

# Mitigating Recycling Contamination

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**SCS ENGINEERS**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

SCS Engineers would like to thank the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) for their support of this project. PADEP's commitment to advancing recycling provides important municipal recycling technical assistance to local governments throughout the state.

# 1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Contamination issues are threatening the viability of Franklin Park Borough's (Borough) recycling program, particularly the drop-off recycling program at the Municipal Building. Contamination incidents result in fines that are levied to the Borough by the hauler, which unnecessarily increases program costs. The Borough has some measures in place to discourage contamination; however, to date those measures have not been successful in reducing contamination to the extent required by their contracted recycling hauler. Currently, Borough staff physically check the recycling dumpsters multiple times each day for contamination. Materials considered contamination are manually removed from the containers and disposed of property.

Additionally, the Borough experiences instances of unauthorized use of trash and recycling containers at Blueberry Hill Park and the Clover Hill Golf Course, and illegal dumping at the Borough's Yard Waste Site. This recycling technical assistance project identifies measures the Borough can take to reduce instances of contamination, illegal dumping, and unauthorized use at these sites. Modifying existing mitigation measures coupled with implementing additional control methods and initiatives should help the Borough manage their solid waste programs more effectively.

## 2 SUMMARY OF WORK

The following summarizes the tasks and activities completed for this project.

### **Task 1 – Data Collection and Site Visit**

SCS requested technical and operational information/data on the Borough's recycling programs. This information was received and reviewed prior to conducting a site visit and field observations. The site visit and field observations occurred over a one-day period in January 2020. This included meeting with Borough staff, visiting the recycling drop-off location at the Municipal Building, and touring the recycling/trash collection areas and Yard Waste Site at Blueberry Hill Park and the Clover Hill Golf Course.

### **Task 2 – Identify Options for Controlling Contamination and Unauthorized Use of Containers**

Using SCS's experience and knowledge coupled with our understanding of local conditions in the Borough, SCS identified opportunities for controlling and reducing recycling contamination at the Borough's Municipal Building drop-off site and illegal dumping at Blueberry Hill Park and Clover Hill Golf Course. Recommendations include administrative, operational, and educational activities that coupled together may help the Borough increase their control over the programs.

### **Task 3 – Develop Educational Materials**

Central to the success of recycling is education and outreach that informs residents in the Borough of recycling requirements and how to use the Borough's programs. SCS developed an example sign for the drop-off recycling site. This language can be used in other media such as the Borough's website, newsletter, or inclusion on a utility bill insert to further educate residents on program use guidelines.

### **Task 4 – Final Report**

The final task of this project was to develop this report that provides recommendations for controlling recycling contamination and illegal dumping.

### 3 CURRENT PROGRAM

Franklin Park Borough is located in Allegheny County near the City of Pittsburgh. The Borough's solid waste program serves approximately 5,400 households. The total population of the Borough is estimated to be about 14,500<sup>1</sup>. The Borough is a Pennsylvania Municipal Solid Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101) mandated recycling community. A number of solid waste and recycling programs exist to serve residents, including:

- **Curbside Collection of Trash and Recyclable Materials** – Through the Borough's contracted hauler, Waste Management of Pennsylvania (WM), residents receive weekly collection of trash and recyclable materials. There are no limits to the amount of trash collected from households each week. WM manually collects trash placed in bags and/or containers provided by each household. Recyclable materials are collected through an automated cart-based program. Recyclable materials are collected single-stream and all materials must fit in the 65-gallon cart provided by WM.
- **Drop-Off Recycling** – Located adjacent to the Borough's Municipal Building are four eight-cubic yard dumpsters for residents to place household recyclable materials for collection. This drop-off site complements the Borough's curbside program by allowing residents to recycle materials, mainly cardboard, that do not fit in their curbside recycling cart. Three dumpsters are designated for corrugated cardboard only while the fourth container accepts co-mingled recyclable materials such as plastic bottles and metal cans. Materials are all mixed together when collected by WM. The major focus of this study is to control and manage contamination in this program.
- **Yard Waste:**
  - **Drop-Off** – The Borough established a Yard Waste Site (Site) at Blueberry Hill Park. Yard waste drop-off at this site is available to residents from March 1 to December 1 each year. Materials accepted include brush trimmings (four inches or less in diameter) and leaves (contained in paper bags). Residents are required to obtain an annual permit in order to use the Site.
  - **Brush Chipping** – The Borough's Public Works Department completes a one-time pass through the community each spring and fall to chip branches and tree trimmings placed curbside.
  - **Curbside Leaf Collection** – Each spring and fall the Borough's contracted refuse hauler, WM, completes weekly passes through the community to collect leaves contained in paper bags for composting. Two weekly collections occur in the spring and five are completed in the fall each year.

