

Executive summary

June 2017

The Multifamily Recycling Project was a collaborative venture between Metro, the cities of Beaverton, Gresham and Portland, and Clackamas and Washington counties.



Project background and goals

The Multifamily Recycling Project was a collaborative project between Metro, the cities of Beaverton, Gresham and Portland, and Clackamas and Washington counties.

The project focused on gathering and analyzing a range of data about garbage and recycling in apartment and condominium buildings with five or more units, called “multifamily,” across greater Portland.

The purpose of the project was to define what opportunities for improvement exist in multifamily garbage and recycling collection related to policy, infrastructure, and education. Project goals included:

- ensuring access across the region to recycling services for people living in multifamily households,
- increasing the amount of materials recycled by multifamily households,
- ensuring the recyclable materials collected are high quality and therefore have value in recycling markets.

Project data sources

Multifamily service level data	The service volumes of over 4,000 multifamily garbage and recycling accounts were analyzed to determine the number and percent of sites with access to mixed recycling and glass recycling service. Median service volumes for garbage, mixed recycling, and glass recycling streams were calculated.
Multifamily program interviews	20 local governments were interviewed to identify successful multifamily garbage and recycling collection program characteristics.
Multifamily waste characterization study	The first regional, multifamily-specific waste characterization study to include measures on recyclables remaining in the garbage, contaminants in the recycling bin*, per household generation, and total generation.
Multifamily resident community interviews	Through culturally-competent contractors 54 low-income multifamily residents, and multifamily residents of color, were engaged to describe their experiences with garbage and recycling services.

*In this report the word “bins” is used to refer to all equipment used to collect garbage, mixed recycling, and glass recycling at multifamily sites.

Project findings

1. There is inadequate access to mixed recycling and glass recycling service at many multifamily sites. Capacity, or volume, of available garbage, mixed recycling, and glass recycling service is inconsistent from site to site. Less than weekly service of glass recycling or mixed recycling is problematic.
 2. The current collection equipment is inconsistent and confusing to those who use it.
 3. Contamination in the mixed recycling stream is high.
 4. Bulky waste is inadequately managed.
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Project options

Options that could be implemented with no policy changes

- A. Local Governments: Assist sites that lack mixed recycling or glass recycling collection to bring the missing material collection services to the site.
 - B. Metro: Provide reporting and data analysis to track changes in service resulting from local government assistance.
 - C. Project Team: Complete options for required weekly, per unit, service volume minimum standards for garbage, mixed recycling and glass recycling material streams.
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Options to be considered in development of the Regional Waste Plan

- D. Require per unit, service volume minimum standards (gallons/unit/week) for garbage, mixed recycling, and glass recycling material streams.
 - E. Require weekly mixed recycling and glass recycling service.
 - F. Set standard for bin colors.
 - G. Require use of standardized signage at all multifamily sites in the region.
 - H. Require regular bulky waste service.
 - I. Develop garbage and recycling collection area model ordinance or design guidelines for new construction and significant remodel of multifamily sites.
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