



## *Recycling Advocate's Toolkit*

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How to advocate for a recycling program in your apartment building, office building or condominium

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*Created by the Recycling Alliance of Philadelphia as part of the RecycleNOW Philadelphia campaign.*

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[www.recyclenowphiladelphia.org](http://www.recyclenowphiladelphia.org)



## Table of Contents

Current: 6/10/2009

- 1) Overview
- 2) Why Recycle?
- 3) Apartments, Condominiums, Office Buildings and Recycling in Philadelphia
- 4) Recyclable Materials Targeted for Collection
- 5) Eight Steps to Becoming an Effective Recycling Advocate

### Supporting Materials:

- A. Advocate Pledge Card
- B. RecycleNOW Petition
- C. Postcard Petition
- D. Questionnaires
  1. Apartment and Condominium Background Survey
  2. Office Workplace Background Survey
- E. *"Complex Recycling Issues: Strategies for Record-Setting Waste Reduction in Multi-Family Dwellings"*
- F. *"Recycling: It starts with you: A Guide to Recycling at Work"*

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## Want recycling in your Apartment, Condominium or Workplace? Demand it.

### Are you a tenant or office worker who wants to recycle but can't?

Are you frustrated because recycling is not offered in your apartment, condominium or the office where you work? Have you been told the city doesn't offer service and the management won't? Have you been told recycling is sorted from the trash at a mystery location or that for whatever reason, it just *can't be done*?

### Are you a building manager or owner wants to recycle but:

You have no space in your building to store recycling or been told by your hauler all trash is sorted "back at the plant"? Are you reluctant to invest the time and money to set up a program that no one uses? Have you discovered that the hauler picks up recycling and trashes it? Or are you just not sure how to get started?

Well, know this: Both state and city law mandate recycling by all residents and commercial establishments – no exceptions. The city provides collection service for all residential establishments under six units. Managers of apartment buildings, office buildings and condominiums – all considered commercial establishments - are required to perform specific tasks (see sidebar) or be subject to fines of up to \$300 per offense.

In short, apartment and office building landlords, property managers and condominium associations - not the City of Philadelphia - are responsible for providing recycling programs for their tenants. Despite the law and its enforcement, recycling will not happen until it becomes a priority for the tenants and building managers and owners. **Just as it took a coordinated effort among Philadelphians to**

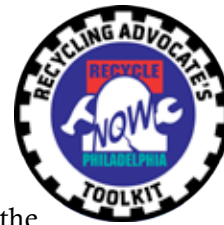
**demand citywide, weekly curbside collection for single-family residents, those of us who live or work in these commercial establishments must work together with owners and managers to make recycling happen**

All Commercial Establishments are required to

- Prepare post and distribute a plan describing the building's recycling program. This recycling plan must also be submitted to the City of Philadelphia.
- Provide suitable receptacles for the collection and storage of trash and recyclables including glass, metal and plastic food and beverage containers, newsprint, ledger paper and cardboard containers.
- Arrange for collection by a properly licensed hauler or recycling company (NOTE: There are NO haulers in Philadelphia licensed to sort recycling from mixed trash).
- Provide information to each resident or tenant on why and how to participate in the program, changes as they might occur and how the program is progressing.

Commercial buildings that do not follow these regulations are subject to fines of up to \$300 per offense by uniformed S.W.E.E.P. (Streets & Walkways Education and Enforcement Program) Officers.

