

# Chicago Recycles

## A Guide to Commercial, Retail, and Multi-Unit Residential Recycling in the City of Chicago

### Overview

Faced with the challenge of reducing our waste and conserving local resources, the City of Chicago passed the Chicago High Density Residential and Commercial Source Reduction and Recycling Ordinance in 1995.

The ordinance applies to residential and commercial operations that contract with private waste collection companies. The ordinance seeks to recover materials that would otherwise be thrown away, therefore reducing the amount of waste generated in Chicago.

The City of Chicago is committed to helping residential, commercial and office building owners achieve the mandated recycling provisions in the most cost-effective and efficient way.

### It's the Law

The ordinance requires the owner/property manager of every residential, commercial, and office building, restaurant, and bar to have a recycling program in place for tenants and customers.

### Three Items

Three items from the list on the back of this flyer must be included in your recycling program. In place of the third recyclable or in addition to it, your program may implement two measures designed to reduce waste at its source.

### Source Reduction

Pre-approved source reduction measures are included in the ordinance and listed on the opposite side of this flyer.



### Source Separation

The Ordinance suggests that buildings use a “source separated” collection program instead of a “post-collection” system. The program you choose should keep recyclable items separate from regular trash to ensure paper items are not contaminated by other wastes.

In order to qualify for a “post-collection” system, you must be able to show undue financial hardship and space constraint and provide the results of an analytical waste audit.

### Compliance

Compliance with the law is monitored and enforced by the City.

**Noncompliance may result in fines and/or suspension or revocation of business licenses.**

### It's Flexible

Flexibility is a key component of the ordinance. Building owners are encouraged to create a recycling program with their own tenants, keeping the building layout and collection service in mind.

If you can demonstrate through a waste audit that one recyclable material constitutes more than 51% of the weight in the waste system, your building will be permitted to recycle only one item. (The waste audit must be kept on the premises for a review during inspection.)

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## Recycling At-A-Glance

The City requires that all effective recycling programs:

1. Develop a program with a recycling service provider or waste hauler that is designed to:
  - collect at least three approved recyclables / OR
  - collect two approved recyclables and implement two source reduction methods.
2. Maintain an ongoing education program to communicate to residents, tenants, and employees about which materials the program accepts and how to prepare the materials for recycling.
3. Create and keep on file a written description of the recycling program, which must be available for review by residents, tenants, employers, or City officials during normal business hours.
4. Post signs in common areas identifying the materials to be recycled and the location of the material collection points.

## Approved Materials At-A-Glance

### Residential Buildings

- Newspapers
- Mixed paper
- Plastic containers
- Metal containers, such as aluminum, steel and bi-metal
- Magazines and catalogs
- Glass containers
- Corrugated cardboard

### Office Buildings

- High grade office paper
- Glass containers
- Catalogs
- Wooden pallets
- Metal containers, such as aluminum, steel, and bi-metal
- Mixed office paper
- Newspaper
- Plastic containers
- Corrugated cardboard

### Commercial Buildings

- Corrugated cardboard
- Glass containers
- Catalogs
- Plastic film
- Metal containers, such as aluminum, steel and bi-metal
- High grade office paper
- Magazines
- Mixed paper
- Wooden pallets
- Newspapers

## Ideas for Source Reduction

- Use renewable, refillable, or returnable containers
- Reduce consumer packaging
- Switch to wipeable or reusable signage
- Implement double-sided copying
- Use long-lasting, energy efficient lightbulbs and fixtures
- Donate surplus food or office materials
- Reuse laser printer and toner cartridges

**Before you contract for your recycling program, here are a few questions you should ask:**

1. What does your service include?
2. How should recyclables be prepared?
3. What is the schedule for collection?
4. Are there additional sorting and processing fees?
5. Is it possible to modify the recycling program in the future?
6. Does your program include an educational component?
7. Are the recycling containers leased or purchased?

## Next Steps & Resources

After your recyclables have been picked up, they are:

- sorted for processing
- sold to factories
- made into new products

For more information on the recycling ordinance, call 311. Or visit the web at [www.commercialrecyclingchicago.org](http://www.commercialrecyclingchicago.org).



Michael J. Picardi  
Commissioner  
Department of Streets and Sanitation

City of Chicago  
Richard M. Daley  
Mayor

Sadhu A. Johnson  
Commissioner  
Department of Environment