



Smart Recycling in Condos Can Save Money

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Currently, Metro Vancouver expects the Metro Vancouver area recycling rate to improve to 80% by 2020. All building owners and stratas will be able to help Metro Vancouver and other municipalities in BC get to their recycling goal while keeping recyclable items out of the landfill through two primary efforts: educating tenants about recycling and ensuring that both an adequate collection volume is available and that there are enough varieties of recycling material to collect. Now is the time to develop a recycling plan with goals, or to have your waste and recycling consultant develop one for you!

No two buildings are the same when it comes to diverting items from the waste stream. Owner-occupied buildings and co-ops will generally have higher recycling and food scraps collection rates than either rental buildings or condos with higher-than-average rental rate percentages. Demographics play a part in determining both the type and quantity of the waste and recyclables generated. Baby boomers and retirees have different waste and recycling stream amounts and types than do young single people. Buildings in urban and rural areas also differ in waste and recyclables volume and composition.

Smart recycling starts by determining the average diversion rate. Either the hauler or a waste and recycling consultant can determine the initial diversion percentage and, for a fee, regularly report it. Alternatively, you can calculate it yourself. To do so, you need to determine the average dry material yards for both waste and recycling, and then compute the percentage recycled. Regular reporting of the diversion rate to your tenants will help you to reach your recycling goals.

Recyclables also need to be regularly serviced. If the recycling carts or food scrap bins are overflowing, residents will toss the recyclables in the garbage – at a much higher cost to you. You can request additional or larger recycling carts from your city, usually at no added cost. The commercial hauler can, at a cost, increase the size of recycling carts or bins or increase your service to allow the collection of more recyclables. Having adequate available volume to collect recyclables will maximize the potential for recycling and save money by preventing recyclables from going into the costly garbage stream.

Positioning of the recycling bins forefront will emphasize recycling. If a waste bin is forefront, then some residents may be tempted to think garbage is an acceptable way to dispose of items. We need to change everyone's thinking if we are going to get to Metro Vancouver's goal of an 80% recycling rate. In the Netherlands, garbage bins are positioned the furthest away of all bins in order to emphasize recycling first – and it works! Re-positioning of the recycling bins forces the residents to re-think how they approach waste and recycling.

Analyzing the waste stream is also necessary for understanding what items people are tossing out that could be recycled. Haulers can provide additional bins, cages, or totes for new recycling streams, including electronics, batteries, plastic bags, textiles, Styrofoam, and more. Check out the downloadable recycling app called *Recyclepedia* from the Recycling Council of BC for a listing of recycling types. Additional streams of recycling helps us get closer to our goal.

Continually educating residents about recycling is the easiest and most effective method for reducing

contamination and increasing recycling. The most cost-effective and successful way to reduce contamination at a compost facility or a materials recovery facility is to ensure the residents are properly separating the recyclables. The hauler faces fines and loads are downgraded in value when loads taken to recycling facilities and compost facilities are contaminated. The hauler will also be fined if residents toss banned items into the garbage. Those fines are passed on to the customer. Contamination can also damage processing equipment and lower the value of the end product. Continual education and informative signage is a win-win for everyone.

With a simple and logical approach to recycling, we can increase our recycling rate and keep many more items out of the landfill. Many items are even banned from the garbage, such as stewardship materials, hazardous materials, oversize and overweight items, and food scraps, and can lead to fines. By smartly recycling and doing the right thing, we can help achieve the goal of getting to zero waste while potentially saving money and protecting the environment.