



# MULTI-FAMILY RECYCLING GUIDE

For Multi-Family Property Owners and Managers

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Baltimore County Department of Public Works  
Bureau of Solid Waste Management  
[www.baltimorecountymd.gov/solidwaste](http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/solidwaste) · 410-887-2000



# RECYCLING MADE EASY

## Together we can do the right thing

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Multi-family buildings face more challenges in implementing a recycling program than single-family homes. Baltimore County provides most multi-family communities with once a week trash collection and once a week single stream recycling collection. Together, along with property owners or managers, we can be successful in building an active recycling program in your multi-family community—and the benefits are many:

- **Help your community and the environment.** Recycling conserves landfill space and saves scarce natural resources. It can also bring new jobs and extra income to the community.
- **Make your building more attractive to tenants.** Many multi-family building tenants want to do the right thing and recycle. A good recycling program can be a selling point for your property.

This guide is designed to support multi-family communities that currently receive Baltimore County collection services each step of the way, and to help make your property's recycling program a success. From planning to ongoing maintenance, this toolkit is filled with practical, hands-on instructions, print-ready materials and all the contacts you need.



[www.baltimorecountymd.gov/solidwaste](http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/solidwaste)  
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# ACCEPTABLE MATERIALS

## All recyclables can be mixed together

PAPER & CARDBOARD	METAL & GLASS	PLASTICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Newspaper (with all inserts)</li> <li>✓ Magazines</li> <li>✓ Phone books</li> <li>✓ Catalogs</li> <li>✓ Books</li> <li>✓ Computer paper</li> <li>✓ Mail</li> <li>✓ Paperboard (e.g. cereal, frozen food and shoe boxes)</li> <li>✓ Cardboard (flattened)</li> <li>✓ Milk Cartons</li> <li>✓ Juice Boxes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Aluminum and steel food and beverage cans</li> <li>✓ EMPTY aerosol cans</li> <li>✓ Aluminum foil</li> <li>✓ Aluminum pie pans</li> <li>✓ Glass bottles and jars (all colors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Narrow-neck plastic bottles and jugs (♻️ - ♻️ recycling symbol)</li> <li>✓ Wide-mouth plastic containers (e.g. butter, cottage cheese, peanut butter and yogurt containers)</li> <li>✓ Rigid plastics (e.g. buckets, drinking cups, flower pots, kiddie pools, toys, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p>ITEMS NOT ACCEPTED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Plastic bags</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Light bulbs</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ CD jewel cases</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Styrofoam™ </li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Ceramics</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Motor oil containers</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ "Clam shells" (e.g. salad containers)</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Drinking glasses</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ VHS tapes</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Used tissue/napkins</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Mirrors</li> <li style="width: 33%;">✗ Scrap metal</li> </ul>		

# STEP-BY-STEP SETUP

## Getting started is easy

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### Step 1: Schedule a Waste Assessment

If you currently receive collection service from Baltimore County, contact the Baltimore County Bureau of Solid Waste Management to request a free on-site waste assessment at your property. During the assessment, Bureau staff will evaluate the amount and type of waste generated, determine your building's recycling potential and recommend changes, if any, to your current service.

### Step 2: Adjust Your Trash & Recycling Service

Place recycling signs/decals (provided by Baltimore County) near the containers. Bureau staff can help you reorganize your trash and recycling areas, and coordinate with the hauler.

### Step 3: Plan the Program Introduction

Work with your janitorial and/or maintenance staff to familiarize them with the recycling program and their role in making it a success. Point out any indoor recycling bins in the common areas and how to service them. Next, choose a date to introduce your improved recycling program to your tenants. Make sure the recycling area is properly set up prior to this date.

### Step 4: Inform Your Tenants

Use a variety of methods to reach out to tenants about the program, about 2-4 weeks in advance. For example, you can place posters (provided by Baltimore County) on bulletin boards or near mailboxes, distribute letters and/or door-hangers to each apartment, and announce the event through emails or tenant newsletters. Include contact information for tenants who are unable to attend.

#### Give It A Try!

Provide your tenants with indoor recycling containers (6-7 gallons) to collect recyclables and carry them to the building's recycling areas. In addition, pair each trashcan in the common areas with an indoor recycling bin. A label placed on each indoor bin will help identify acceptable materials.



### Step 5: Continue Outreach

Check the trash and recycling areas frequently to gauge participation in the program and to identify any problems. Address issues and keep your tenants engaged by posting or distributing occasional reminder notices. Consider recruiting motivated tenant volunteers to help with outreach tasks, particularly if neither you nor caretakers are on-site.

# PROGRAM SETUP

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Where can I get the printed outreach materials?

All outreach materials mentioned in the Step-by-Step Setup instructions are provided by Baltimore County's Bureau of Solid Waste Management – Recycling Division. Most of the pieces can be downloaded at [www.baltimorecountymd.gov/recycling](http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/recycling). If you have trouble downloading, contact Rashida White, Public Information Specialist, at 410-887-2790.



