e.g., which carts present these issues recurringly?), removing small problem items when safe, and trigger education outreach (e.g., emailing residents with reminders / notes on the enclosure, recycling station or door hangers in the building closest to that enclosure / recycling station).

Overflow and illegal dumping

Overflowing garbage containers make it more likely for residents to dump bulky items or trash in the wrong container. Overflowing recycling containers usually disincentivize residents from recycling as it makes them second-guess on where to dispose of their already collected recyclable items. Property staff should periodically monitor fullness levels and report capacity issues to the program coordinator. If this issue is reoccurring, a new capacity assessment should be made to determine if more containers are needed or if additional signage / education outreach is needed. Several multi-family recycling programs in other cities have found ties between regular monitoring, successful recycling contamination reductions and program success.

Unclear or outdated signage

Faded, missing, or conflicting signs indicating which items are considered recyclable are a common issue in multi-family properties. These issues can lead to resident confusion or cause new residents to avoid engaging with the program at all. Property staff should monitor signage, flag and replace as promptly as possible to ensure it matches the information provided by city staff.

Staff Turnover

Staff turnover can lead to newer employees not being familiar with the program or its requirements. Providing staff with concise and standard instructions or fact sheets will allow individual staff members to handle recycling questions consistently. Education material for staff and reaffirming the recycling program's importance during staff onboarding and team meetings can help maintain consistency across shifts and new hires.

Implementation

Property Onboarding Process and Participation Schedule	
Before Program Launch	
Note: The 3 steps before the recycling program launch can vary greatly timewise. Properties may take anywhere from 4-10 weeks to get to program launch.	
	Property Responsibilities
Step 1 – Program Enrollment	• Complete online survey to opt in Madison Heights' recycling pilot for multi-family properties • Review program overview • (**OPTIONAL**) Distribute survey to gauge residents' interest in recycling program • Sign Memo of Understanding • Gather / review data on resident demographics to determine if translations are necessary
Step 2 – Property Walkthrough	• Coordinate and go on walkthrough with program coordinator to assess property • Confirm with program coordinator tentative start date for recycling pick-up • Distribute program information and fact sheets to property staff
Step 3 – Educational Campaign Launch	**2 weeks before pick-up start date** • Launch program information to residents – "Recycling Welcome Letter" email, text message, residential app, etc. • Customize and place orders for resident educational material (magnets, printed material (e.g., new tenants' postcards), and / or any other material such as totes) **1 week before pick-up start date** • Signage and carts placed

Property Onboarding Process and Participation Schedule	
Recycling Pick-Up Program Launch	
	Property Responsibilities
Week 1 – 2 – Program Launch	• Baseline recycling container monitoring – Observe volume / contamination in containers • Distribute magnets / tote bags / longer-lived educational materials • Inform program coordinator of progress or issues: if recycling has been overflowing for the first two weeks it is likely capacity will need to be increased

Week 3 – 6 – Resident Education Outreach	• Launch outreach campaign – reach residents with printed or digital material (postcards / door hangers / information cards / etc.) and stagger over 4- week period For example:
	  ○ Week 3: information cards / postcards
	  ○ Week 4: text / email / resident app reminder
	  ○ Week 5: door tag
	  ○ Week 6: text / email / resident app reminder
	• Monitor volume and contamination before weekly pick-up
	• Inform program coordinator of status or issues
	• Continue to inform program coordinator if capacity is an issue, estimate overflowing volume and ask DPS for additional containers (1:1 garbage to recycling capacity at program maturity is ideal)

Weeks 7 – 8 – Post-Implementation Phase	• Monitor volume and contamination before weekly pick-up • Inform program coordinator of progress or issues • If recycling capacity had to be increased, ensure additional containers were ordered, received and placed
Week 8 and beyond – Sustaining	• Communicate with program coordinator and inform them of any issues or further needs to keep program going

Property FAQs

What will the program cost for my property?

In the City of Madison Heights this program comes at no cost for multi-family properties as these properties already pay a solid waste millage rate. Under the contract the city has with Priority Waste, recycling pick-up for these properties is covered and paid for with the tax collected through the solid waste millage rates. Rather than representing an additional cost, this program allows properties to effectively receive a service they are already paying for. If you want to know more on the millage rates or your property's contributions, use the Tax search in this link

Will there be an additional service fee for recycling pick-up at my property?