**Figure 1** is a photo summary of the Franklin Park Borough's recycling program. **Appendix A** contains a summary of the municipal recycling requirements for Act 101.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau population estimate



Figure 1. Recycling Operations in Franklin Park Borough



Recycling Containers at Municipal Building



Full Cardboard Recycling at Municipal Building



Contamination at Municipal Building Drop-Off Site



Contamination at Municipal Building Drop-Off Site



Recycling Collection at Blueberry Hill Park



Yard Waste Site at Blueberry Hill Park

## 4 FINDINGS

### MUNICIPAL BUILDING DROP-OFF SITE

The following recommendations are provided to reduce contamination incidents at the Municipal Building recycling drop-off site.

#### Signage Content

SCS recommends that the Borough replace the signs currently posted on the recycling dumpsters. Current signs specify that the dumpsters are for corrugated cardboard. Signs also list specific materials that are prohibited from the dumpsters. The signs listing prohibited materials often result from contamination incidents from those particular materials. Current signage on dumpsters can be streamlined to facilitate proper use of the containers. Concerns over existing signs include:



**Recycling Dumpster Signage**

- **Multiple Signs** - Each dumpster has multiple signs with specific instructions or rules for using the containers. This requires users to review multiple signs posted across the front of the dumpster for complete information on how to properly use the program. This gives a cluttered appearance and makes it challenging for users to understand all program details.
- **Homemade Look and Feel** – Current signs were produced “in-house” at the Borough. Although homemade signs can be produced quickly with little cost, these signs do not project a professional or polished image of the recycling program, and may cause residents to think the program is not worth the time or effort to participate.
- **Overlapping Signs/Logos** – Existing signs overlap or cover up recycling signs, symbols, and logos on the dumpsters, which gives an unorganized appearance.
- **Lack of Consistency** - Signs are not always consistent from one dumpster to another.
- **Sign Designs** – The use of different font types, sizes, and colors can distract from the overall messaging of the signs.
- **No Graphics** – Existing signs do not include graphics to catch the attention of residents and illustrate acceptable or unacceptable materials collected as part of the program.
- **Wordy** – Signs often contain many words that could be modified and/or combined to use fewer words. In general, the more words on a sign the less likely people will read them.

SCS recommends that the Borough work with a professional designer and printer to develop clear, concise, and visually appealing signs that are consistent from one recycling container to the next.

Signs should state what material(s) is accepted for recycling at the drop-off site and include special instructions for preparing it for recycling (i.e. cardboard must be flattened, clean, and dry). It may be necessary to include additional information on signs; however, care should be given to not overwhelm users with too much information and words that would keep them from participating in the program. Additional signage information may include:

- **Unacceptable Material** – List and provide visuals to illustrate what materials should not be placed in the recycling dumpsters. The list should be limited to a small number of materials that often create the most contamination issues. The Borough’s hauler, WM, should be able to help identify what contaminants to highlight.
- **Contact Information** – Listing the Borough’s phone number or website address on a sign may prompt users to call if there are questions about the program.
- **Surveillance** - It may be necessary (or required) to state that the drop-off site is being monitored by cameras to track use of the facility. This would necessitate the posting of a sign with this information/warning.

Signs should keep words to a minimum and include graphics to add visual appeal. Prior to finalizing the design and printing of all signs, the Borough should contact representatives from WM to confirm that the instructions and requirements of using the recycling program are correct. Proper signage that includes the right information is one of the most important tools for the Borough to control contamination at the Municipal Building drop-off site. **Appendix B** includes simple sign text that can be modified for use at the drop-off site.

## Signage Location

Not only is the content of signs important for educating residents on proper use of the drop-off recycling program, but also the location and placement of signs is critical. A sign can be visually appealing and contain all the right information, but if it is in a location that is hard to see or an obscure location people will not see it.

Currently, signs are located in a couple of different places at the drop-off site. As indicated above, the majority of signs are affixed to the front of the recycling dumpsters. There are additional signs posted on the inside of the dumpster enclosure as illustrated in the adjacent picture.

SCS recommends that the Borough continue affixing signs to the front of the dumpsters.

This is the most logical and visible location to provide the rules and guidelines as residents approach the containers. Note that before affixing signs to containers, the Borough should discuss with the hauler an acceptable way to attach the signs. If the Borough needs to communicate the presence of



**Additional Recycling Container Signage**



surveillance cameras monitoring the site, this information could be posted on both ends of the recycling enclosure wall so they are facing the parking area.

## Access Control

Another important way to reduce contamination and misuse of the drop-off site is to control access. Currently, recycling dumpsters are available for residents to use 24/7 with no restrictions on when residents can visit and use the site. With recycling contamination issues increasing and the costs of illegal dumping growing, there is a trend of transitioning unmanned, uncontrolled recycling drop-off sites to manned, controlled sites with limited operational hours.

The Municipal Building recycling drop-off site is an uncontrolled, unmanned operation that experiences contamination issues on a weekly basis. It is recommended that the Borough take steps to limit access to the site. The most reasonable, practical, and cost-effective way to limit access to the site is to establish set hours of operation and install a gate across the dumpster enclosure that can be closed when the site is not open.