### 2. What if my tenants don't want to participate in the program?

Some residents may be hesitant because they are concerned that indoor recycling bins take up too much room. You can address this concern by suggesting suitable spaces in the apartment to store both trash and recycling containers. Residents may not be fully aware of the program's benefits: recycling protects the environment, helps keep the building clean and attractive, and reduces disposal costs.

If recycling is already underway at your building, use the fact that other tenants are recycling to persuade newcomers. Again, recruiting residents already recycling to contact those new to your community may be very persuasive.

### Give It A Try!

Participation is best promoted through regular learning opportunities. Provide recycling information to your tenants at least once per year and to all new residents when they move in.



# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## Maintaining Your Program

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If you have kicked off your property's new recycling program, congratulations! The hardest part of the work is done. But don't stop there! Maintaining your program is key to ensuring long-term success.



### Keep the recycling area in good shape.

A clean and well-kept recycling area will help make recycling a pleasant experience for your tenants. Replace recycling posters and bin labels if necessary, and check the area frequently to identify problems.

### Get help from volunteers.

Consider enlisting the active support of motivated residents in maintaining the program, especially if management is off-site and there are no caretakers at the building. Volunteers can monitor the recycling bins, alert you to problems, and act as points of contact for other tenants. This is particularly important if your volunteers can communicate with non-English speaking residents of your building. Provide your volunteers with copies of the recycling postcard (available in English, Spanish, Korean and Russian).

### Solicit feedback and listen.

Invite comments and suggestions about the recycling program at meetings, through newsletters or word of mouth. Make it convenient: post your phone number prominently in the recycling and/or common areas, or put up a comment box. Check in frequently with the recycling volunteers and janitorial or maintenance staff. Respond to feedback and act on helpful suggestions.

### Keep your tenants motivated.

Occasional reminders of the importance of recycling help keep your tenants engaged. Boost their enthusiasm by posting the amount of materials recycled on a regular basis, along with a list of recycling benefits for the environment and community. Contact the Baltimore County Bureau of Solid Waste Management for these facts and for additional ideas. If your property has a bulletin board, create a designated "green corner" for this information.

### Celebrate success!

Reward your tenants for their efforts. This could be an acknowledgment in a resident newsletter, a posting on the bulletin board or a even a party—for example, on the anniversary of the program. If your property's trash bill has been lowered due to recycling, use some of the savings to buy refreshments for the festivity.

# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## Getting new tenants on board

It's important that you introduce new residents early to the property's recycling program to establish the right behavior before your new tenant has settled in.

### Include recycling in the lease agreement.

You can emphasize the importance of recycling at your property by including it in your tenant lease agreement as property policy. Also, if you choose to provide bins for your tenants, you may also want to add language requiring a deposit on the indoor recycling bins, which are returned when the tenant moves out.

**SINGLE STREAM RECYCLING COLLECTION**  
All acceptable recyclables may be mixed together for collection to be sorted at a single stream sorting facility.  
Contact your property manager or decision maker for details on how to participate.  
Caps, labels, lids, and rings OK for collection!

**DO NOT** use plastic bags to place recyclables out for collection. Also, **DO NOT** place plastic bags out for recycling collection. Plastic bags cause major problems with single stream recycling sorting equipment.

**Recycling made EASY**  
Baltimore County Bureau of Solid Waste Mgmt.  
410.887.2000 www.bocycle.com

	✓ WE COLLECT:	✗ WE DON'T COLLECT:
<b>METAL</b>	Aluminum and steel food & beverage cans, EMPTY aerosol cans, aluminum foil and pie pans	Propane cylinders, pots and pans, scrap metal
<b>GLASS</b>	All colors of glass bottles and jars	Dishes, ceramics, drinking glasses, window glass, light bulbs, mirrors, crystal, cookware (such as Corningware™, Pyrex™)
<b>PLASTIC</b>	Narrow-neck plastic bottles and jugs (with a ♻️ to ♻️ recycling symbol), wide-mouth plastic containers (such as butter and yogurt containers), rigid plastics (such as buckets, drinking cups, and flower pots)	Plastic bags, Styrofoam™, clam shells (such as packaging for toys and batteries, as well as salad bar plastic containers, CD jewel cases, motor oil containers, VHS tapes, plastic electronics)
<b>PAPER &amp; CARDBOARD</b>	Newspapers (including all inserts), magazines, phone books, catalogs, books, writing and computer paper, mail, paperboard (such as cereal, frozen food, and shoe boxes), cardboard (flattened), milk and juice cartons/boxes	Paper or cardboard covered by food, Kleenex™, foil gift wrap, photo paper

### Provide acceptable materials postcard.

If you have a move-in packet for new residents, make the recycling acceptable materials postcard a standard component. Briefly go over acceptable items. You can suggest some good spots in the apartment for both a garbage can and an indoor recycling bin.