The Recycling Alliance of Philadelphia's RecycleNOW Campaign is focusing on bringing apartments, condominiums and office buildings into compliance with Philadelphia's commercial recycling regulations. The campaign will work with volunteers from non-compliant buildings and provide them with the tools and support to successfully advocate for recycling in their workplace,



apartment, or condominium. The campaign will also direct building managers and owners to the technical assistance they need to make recycling happen

### **RecycleNOW Philadelphia Campaign for Apartments, Condominiums and Office Buildings**

To advocate for increased recycling in apartments, condominiums and offices, the campaign's four point strategy will:

- Enlist volunteers among residents/tenants in apartments, condominiums and office buildings.
- Organize workshops to teach volunteers how to become recycling advocates and help them formulate and execute plans to support building managers and owners to make recycling happen in each of their buildings.
- Identify and praise as examples those apartments, condominiums, office buildings and property management companies who offer recycling to their residents and tenants.
- Represent advocates and compliant building managers before the media, the Nutter Administration and legislative bodies to provide support and enforcement of recycling programs at all commercial establishments across the city.

## **Why Recycle?**

***Recycling provides opportunity to reduce cost.*** A properly sized waste collection matched with an effective recycling program will substantially reduce the amount of trash generated and lower waste management costs for most commercial establishments.

***Recycling spurs economic growth.*** Recycling industries provide jobs for Philadelphians and help boost our city's economic growth by increasing the tax base. In Pennsylvania, 3,803 recycling and reuse establishments employ 52,316 people, with a total annual payroll of nearly \$2.1 billion. Total annual sales receipts for these industries were \$20.5 billion. The employment, payroll and sales numbers are more than any other state in the nation<sup>1</sup>.

***Recycling is good for the environment.*** The benefits of recycling are found at every stage of the life cycle of a consumer product—from the mining of raw materials through use and final disposal. By redirecting waste to serve as raw materials for industry, recycling provides a number of important benefits:

- Reducing air and water pollution caused by landfills and incinerators
- Conserving natural resources such as water, trees and oil
- Saving energy by reducing the need to extract and process “virgin” raw materials to manufacture new products
- Reducing greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide

***And, It's the Law.*** On July 5, 1994, Philadelphia approved commercial regulations that require recycling in the commercial, institutional and industrial sectors. Accompanying regulations require all city licensed private haulers to provide recycling collection services. Penalties for non-compliance can amount to \$300 per day per violation. These ordinances were developed in response to Pennsylvania law, which requires all municipalities with more than 5,000 people to adopt and enforce commercial recycling regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> Northeast Recycling Council, Inc., Recycling Economic Information Study Update, Final Report, February 2009, Table ES.1



## **Apartments, Condominiums, Office Buildings, and Recycling in Philadelphia**

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 655,000 residences in Philadelphia, housing around 1.4 million people. 111,300 of these residences are apartments or condominiums with five units or more, accounting for about 17 percent of Philadelphia's households. Based on an average 250 square feet per person, and 3.6 million square feet of occupied space, there are an estimated 14,500 office workers in Philadelphia.

It is the responsibility of building management to make the logistical arrangements to establish recycling programs. Like trash collection, formal arrangements must be made to secure a recycling company or waste hauler to provide the receptacles, a schedule of collection and guidelines for how materials to be recycled must be prepared for collection.

Collection guidelines are based on requirements set by the purchasing market or material processing center that accepts the required materials - not by the collecting vendor (see below 'Recyclable Materials Targeted for Collection'). The materials available and the configuration of the buildings result in programs that are organized differently in apartments and condominiums than office buildings.

### ***How Recycling Works in Apartments and Condominiums***

There is no single model or approach for recycling programs at apartments or condominiums because of variations in building size, layout, resident characteristics, and trash disposal systems. Some programs include yard debris and other recyclables while others collect only recyclables.

Some programs will require residents to deliver materials to a central location. Others provide collection from doorways, curbs or trash chute rooms. Buildings with no waste storage facilities must establish a two bag waste/recycling system that can be sorted as it is collected by the waste hauler.

Regardless of the configuration there are several common steps all managers are recommended to take to organize their buildings:

- Once a vendor is secured, collection points must be set up that are convenient to the tenants, providing clearly labeled receptacles adjacent to those for trash. Custodial crews must be oriented to properly collect and deposit recyclable materials separate of trash for collection by the vendor.
- A kick-off for the program should be launched with letters, phone calls, and in some cases an event. These efforts should be supported with ongoing communications including posters, flyers, periodic newsletters or bill stuffers and the like.
- Unlike trash collection, recycling programs must be monitored and managed to assure proper set out and continuous participation.
- New tenants must be oriented as they move in and existing residents periodically reminded of their responsibility.