Installing a gate at the drop-off site is a simple activity that can be completed relatively quickly; however, there are some important considerations that must be addressed if new operating hours are established and a gate is used to control access, including:

- **Hours of Operation** – Establishing limited hours of operation for the site that balances serving the needs of residents while not creating logistical or operational obstacles for Borough staff is important. SCS's experience is that having regular hours of operation during the week is necessary, with added operating hours on the weekend being necessary to accommodate residents' schedules.
- **Communication with Residents** – Establishing limited hours of operation for the drop-off site requires the Borough to communicate to residents these new hours to reduce complaints and inform them when the site is closed. Information on new operating hours should be communicated several weeks in advance of the new hours taking effect. Multiple communication methods should be used in order to increase opportunities for resident awareness.
- **Opening/Closing of Gates** – Installing a gate to control access to the drop-off site increases logistical and operational obstacles for the Borough's recycling program. A staff member(s) must be tasked with opening and close the gate each day at set times. Additional complications exist to opening and closing the site at non-traditional times (i.e. weekends) if public works or administrative staff do not report to work. In these instances, perhaps an arrangement can be made with the police department to have an officer or staff member open and close the site. The police department operates 24/7 and their office is adjacent to the drop-off area. However, this task may be considered beyond their responsibility. If such an arrangement cannot be made, a timer can be installed on the gate so that it automatically opens and closes the gate at designated times.

## Container Modification

Another important way the recycling drop-off site at the Municipal Building can be modified to reduce contamination is to utilize different container types. Most dumpsters in use at the site are eight cubic yard open-top dumpsters. These open-top containers essentially allow residents to place most

materials in the dumpster, regardless of their acceptance or not. This configuration can facilitate the misuse of the containers and increase contamination.



**Cardboard Collection Dumpster with Slot Opening**

The primary material collected for recycling at the drop-off site is corrugated cardboard. The drop-off site complements the Borough's curbside recycling program in that oftentimes large, bulky cardboard cannot fit into residents' recycling carts. Rather than place this material in the trash, the Borough's drop-off site allows for residents to recycle this material. The existing dumpsters can be removed and replaced with similarly sized containers that have a slot opening on the front of the dumpster for placement of cardboard. The lids on these containers would be locked and the side sliding doors would be welded shut to essentially seal off the container other than for the slot in the front. The slot opening requires all cardboard to be flattened in order to fit in the container. There would be no way for bulky items, bags of trash, and other contaminants from being placed in these types of containers.

### Materials Accepted

The Municipal Building drop-off recycling site includes four dumpsters. Three of those dumpsters are exclusively designated as cardboard only containers. One dumpster is for the placement of co-mingled recyclable materials, such as bottles, cans and other recyclable paper.

The Municipal Building drop-off recycling site includes four dumpsters. Three of those



**Comingled Recycling Container**



**Materials in the Comingled Recycling Container**

Currently, the recycling drop-off site provides an opportunity for residents to recycle all materials collected as part of the Borough's curbside recycling program. Although this can provide a greater service to residents, it may not be needed. Opening up the site to accept multiple recyclable material

types not only increases the potential of non-recyclable material contamination, but also of recyclable material (i.e. bottles, cans, office paper, etc.) contamination with cardboard.

Since the drop-off site is designed to complement the curbside recycling program, SCS suggests that the site only accept bulky cardboard that residents have a hard time containing in their recycling cart. Observations at the site indicate that the quantity of cardboard collected is significant compared to collection of other recyclable materials, which can more easily be contained in a curbside recycling cart. SCS suggests that the Borough discuss with WM the benefits and challenges of modifying the drop-off site to only accept cardboard to understand how the change will impact operations and how the Borough pays for servicing of these containers.

## Enforcement

The Municipal Building drop-off site modifications discussed above should help to reduce instances of contamination. The changes will likely not completely eliminate contamination incidents. To address problems of site misuse that still might occur, the Borough must employ a robust enforcement program. An effective enforcement program prioritizes education, but when education does not work will identify violators of site rules and issue citations and/or fines when necessary.

The Borough's code of regulations should allow for penalties if someone is caught misusing the recycling dumpsters. SCS understands that cameras at the site already exist and can be monitored to identify perpetrators of violations. SCS suggests that the Borough first focus on education when violations occur, although each incident should be evaluated on its own. When the Borough can document education activities and a violator knowingly misuses the program a second time, it may be appropriate to issue a citation and penalty. Such a measure may be the only way to curb the actions of program abusers.

## Drop-Off Recycling Toolkit

The opportunity exists for the Borough to complete additional site reviews and analysis using the Anti-Contamination Recycling Toolkit (Kit) that was developed by the Recycling Partnership<sup>2</sup>. This kit is designed specifically for communities with established drop-off recycling programs to help improve the quality of the program. The Kit includes guidance on how to work with haulers and materials recovery facilities (MRF), instructions and tools for designing targeted messages, and strategies for measuring and tracking results. The Kit also includes links to resources for improving recycling. More information on the Kit is available from the Recycling Partnership's website at [www.recyclingpartnership.org](http://www.recyclingpartnership.org). An outline of the Kit is included in **Appendix C**.

