



## Recycling in Medium Residential Buildings

Recycling programs in medium buildings may share similar recycling practices with both small and large buildings and are typically based on the building's waste handling practices.



If residents carry trash to the dumpster, a recycling program can be easy to establish and participation will not require residents to modify their current practices. In the building shown in the photo to the left, residents bring trash and recyclables to dumpsters in the alley. One of the dumpsters is dedicated to recyclables and is clearly labeled.



The convenient location of recycling receptacles is important to consider if residents need to handle recycling differently from trash. In the building shown in the photo to the left, residents use the building's trash chute for waste, but recyclables are collected in totes in the parking area where residents frequently pass.

For maximum participation, buildings should consider all of their options when choosing where to place recycling receptacles. Even a small trash room, shown in the photo to the right, can be used to collect recyclables; however, this option may require maintenance staff to monitor chute rooms with increased frequency. Mailrooms, laundry rooms and meeting rooms are also great locations for receptacles.



### *Characteristics of Medium Buildings*

*Generally there are similarities within the structure of medium buildings (40 to 100 units) which tend to define how recycling practices are implemented. These characteristics might include:*

- *Walk up or elevator*
- *Property owner, building manager and/or condo board*
- *Common areas may include laundry areas, meeting rooms, etc.*
- *Single or multiple locations of mailboxes at entryways*
- *Maintenance staff available*
- *Cleaning staff for common areas*
- *Chute rooms may be used for trash disposal*
- *Trash/recycling collected both inside and outside of building*

### *Potential Tool Kit Accessories*

*Components of the tool kit which may be helpful in medium buildings include:*

- *Recycling Plan and Waste Generation and Recyclable Collection Worksheet*
- *Vendor Contact List*
- *Waste & Recycling Hauler RFP*
- *Tenant Lease Language and Condominium By-Laws Insert*
- *Sample Letter to Residents*
- *Sample Newsletter*
- *Sample Recycling Flyer and Poster*
- *Pledge Card*
- *FAQs/Fact Sheets*



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### Best Management Practices

The following best management practices (BMPs) promote efficiency and safety in multi-unit residential building recycling programs, especially buildings with chute rooms:

- Depending on size, chute rooms should be considered for collection of recyclables. Waste haulers can provide toters for collection of recyclables in chute rooms as part of the contract. (There may be a minimal monthly fee associated with the toters if a large number is required.)
- Any common area such as mail rooms, laundry rooms, meeting rooms, storage lockers, bike storage areas, garages and pools should be considered for collection of recyclables.
- Recycling containers are available in a wide variety of sizes, including minimal footprints, for use in small areas such as chute rooms.
- Any locations where recyclables are collected should be monitored by building staff at a minimum of once a day to ensure recyclables are not overflowing or near an ignition source. If small containers are used, emptying the containers on a daily basis may be required, dependent on use by residents.
- Below are some examples of important things to consider before placing containers; however, for specific information on fire safety, contact the **Fire Prevention Bureau at (312) 744-4762**.
  - Both the door to the trash chute and to the room itself should be free from obstruction.
  - Materials must be monitored, collected, and removed on a regular basis so that no excess accumulation occurs
  - Due to their combustibility, extra care and attention (such as increased monitoring and more frequent removal) must be paid to any paper or plastic materials being collected.
  - High-rise buildings that are required to have a Life Safety Plan should consider adding the locations of the recycling receptacles to the plan.

### A Success Story: Increased Recycling Rate with Single Stream Recycling

Several buildings participating in the Chicago Multi-Unit Recycling Project had successful recycling programs already in place, including a historic walk-up building with approximately 70 units. Recycling was a priority for the building and they had established a source-separated recycling program with residents sorting paper, some plastics and cans separately. An initial assessment estimated a 40% recycling rate - a recycling rate to be proud of!

The building was considering changing waste haulers and looked into other recycling options. Single stream recycling (combining all recyclables in one container rather than sorting by type) was chosen as it would be easier for residents to collect recyclables in one bag. After only a few weeks the recycling rate had increased to 70%. This could not have been accomplished without the help and support of the condo board and building manager, who both did a great job of introducing the new program and continuing to educate the buildings residents on the importance of recycling.

**The recycling rate increased  
from 40% to 70% after  
transitioning to a single stream  
recycling program.**