### Point out the building's recycling area.

During the move-in orientation, visit the trash and recycling area. This is also good time to let your new tenant know whom to contact with trash and recycling related questions.

### Address move-in specific discards.

Chances are your tenant has moving boxes, packing materials and possibly other items left over after the move-in is complete. To prevent all of this from ending up in the trash, share the move-in tips and encourage reuse and recycling.

### Follow up.

Check in with the new tenant after a few weeks to answer questions about the recycling program and to provide positive reinforcement.

# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## Troubleshooting

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Even a diligently maintained recycling program may encounter some problems along the way. It's best to be proactive and work out the issue(s) before bad habits form or your tenants' motivation to recycle is affected.

When solving problems, request the assistance of the Baltimore County Bureau of Solid Waste Management. We are here to help!

### Recyclable materials placed in the trash and vice versa

Make sure trash and recycling containers are placed next to each other or in close proximity to make it convenient for tenants to use them properly. Check to be sure labels and posters are in place. Review do's and don'ts in a resident newsletter, at meetings, or post a notice prominently in the common area. Place the recycling brochure next to the notice to remind residents of acceptable items. Don't worry about being repetitious – residents are more likely to act on a recycling message when they see and hear it frequently.

### Non-recyclable items placed in or next to the recycling containers

These materials may include furniture and other bulky items, electronics such as computer monitors or televisions, or even household hazardous waste such as paint and used motor oil. These are neither recyclable through the curbside program, nor may they be placed in the trash (most household electronics are illegal in the trash). Advise tenants that proper disposal is their personal responsibility, not that of the property management. If this is a recurring issue, place a sign in the recycling area, listing the prohibited items along with appropriate drop-off locations. If necessary, post a warning that the area is under surveillance and threaten a fine.

### Property management is off-site

Lasting success of your recycling program depends on regular monitoring and upkeep. If neither management staff nor caretakers are on-site, it is highly advisable that you enlist the support of volunteer tenants as the "eyes and ears" of the program. If you notice particularly motivated residents, approach them about volunteering. You can also post a "want ad" in the common area to recruit help. Arrange to check in with your volunteers on a regular basis, and consider offering perks such as a small rent reduction or prizes.

## Scavenging

Scavenging is gathering or taking from discarded items. Scavenging often leaves the recycling area untidy and is sometimes noisy. It may also discourage your tenants from fully participating in the program. To deter scavengers, post a sign in the recycling area, warning that scavenging is against the law and punishable with a fine, and that the area is under surveillance. While you may not be able to afford 24/7 surveillance, encourage tenants to keep an eye on the area and to report scavengers to you or the Police at 410-887-2222. Another option is to request lockable dumpsters with domed lids that are less prone to scavenging.

## Tenant turnover

Make a thorough introduction to the program a standard component of your move-in procedure. If others are in charge of the initial contact with the new tenant, make sure they are well-informed about the recycling program and have all the tools they need.

## New janitorial/maintenance staff or property management

If there is a turnover in the staff or management responsible for the facility, pass on important educational materials, such as this guide, and whatever quantity of indoor recycling bins and outreach materials you may have. Give the new staff an overview of the program's history and performance, including level of participation, outreach activities and challenges. Most importantly, introduce them to your contacts at the Baltimore County Bureau of Solid Waste Management, the hauling company, and on-site caretakers or recycling volunteers.

### We Can Help!

The Bureau of Solid Waste Management can assist property owners and managers in educating staff about recycling free of charge.

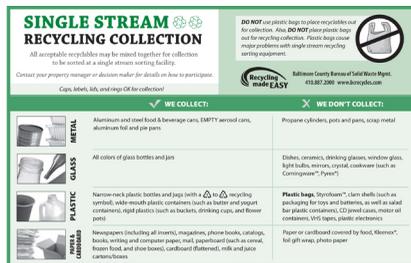
The Bureau can provide information through onsite presentations, literature, and is only a phone call away to address questions or concerns.



# RESOURCES

## Materials available for your use

Contact Rashida White, Public Information Specialist, at 410-887-2790 to request printed materials. Electronic files of these resources can also be downloaded at [www.baltimorecountymd.gov/recycling](http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/recycling).



## Postcard - Accepted Materials

Postcard showing materials accepted in Baltimore County recycling program for outreach to tenants. Postcards are available in English, Spanish, Russian and Korean.



## Decal - Accepted Materials

Decal showing materials accepted in Baltimore County recycling program, for use on indoor and outdoor recycling containers. Items shown in both English and Spanish.



## Poster - Accepted Materials

Poster showing materials accepted in Baltimore County recycling program. Post in common areas such as laundry rooms, lobbies, etc.



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