## PARK AND GOLF COURSE COLLECTION

### Blueberry Hill Park

Blueberry Hill Park is centrally located in the Borough and is one of the premier gathering places for community events. The 87 acre park includes many recreational facilities such as baseball/softball diamonds, basketball court, football field, walking/running track, hiking trails, and a playground. Additionally, the park is home to a community activity center that can be rented for parties and other community gatherings. The park also hosts the Borough's Yard Waste Site for residents to drop-off select yard waste materials. There are also several dumpster areas that, although not open for public use, help manage waste and recyclable materials generated in the park.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.recyclingpartnership.org](http://www.recyclingpartnership.org).

## Yard Waste

The Yard Waste Site (Site) located at Blueberry Hill Park is an important component of the Borough's yard waste management program. The Site is open from March 1 to December 1 for residents to dispose of select yard waste, including leaves and brush (less than four inches in diameter). Residents are required to obtain an annual permit from the Borough to use the Site. The Site consists of two areas. One area includes a concrete pad where residents are to place bags of leaves. Signs at the Site indicate that leaves are to remain bagged and should not be placed loose on the ground. The other area of the site is covered in mulch and is designated for the placement of brush. The following recommendations may provide for proper use of the Site.



**Entrance to Blueberry Hill Park**

## Signage

Signage at the Site is neon yellow and is clearly visible upon entering. Information on signs is clear and easy to read; however, there may be key pieces of information that could be added to signs to help users understand how to properly use the Site. Additional information that may be helpful to communicate at the Site includes:

- 1) **Plastic Bags** – During field visits to the Site, SCS staff observed that some yard waste placed at the site were contained in plastic bags. Information on prohibiting the use of plastic bags to contain leaves and other material should be included in signage.
- 2) **Permits** – Residents wanting to use the Site are required to apply for a permit with the Borough. The requirement to have a permit helps the Borough track use of the Site and provides a direct way for the Borough to communicate with residents about the specific site rules and requirements. There is no fee associated with obtaining a permit or using the Site. The permit requirement for site use should be made more prominent/visible on signage at the Site.
- 3) **Commercial Use** – Commercial haulers or landscaping companies are not authorized to use the Site. A sign explicitly stating this may be helpful.
- 4) **Operating Seasons** – When the Site is closed for the season the Borough should consider posting a sign that indicates the operating seasons for the Site. Although a “closed” sign was posted, there was no indication as to when the Site would be open. Communicating that information at the Site may be important for encouraging residents to use the Site when it is open.

## Access Control

Although there is a gate at the Site, it does not necessarily keep people out. The Site itself is not fenced off and the gate only blocks the paved driveway. Because the drop-off location is off Blaine's Way, individuals can easily walk around the gate to deposit materials. If illegal dumping and other



site misuse occurs frequently it may be necessary for the Borough to provide additional access controls such as a fence to prevent unauthorized use. Additionally, the Borough may consider installing a camera at the Site to identify and prosecute violators.



**Bagged Leaf Collection Area at the Yard Waste Site**



**Brush Collection Area at the Yard Waste Site**

## Recycling/Trash

In Blueberry Hill Park there are at least three areas where trash and recycling dumpsters are located. Signs at each dumpster area indicate the containers are for park use only and not available to the public. Additional signage indicates that cameras monitor each area and that a \$300 fine may be issued if the dumpsters are used for non-park generated waste.

Despite these warnings SCS staff observed several dumpsters that appeared to have illegally dumped materials, including bulky waste, wood, and other non-park generated materials. Two options for controlling illegal dumping in these trash/recycling areas include:

- 1) **Lock Dumpsters** – One of the simplest ways to eliminate the unauthorized use of dumpsters at Blueberry Hill Park is to lock the dumpsters. Currently, these dumpsters are not locked and aside from signs indicating the containers are under surveillance there is nothing to deter people from using them.
- 2) **Construct Dumpster Enclosures** - Another option for the Borough to consider is to construct enclosures to contain the dumpsters. Enclosures would keep the dumpsters out of public view and would improve the overall aesthetics of Blueberry Hill Park. The enclosure could also be locked to prevent unauthorized access to the dumpsters inside.

Another opportunity for controlling unauthorized use of the dumpsters at Blueberry Hill Park, particularly in the off-season, is to have the dumpsters removed. During the off-season, little activity occurs in the park that requires the need for dumpsters. Removing all dumpsters, except a trash and recycling dumpster by the park Activity Center, would eliminate the containers filling up with illegally dumped trash.





**Trash and Recycling Dumpsters in Blueberry Hill Park**



**Illegal Dumping in Blueberry Hill Park**

## Clover Hill Golf Course

Clover Hill Golf Course (Golf Course) is a nine-hole public golf course located in Franklin Park Borough. The Borough contracts with WM to provide waste and recycling collection services from the Golf Course. WM provides a two cubic yard recycling dumpster and a three cubic yard trash dumpster to provide for the waste disposal needs at the Golf Course. The dumpsters are located near the Golf Course's maintenance building just off the main parking lot.