Your property won't have to pay additional fees for the recycling pick-up service. This service is covered through the solid waste millage rate your property pays. In fact, it may actually reduce the amount of trash that you pay to dispose of, or the frequency of service.

Is my property responsible for procuring the recycling containers?

No. Madison Heights' Department of Public Services will contact the cart provider and place an order for containers according to the estimated needs for your property.

Am I responsible for contacting Priority Waste (hauler) to start service?

No. Madison Heights' Department of Public Services (DPS) will contact Priority Waste and coordinate recycling pick-up for your property. DPS staff will inform your property on the start date and scheduled weekly service.

What will my property be responsible for?

Your property will be responsible for placing carts in the agreed upon locations. Your property will also be responsible for carts and signage maintenance as well as a more in-depth monitoring of recycling areas twice a year. Biannual education refreshers on the recycling program are to be provided to residents.

Who should I contact if I need more carts / my carts are damaged / I'm having other issues?

Contact DPS and inform them if you need help with any of these things. If heavily damaged, the carts have a 10-year guarantee. If the damage is minor DPS can replace damaged parts. If carts go missing or are stolen the property will have to pay for new carts.

Part B: Onboarded Properties

Program Continuity

As the program becomes a part of your property, you should be in regular communication with the city's program coordinator. If the estimated initial capacity levels were insufficient and additional containers were ordered, ensure they were placed and the city was informed of their location to convey that information to Priority Waste. Once you have enrolled in the program, long-term success will be determined by your property's ability to maintain recycling areas clean and accessible. Recycling containers should be monitored for contamination, and periodic outreach is a great way to ensure residents have the appropriate tools despite turnover.

Monitor for illegal dumping or littering around the recycling areas, it is likelier that residents will be discouraged from recycling if they notice areas are not maintained or other residents seem to not be following basic guidelines. During the winter months areas should be easily accessible; enclosures, recycling areas or pathways to containers should be shoveled and containers' lids must be kept down to avoid damage to recyclable items inside.

Embedding recycling into day-to-day property operations and maintaining regular communication with the program coordinator will ensure program continuity. Aside from monitoring contamination, area cleanliness, ease of access, and container placement, it is key to maintain signage. If necessary, change anything that has been damaged or is faded.

Just like newly hired staff needs to be trained in the program, new tenants need to receive program information including recycling expectations in move-in packets. The program will likely drift or degrade if routine recycling check-ins and maintenance are not treated like an essential part of the property's operations. Checking in with the program coordinator, periodic signage and outreach refreshers, and using simple monitoring forms help guarantee that service levels stay appropriate as occupancy or waste generation changes.

Involve the property's residents and ask for their feedback once a year; periodic feedback from maintenance staff can also be valuable. An annual survey is an easy way to measure engagement and ask questions; the main objective is to assess what is working and what is not. The easier you make it for residents to understand the program and become excited about it, the likelier it is the program will be successful in your property. As you receive feedback make sure to pass it along to the program coordinator, this will allow Madison Heights to update and rework this guideline to provide better service to properties enrolling in the future.

Make sure to keep in touch with the program coordinator as they may provide updated guidance or instructions if service or hauler were to change. The city will periodically update educational materials and can be a reliable partner if challenges arise with contamination, illegal dumping or access issues. Open and regular communication will also ensure the property stays in compliance with any revised local ordinances. In the future, the property may also benefit from incentives, recognition programs, or other pilot opportunities as Madison Heights looks to create a more robust recycling and sustainability program.

Finally, although monitoring of your recycling containers / stations might be a demanding task, it is essential for a successful program on your property. Instead of relying on assumptions, as property manager you will only be able to tell whether the program is actually working, where problems are concentrated, and which solutions are viable through monitoring. Tracking container fullness, contamination, and asking for resident feedback allow for crucial adjustments. Regular monitoring will also show residents the property is making an effort to make a real difference; seeking feedback ensures it is seen as a joint effort and communicating with the city supports program transparency while informing the program for future improvement.

Monitoring and Data

During recycling pick-up program launch, properties are encouraged to make an effort to monitor containers / stations once a week before hauler pick-up. The first two weeks of monitoring are essential to provide property management with a baseline of recycling practices and engagement in the property. It is only through monitoring that the property will be able to assess if estimates of initial capacity are appropriate or if they should be revised. Monitoring in weeks 3 to 6 will confirm if the property needs to scale up capacity or if educational outreach has improved what is being placed in the recycling containers and its quality.