In the most successful programs, residents are provided with reusable recycling collection containers, regularly informed of the program's progress and solicited for feedback to make the program more effective.



## *How Recycling Works in Office Buildings*

Office recycling programs follow many of the same steps, but differ from apartments and condominiums in terms of the material collected, collection methods, and how the program is promoted. In an office building, 80 percent or more of waste is highly marketable paper. Properly managed, a paper stock dealer will arrange to collect and even pay a premium for the material. In an office building, collections are most often serviced from each office by an in-house or contracted custodial firm.

The key to the success of workplace recycling is effective promotion program and employee participation and full involvement and orientation of the custodial staff. Providing recycling receptacles to each employee is the single most effective promotion tool. Single tenant buildings will have the advantage in that promotion programs and materials can be branded to the company. Multi-tenant buildings will be more complicated. Commitments will be needed by each tenant to encourage participation among their employees and generic materials will be needed for a promotion effort within each office suite. Providing feedback to tenants on how the program is progressing is a very effective way to sustain the program.

## **Recyclable Materials Targeted for Collection**

In Philadelphia, commercial recycling regulations require a minimum list of material to be collected as noted in the chart below. Waste haulers, as a provision of their license, must offer recycling collection services. All hauling companies provide receptacles - typically dumpsters or wheeled 'toters' - for trash and recyclable materials based on the requirements of the companies purchasing the materials. Multiple receptacles may be necessary - such as one for paper and/or corrugated cardboard and another for mixed glass, plastic, and metal food and beverage containers. Waste haulers using a single-stream processing center - such as Blue Mountain Recycling which process Philadelphia's curbside recycling - will provide a single receptacle for all recyclable materials.

Construction and demolition material as are also mandatory recyclable materials, including concrete, sand, gravel, glass, plaster, drywall, gypsum, lumber and other wood products and roofing materials. There are several vendors in Philadelphia licensed to take and recycle these materials.

Yard waste from landscaping should be removed by the landscape contractor. Motor oil is readily recovered by the automotive industry. Hazardous materials and infectious waste are not recyclable but must be handled and disposed by specially licensed haulers.

### **PHILADELPHIA'S MANDATORY RECYCLABLE MATERIALS**

- Newsprint
- Garbage/food waste
- Glass, Metal and Plastic food and beverage containers
- Concrete, sand, gravel, glass
- Plaster, drywall, gypsum
- Lumber and other wood
- Roofing materials

The following items must be recovered or disposed separate from trash:

- Yard waste
- Hazardous materials (regulated chemicals and pesticides)
- Motor oil
- Infectious waste



## **EIGHT STEPS TO BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE RECYCLING ADVOCATE**

### **A Guide for Tenants and Office Workers to Organize Support for Recycling in Your Apartment, Condominium or Office Building**

The goal of the RecycleNOW campaign is to get the management of all apartments, condominiums and office buildings in the city to organize recycling programs for their tenants. Beginning by working with small groups of resident advocates and their building managers and owners in 5 to 10 buildings, we will successfully engage building owners, management groups and condominium associations to implement a recycling program in their buildings. As a resident of an apartment building or employee in an office building, we invite you to join this effort and work to complete the eight steps below.

#### **1. Agree to be the “official” contact for your building.**

As the contact, you will be the main liaison between your building and RecycleNOW. You will be invited to attend educational meetings, and will be the liaison and organizer for other tenants in your building who are interested in helping.

#### **2. Form a “green committee” for your building.**

The second step is to recruit from among your neighbors or coworkers to organize your building. Don't work alone. Recruiting others will allow you to share the work, approach the management as a team, and in general have fun as we work together to make recycling happen.