Similar to the situation at Blueberry Hill Park, the Borough has experienced illegal dumping in these dumpsters that have increased solid waste collection costs. SCS recommends that to control and limit access to the dumpsters at the Golf Course a dumpster enclosure be constructed to keep the containers out of public view. This will also improve the aesthetics of the parking lot area of the Golf Course. As an additional measure to eliminate illegal dumping, the dumpster enclosure can be locked.



**Entrance to the Clover Hill Golf Course**



**Dumpsters at Clover Hill Golf Course**



**Recycling Dumpster at Clover Hill Golf Course**

## 5 CONCLUSION

This report identifies opportunities and options for the Borough to obtain greater control over their Municipal Building recycling drop-off site and Yard Waste Site at Blueberry Hill Park. Improving signage wording and placement, utilizing containers designed for accepting only cardboard, and installing a gate are proven measures to help control contamination and reduce illegal dumping at recycling drop-off sites. Additionally, providing more information on usage permit requirements and the seasonal operation at the Yard Waste Site in Blueberry Hill Park can clarify how the program works and reduce illegal dumping or improper use of that site. A more costly measure would be to completely fence-in the site to eliminate access. Finally, to curb illegal dumping the Borough experiences in the trash and recycling dumpsters at Blueberry Hill Park and at the Clover Hill Golf Course, the Borough should consider installing and utilizing locks on the dumpsters and constructing enclosures around the dumpsters to limit access and improve the aesthetics of the Park and Golf Course.



**Appendix A**  
**Municipal Recycling Requirements of Act 101**

## **Summary of Act 101**

### **Mandatory Municipal Recycling Requirements**

#### **Overview**

Chapter 15, Section 1501 of the Pennsylvania Municipal Waste Planning Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101), outlines the requirements for large municipalities to recycle. Municipalities, other than counties, with a population of 10,000 or more people or with a population of more than 5,000 but less than 10,000 people, and a population density of more than 300 people per square mile, are mandated to recycle.

#### **Recycling Ordinance**

An Act 101 mandated local government must adopt an ordinance that requires recycling. The ordinance shall require the following:

- 1) Recycling at single-family homes and apartments; commercial, municipal, and institutional establishments; and at community activities.
- 2) A scheduled day, at least once per month, when separated recyclable materials are to be placed at the curb or similar location for collection.
- 3) A collection system, including trucks and related equipment, to pick-up separated recyclable materials from the curb or similar location at least once per month from homes and businesses in the municipality. The municipality shall explain how the system will operate, the dates of collection, the responsibilities of persons within the municipality and incentives and penalties.
- 4) Provisions to ensure compliance with the ordinance, including incentives and penalties.
- 5) Provisions for the recycling of collected materials.

#### **Residential Recycling**

Residents must separate for recycling at least three materials deemed appropriate by the municipality from municipal waste generated at their homes, apartments, or other residential establishments. Separated materials must be stored at the property until collection. The three materials must be selected from the following:

- Clear glass;
- Colored glass;
- Aluminum;
- Steel and bimetallic cans;
- High-grade office paper;
- Newsprint;
- Corrugated paper;
- Plastics.

Leaf waste must also be separated from municipal waste generated at residential properties and stored for collection, unless residents have already provided for the composting of the materials (i.e. backyard composting).

Owners or landlords of multi-family rental properties with four or more units must establish a recycling collection system at each property. The collection system must include suitable containers for collecting and sorting materials, easily accessible locations for the containers and written instructions to the

occupants concerning the use and availability of the collection system. Owners or landlords that comply with these requirements shall not be liable for noncompliance by occupants of their buildings.

### **Commercial, Municipal, and Institutional Recycling**

Occupants of commercial, municipal, and institutional establishments are required separate and store for recycling of the following materials at a minimum:

- High-grade office paper
- Aluminum;
- Corrugated paper;
- Leaf waste.

Occupants of commercial, municipal, and institutional establishments may be exempt from the requirements of this law if those persons have otherwise provided for the recycling of materials they are required to recycle. To be eligible for an exemption, the commercial, municipal, or institutional generator must provide written documentation to the municipality annually.

### **Community Activity Recycling**

Organizers of community events must provide for the separation, storage, and collection of high-grade office paper, aluminum, corrugated paper, and leaf waste at the events. Community activities required to recycle include events sponsored in whole or in part by a municipality or held within a municipality and sponsored privately. Events include fairs, bazaars, picnics, or sporting events that will be attended by more than 200 or more people each day of the event.