After the educational campaign has been completed, the property should commit to monitoring recycling containers / stations twice a year at minimum. The approximate dates in which this will happen need to be communicated to the program coordinator. These assessments will help both property management and program coordinator address any issues that may have emerged due to weather, infrastructure, signage, or other damage.

Some key indicators the property should note in the monitoring events:

- Container fullness levels that show consistent use
- Recyclables volume collected as compared with baseline
- Visible contamination
- Illegal dumping / littering

The program coordinator will provide your property with a template checklist that can be used to easily track these metrics. After each monitoring event, the property should reach residents with a recycling reminder. If your property identifies any unusual or major changes in resident turnover, it might be worth refreshing education even if the yearly refreshers have already been done. For these refreshers you may consider simply sharing the recycling guidelines once again or customizing templates to create new material.

Resident FAQs

Where are the recycling bins located and what day is recycling pick-up?

Please visit the city website by scanning the QR code in the property fact sheet to find where the recycling container are located and the collection schedule. The recycling containers are blue and are labeled as recycling containers. Please follow instructions on guidelines and signage on which items are allowed.

What exactly can I put in the recycling?

Use the list of accepted and non-accepted materials for recycling, avoid "wish-cycling." If unsure about an item, you can check https://recyclingraccoons.org/ for more information.

Do I have to rinse and / or dry containers?

Ideally. Items should be empty, quickly rinsed and checked to be free of food / liquid residue before going in the recycling. This prevents residues from contaminating other recyclables, ensuring material quality is not compromised, and not attracting pests.

Should cardboard go in the recycling cart?

All cardboard must go in the recycling cart / dumpster, flattened, and cut down if needed so it fits loosely in the cart. Remove all packing materials (Polystyrene, plastic wrap, air pillows) and put them in the trash. Avoid jamming cardboard into the cart /container as it may not empty properly and make it difficult for hauler pick-up. The City's contract is explicit in that only materials in the cart will be collected so don't place anything outside of the cart.

Can I use plastic bags to collect recycling?

You can collect items in any container / bag in your unit, but all items must be dumped loose into the main recycling cart. You can reuse the plastic bag, throw it away in the trash, or ideally take it to a store for flexible plastic drop-off. No bags or film go in the recycling cart. To find the nearest drop-off locations for plastic bags or film use: https://plasticfilmrecycling.org

What about electronics, batteries, paint, or chemicals?

None of these items should be disposed of in property recycling or trash. Review the list of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) items on the Recycling Right – Resident Guide. If you want to dispose of any of these items, please visit https://ergenvironmental.com

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pilot Property: Lexington Village Apartments



Lexington Village Apartments is an 872-unit apartment complex located at 32000 Concord Dr Madison Heights; it is a garden-style multi-family property with close to 100 buildings. Before program launch the property had 16 waste enclosures (circled in red) placed throughout the property. In each enclosure there were one to two 5-yard dumpsters. One dumpster placed around the bulky-item collection area was not enclosed.

This property was selected to launch the pilot program in Madison Heights as property management had voiced to city staff deep interest in providing such a program to their residents.

Program Design

Capacity

Using the capacity calculator found in the program design section of this guidebook, the estimated needs for this property was of:

$$\mathbf{11}\ \boldsymbol{gallons\ per\ unit\ per\ week}\ \times\ \mathbf{872}\ \boldsymbol{units}$$

$$=\ \mathbf{9592}\ \boldsymbol{gallons\ per\ week}$$

It is important to note that as Madison Heights contract with Priority Waste is currently a “Cart-Only” program, the city can only provide multi-family properties with 96-gallon recycling carts and not dumpsters. According to the calculation, the property would have needed close to 100 recycling carts to meet the estimated capacity. However, a decision was made to start with a much smaller capacity providing the property with 20 carts or 1/5 of the estimate.

Starting with less capacity will mainly allow to understand the impact of program take-up among residents and would allow both the property and city to devout less resources towards monitoring needs. Increasing capacity as demand for the service increases will also allow the program coordinator to refine the capacity estimates for future properties. Madison Heights will follow-up closely with property management to understand how the program is coming along and will order additional carts as they are needed to eventually meet the estimate.