So how do you do it? Reach out in casual conversation with your neighbors or friends. If you want to be a little more formal, ask a small group to meet with you over coffee or tea. You will find in discussing the need for recycling with other residents and friends that many feel the same way. Let them know what you have decided to do, show them what's involved and ask them to join you. The key here is to keep it simple. Are you still not quite sure or uncomfortable talking to people you don't (yet) know? Contact us and we can help.

#### **3. Circulate a petition among the residents to demonstrate support for a recycling program in your building.**

This is a very important step as a completed petition empowers you as the advocate to approach the owner or management of the building or condominium association to make the case for recycling.

It is recommended that you collect signatures by going door-to-door in your building. Where you are unable to reach everyone, leave the petition postcard with a phone number or email address, office or apartment number so they can get back to you with their support.

*\*A copy of the petition, handout and other supporting materials are enclosed.*

#### **4. Educate yourself about recycling.**

We have included helpful information in the Recycling Toolkit to help you.



First, review the enclosed reading material that will help you understand recycling and trash as it relates to apartments, condominiums and office buildings. In particular, if you live in an apartment or condominium, review the publication from the Environmental Protection Agency entitled, *“Complex Recycling Issues: Strategies for Record-Setting Waste Reduction in Multi-Family Dwellings.”* This document speaks with great clarity about apartment recycling with commonly asked questions and answers, planning tips and nine case studies from successful programs around the country. If you work in an office please see *“Recycling: It starts with you: A Guide to Recycling at Work.”*

### **5. Get to know your building.**

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire for your building. It will guide your research to gathering information about your building, most of which you will find by simple observation and looking over your lease or correspondence you get from the landlord or association. Talking to the building supervisor or custodial staff can be very instructive but beware: these are the people who will have to do the work and can be very negative. Additional tips about completion can be found on the questionnaire.

### **6. Utilize your resources.**

Once you have completed your questionnaire, contact the RecycleNOW Campaign to discuss making a plan to meet with building management. Be sure to have completed your questionnaire and read the supportive material.

### **7. Meet with building management.**

Schedule a meeting with the owner or management of your building or approach the condominium association. Contact a RecycleNOW representative to help plan the meeting.

### **8. Follow up.**

Stay in touch with representatives from RecycleNOW and attend support meetings with other advocates to share and learn.

Attend a meeting of RecycleNOW Philadelphia or a follow-up commercial recycling advocacy workshop.





## **RECYCLING IN APARTMENT, CONDOMINIUM OR OFFICE BUILDING A Building Manager's Guide**

- 1. Secure a vendor;**
  - a. Assess current services and recycling services offered by waste hauler**
  - b. Determine material preparation criteria**
  - c. Determine how materials will be stored for pick-up**
  - d. Secure promise of services**
- 2. Discuss intentions with staff and contractors (custodial company or/and facilities manager and waste hauler)**
  - a. Assemble or discuss program with facilities manager**
  - b. Review contract and waste collection procedures with custodial company; determine plan for participating tenants and custodial collection program**
- 3. Design the collection program**
  - a. Select and purchase or recommend receptacles for purchase by tenants**
  - b. Secure needed materials for custodial collection**
- 4. Develop a promotions program**
- 5. Meet with tenants or representative group**
- 6. Implement program**
- 7. Report on progress**
- 8. Provide support and re-orientation to custodial staff and tenants as needed**



## APPENDIX (Resource Materials)

- A. Advocate Pledge Card
- B. RecycleNOW Petition
- C. Postcard Petition
- D. Questionnaires
  - 1. Apartment and Condominium Background Survey
  - 2. Office Workplace Background Survey
- E. *“Complex Recycling Issues: Strategies for Record-Setting Waste Reduction in Multi-Family Dwellings”*
- F. *“Recycling: It starts with you: A Guide to Recycling at Work”*