### **Leaf Waste Diversion**

Municipalities mandated to recycle under Act 101 must require residential and commercial establishments to separate and store leave waste for collection. Leaf waste includes leaves, shrubbery, tree trimmings, and similar materials, excluding grass clippings. These materials must be collected at least monthly. In order to comply with Act 101, mandated municipalities must at a minimum:

- 1) Implement an ordinance that requires leaf waste to be separated from municipal waste for recycling at residential and commercial, municipal, and institutional establishments, AND
- 2) Establish a scheduled day, at least once per month, when leaf waste is collected curbside or similar location, OR
- 3) Establish a scheduled day, no less than two times per year and preferably in the spring and fall, when leaf waste is collected curbside or similar location from residential and commercial establishments, AND facilitate a drop-off location or other collection alternative approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection that allows persons to drop-off leave waste for composting at least once per month. A leaf waste drop off site can be in a neighboring municipality or at a private establishment provided there is an agreement in place to utilize the site, and residents and occupants of commercial establishments are informed of the drop-off location at least every six months.

Municipalities are encouraged to manage source separated Christmas trees as leaf waste for processing at DEP approved composting facilities.



## **Public Education and Outreach**

Municipalities subject to the requirements of Act 101 must implement a comprehensive and sustained public education program. This program is to provide residents and owners/tenants/occupants of commercial, municipal, and institutional establishments with information on recycling program features and requirements. The educational program includes two features:

- **Initial Education** – At least 30-days prior to the start of a recycling program notify all persons occupying residential, commercial, municipal, and institutional establishments of the recycling requirements as contained in the ordinance.
- **Sustained Education** – Every six months the municipality must inform and remind all persons occupying residential, commercial, municipal, and institutional establishments of the recycling requirements.

Numerous forms of educating the public are acceptable and include:

- Newspaper advertisement circulating in the municipality;
- Public notice posted where such notices are customarily posted;
- Notices in other official notifications (i.e. utility bills);
- Website;
- Newsletter;

A combination of forms are acceptable and at least one form must be in print annually.

## **Implementation**

Municipalities may implement their responsibilities for the collection, transportation, processing, and marketing of recyclable materials in one or a combination of the following ways:

- 1) Collect, transport, process, and market recyclable materials themselves;
- 2) Enter into a contract(s) with other entities for the collection, transportation, processing, or marketing of recyclable materials. If contracting for recycling services, the entity being contracted is responsible to the municipality for implementing of recycling activities.
- 3) Contract with a landfill or material recovery facility, in lieu of a curbside recycling program, that guarantees by contract that at least 25 percent of the waste received is recycled. The technology utilized in this program must have prior approval from DEP.
- 4) Utilize a recycling facility that demonstrates that the materials separated, collected, recovered, or created by the facility can be marketed as readily as materials collected through a curbside recycling program. In addition, the mechanical separation technology used by the facility has been demonstrated to be effective for the life of the facility.

## **Exceptions**

The municipality is not required to collect, transport, process, or market recyclable materials or contract for these services if all of the following conditions are met:

- 1) The municipality is not collecting and transporting municipal waste from such establishment or activity.
- 2) The municipality has not contracted for the collection and transportation of municipal waste from such establishment or activity.
- 3) The municipality has adopted an ordinance as required, and the establishment or activity is in compliance with the provisions of the ordinance.

## **Act 140**

### **Requirements for Section 904 Recycling Performance Grants**

#### **Overview**

Act 101 was amended in 2006 by Act 140 to establishment requirements for the use of Section 904 Recycling Performance Grants.

#### **Requirements:**

Municipalities mandated to recycle under Act 101 and receive more than \$10,000 in funding from recycling performance grants must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Requires, through ordinance, that all residents have waste and recycling service.
- 2) Has an implemented residential recycling program and facilitates a commercial recycling program or participates in a similar county or multi-municipal program.
- 3) Has a residential and business recycling education program.
- 4) Has a program of enforcement that periodically monitors participation, receives complaints and issues warnings for required participants and provides fines, penalties, or both, in its recycling ordinance.
- 5) Has provisions, participates in a county or multi-municipal program or facilitates a private sector program for the recycling of special materials.
- 6) Sponsors a program, facilitates a program or supports an organization to address illegal dumping and/or littering problems.
- 7) Has a person or entity designated as recycling coordinator who is responsible for recycling data collection and reporting recycling program performance in the municipal or municipalities.

If these requirements are not satisfied by the municipality, then the grant funds awarded under this section must be expended by the municipality only to satisfy these requirements. If all these requirements are satisfied, then the grant funds awarded may be used for any expense as selected by the municipality.

**Appendix B**  
**Sample Recycling Container Signage**

# CARDBOARD RECYCLING ONLY!



## CORRUGATED CARDBOARD DUMPSTER RULES

- **CLEAN AND DRY CORRUGATED CARDBOARD ONLY**
- **NO PAPER** should be placed these dumpsters, including pizza boxes, office paper, cereal boxes, soda boxes, beer boxes, newspaper, junk mail, or magazines.
- **BREAK DOWN ALL BOXES** before placing in the dumpster.
- **LEAVE NO MATERIAL OUTSIDE DUMPSTERS** such as recyclable materials, trash, packaging, Styrofoam®, hazardous waste, cardboard, etc.