Convenience and Access

While visiting the property it was evident the enclosures did not have enough space to accommodate the recycling carts inside. Property management was very open to place the carts in 4 designated areas, “Recycling Stations” throughout the property.



Photos by author

By having the carts grouped, it would also be easier to place signage to clearly identity these as recycling container along with a list of accepted materials for recycling. Carts would be placed at enough of a distance from dumpsters to avoid residents being confused that these might be additional trash collection containers. Placing the carts in open spaces would also provide the hauler with additional clearance making pick-up easier.

Monitoring and Data Measurement

Monitoring and data measurement will start at a very basic level to ensure it is manageable for property staff. Setting too strict requirements from the start might drive properties away from the program at first and since the city doesn’t yet have dedicated resources towards this program it is not a possibility for the city to acquire these responsibilities. Options trying to engage residents as recycling champions that can help with monitoring have been pitched to property management and remain a viable possibility for monitoring at program launch.

Education Material

The city used grant money from the Michigan Recycling Coalition to order and print some material, including fridge-magnets that are to be provided to residents at program launch. Additionally, city staff will provide property management with outreach material including a resident guide to recycling, factsheets, postcards, flyers, door-hangers, which will be used in the outreach campaign to educate residents as defined in the implementation plan.

Appendix 2 – Which items are recyclable?

RECYCLABLE Items

- Glass jars – empty, clear and colored.
- Glass bottles – empty, clear and colored.
- Plastic bottles – empty, clear and colored.
- Plastic cups – clear only.
- Paper cups – hot or cold cups with plastic linings. **No lids or straws.**
- Plastic (rigid) containers – empty jugs, storage and tubs. **No plastic bags or foam**.
- Cartons / containers – empty juice or milk containers, egg cartons, cereal boxes.
- Cardboard – flattened shipping boxes (ideally cut down to better fit in carts) and box board. **Clean pizza box tops** can be recycled, anything stained with grease is not recyclable.
- Paper – looseleaf paper, newspaper, magazines, paper packaging and junk mail.
- Metal – empty cans, aerosol cans, aluminum / tin.

How should recyclable items be prepared?

Ideally items should be empty, clean, dry, and loose (not in plastic / paper bags). Why?

Empty: Leftover food or liquid can leak onto paper and cardboard, turning recyclables into garbage and leading to recycling loads being rejected as ***contaminated***.

Clean, dry items: It makes it easier for sorting staff and equipment to handle; this helps keep the recycling value chain financially viable.

Loose items (not bagged): Allows materials to be sorted by machinery; bagged items are often treated as trash or may cause jams when the bags tangle in the machinery and other equipment.

Flatten all cardboard; remove packing materials. Why?

Flattening boxes: Saves space in carts, allows more recyclables to be collected per trip and reduces costs and emissions. Unflattened boxes can block cart openings and slow down the sorting process once they get to MRFs, increasing risk for operators. Additionally, when operators pull cardboard boxes from the recycling stream to flatten them, other viable material might get pulled out and lost to the recycling process.

Removing packing materials: Removing plastic wrap, foam, and other non-recyclable packing materials prevents contamination of cardboard and reduces manual sorting work at the facility.

No plastic bags or "tanglers" (cords, string lights, hangers, hoses). Why?

Flexible items: Plastic bags, plastic wrappers, cords, and hoses wrap around machinery at Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs), forcing shutdowns while workers remove them; this is dangerous and expensive. Cords and hoses should be dumped in the trash. Plastic bags and other flexible plastics can be dropped off at participating stores, use this link to verify nearby locations: https://plasticfilmrecycling.org

NON-RECYCLABLE Items

- Polystyrene and / or foam – packaging and food containers
- Plastic bags or film
- Plastic packaging and / or bubble wrap
- Plastic cups or silverware
- Hangers – metal or plastic
- Textiles (clothing, sheets, shoes)
- Diapers
- Electronics
- Paints
- Chemicals
- Greasy cardboard or paper (bottoms of pizza boxes)
- String lights, cords, hangers, cables or hoses
- Batteries (hazardous waste drop-off) – should not be disposed in trash nor recycling

If residents or staff are unsure or have doubts on whether a specific item is recyclable, direct them to the Recycling Raccoons search tool to check specific items and avoid “wish-cycling”:
https://recyclingraccoons.org/

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