Please contact the Borough at (412) 364-4115 if you have questions on the program.

This cardboard recycling service is provided to Franklin Park Borough residents only.  
Please do not abuse this program. Thank you for recycling!

**This area is under video surveillance.  
Violators will be prosecuted.**



**Appendix C**  
**Anti-Contamination Toolkit from the Recycling Partnership**



# Anti-Contamination Recycling Kit

.....  
Improving Quality in Your Recycling Program

## A Step-By-Step Guide

We know that many communities utilize drop-off sites for dual- and single-stream recycling programs where curbside collection isn't always available. These locations are important for community participation and play a huge role in the volume and quality of the local recycling stream.

That's why we've created this kit for drop-off sites. Implementing this kit will help kick-start a better quality material stream, providing clarity and a more user-friendly experience for your residents. It will require resources, planning, and time on your end, as well as a partnership with your materials recovery facility (MRF) and hauler, but the benefits are many. Increasing the quality of the recycling stream can save on disposal fees, improve resident satisfaction with your program, and ensures the success and sustainability of the recycling system.

To get started, use this **ASSESSMENT FORM** to make sure your community is ready to take on this challenge. Before starting this project you'll need to assess your **BUDGET**, present your case to decision makers, and get buy-in from your MRF.

## DROP-OFF



### This toolkit includes:

- Guidance to help you broach this subject with your MRF and hauler
- Visual instructions and tools for targeted messages
- Tips to help you get the best results
- Tools to help you track and report results
- Quick links to resource documents



This Kit was developed in collaboration with  
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

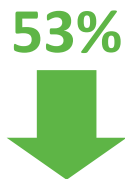
# KICK-START IMPROVED RECYCLING

This is not your typical education and outreach campaign. This program calls for:

- face-to-face interaction with residents at the site,
- clear and consistent signage for collection containers, and
- direct messaging to target the top contaminant.

Proven results from implementation of this kit have included:

- decreased overall contamination
- decreased occurrences of the most problematic contaminant



In one Massachusetts community, the specifically targeted contaminants – recyclables in bags and refuse in bags – decreased from 94 percent of the contamination by weight to only 53 percent of the contamination by weight, substantially reducing the overall contamination.

## TIP

Some communities are concerned that saying “no” to certain items would discourage recycling. However, where this kit has been deployed:

- customer traffic stayed consistent.
- users of the site were pleased with the upgraded signage.
- site managers expressed that the program was worth the effort.

**ARE YOU READY?** Use this **ASSESSMENT FORM** to make sure your community is ready for the fight against contamination.

**ASSESSMENT FORM**

click [LINKS](#)  
for related documents

## → STEP 1 GATHER THE FACTS FROM YOUR MRF and HAULER

Open lines of communication with your MRF and hauler are critical. Speak with them to find out the biggest problem materials in your recycling stream.



### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

WORKSHEETS

MRF SURVEY

CONTRACT  
CONSIDERATIONS

- Your recycling hauler contract
- Your MRF contract (if separate from hauling)

### TIP

Review your hauler and MRF contracts for relevant clauses. Material audits, education, and enforcement may already be built in for you to implement. Further, keep these **CONTRACT CONSIDERATIONS** in mind when your current contracts are up for renewal. Remember, written contracts are a fundamental best practice.

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Use these **WORKSHEETS** to guide discussions and set the work plan.
- Use this **MRF SURVEY** to guide your discussion and narrow down the top five problem materials. (You'll highlight these in many of your communications tools.) This is also a good time to verify that the MRF accepts the items listed on your current outreach materials.
- Name the top contaminant. This will become the central focus of your work to improve quality.
- Ask the MRF to periodically assess your contamination rate. You will need to agree on the assessment method and the frequency. Get a baseline contamination rate so you can measure against it later and track your progress. *Use data in Step 5 to track results, evaluate and adjust.*
- The Recycling Partnership strongly recommends you track your contamination and program performance data using the Municipal Measurement Program, or MMP, as a way to see trends year-over-year. Learn more at <https://recyclesearch.com/profile/mmp>.



## → STEP 2 PREPARE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

You've named your top contaminants. Now it's time to prep, print, and prepare to post.



### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

ARTWORK

CHECKLIST

BUDGET

- Mailing addresses for every household eligible to use the site.
- Your logo and preferred contact information.
- Your budget.

### NOTE

Each of these tactics serves a specific purpose, but you might have access to similar approaches more fitting for your community. Consider all of the resources you have to make this program effective in your community.

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

A consistent and clear message is important to ensure everyone understands their job as recyclers. Download **ARTWORK** and use the **CAMPAIGN BUILDER**.



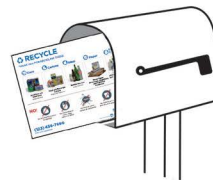
**Assess and update site signage.** Look at your site with fresh eyes. Is your signage clear and concise, or overly detailed? Is your site cluttered with signs? Consider updating your signage with clear messaging before starting this program.



**In-person feedback plus info handout.** Print handouts for on-site staff to start the conversation with residents. Be sure your staff is well-versed in the specifics of the new messaging. Make sure the top contaminants are clearly represented.

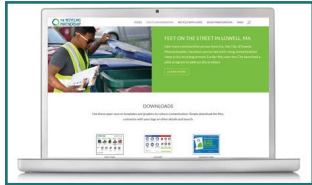


**Top issue signage.** Post eye-catching temporary signage about the top issue at your site, and leave it out for 6 to 8 weeks. A-frames work well for this, and because you can switch out messaging at a very low cost they pay dividends for years to come.



**Annual info card/promotion.** Verify that the acceptable materials and top contaminants are accurate. If your budget allows, print and mail cards to every household at the start of this program. (This will help build participation as well as inform on do's and don'ts. While this tactic is strongly recommended, it is optional based on your goals and budget.) To save money in the budget, you could post this card as a downloadable resources from your website. Consider using the budget to buy a newspaper or radio ad, or boost posts on social media. You could also use the budget to pay for a radio or newspaper ad, or promote it with boosted posts on social media.

## → STEP 2 PREPARE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS cont'd



### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

CHECKLIST

CAMPAIGN BUILDER

### TIP

Refer to the **CHECKLIST** often to ensure you are maintaining your timeline.

**Budget for deploying CORE TOOLS** – Speak to your local printer and/or sign maker for an estimate of costs.

See [Step 3](#) for more on staffing.

### Best Practices

For a successful and sustainable program, your messaging must continue beyond this program.

**Website.** It's likely that most residents visiting your website are looking for information on how to properly handle a particular item. Providing easy search functions for that information will help ensure that item does not become contamination. Or, consider adding an image of your annual info card to your website. Consult with your MRF to ensure accuracy.

**Campaign Builder.** The best option for creating a FREE, downloadable, ready to print, and easy to change annual info card and top issue postcard, for your drop-off site can be found through our **CAMPAIGN BUILDER**.

**Social Media.** Make use of social media and your website to remind your community how to recycle better. Look to [The Recycling Partnership's Social Media Kit V2](#) for 52 weeks worth of posts, images, and ideas.

## → STEP 3 IDENTIFY and TRAIN STAFF

Resident education alone will not improve your recycling stream. Direct feedback is key to improving quality because it reinforces the rules and helps recyclers know what they are doing wrong...and right!



### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Staff to talk to residents visiting your drop-off site on the busiest days and times.
- A training session for those staff.

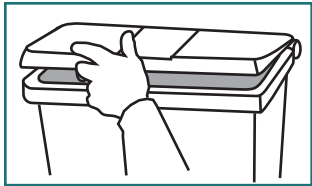
### WHAT YOU'LL DO

- a** First, you'll need to find staff. Look to existing on-site staff first, then to volunteers, and finally to temps or part-time hires. The ideal candidates will be helpful, friendly, likable and chatty.
- b** It's critical that your staff, the front line of communications at your site, know what is and is not accepted and where it goes for processing. Provide all drop-off staff simple talking points to ensure they understand the new signage and benefits of a high quality stream. Train them to share the message in a friendly way. For example, "Hi. I see you have some clothing you're trying to recycle. We don't accept that here because it causes problems and safety issues in the recycling process, but you can donate it down the street. Thanks for recycling!"
- c** Some residents will want much more information about your program, recycling processing, or other options once they leave your site. Be sure your staff knows where on your website they can access this info.



## → STEP 4 DEPLOY CORE TOOLS and PROVIDE ON-SITE FEEDBACK

This toolkit is designed to help you give recycling the equivalent of a pool shock – hit it hard with everything you’ve got to clean the system. Keep it up for 6 to 8 weeks, then repeat in smaller doses to maintain results.



### WHAT YOU’LL NEED:

#### FAQ

- Prelaunch meetings with hauler, MRF, and internal staff.

### TIP

For mailings, talk to your local post office about door-to-door distribution. Postal staff may have options to reduce costs, and this will help ensure that your mailing gets to all households.

### WHAT YOU’LL DO

- Double check that your mailers and other printed items are correct. Review training materials with front line staff.
- Tell your hauler and MRF your start date so that everyone is aware when you are ready to launch.
- Inform decision makers and frontline staff, and anyone else who may interact with residents about the details of this program, in case there are any questions from residents. In addition, give them a specific answer to “Why is the city doing this?” That answer is “To protect the health and safety of workers.”
- Launch.
- Prepare for the next phase – program maintenance – which should include continued dialogue with your MRF, regular communication with customers, and regular communication with residents about the most problematic materials.

## → STEP 5 TRACK RESULTS, EVALUATE, and ADJUST

There's only one way to measure success, and that is to collect accurate data.



### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

#### MRF TRACKING FORM

- A spreadsheet, notebook, app, or other means of recording data.
- Clickers, tally counters, or tracking app.

### TIP

A capture rate study will help you identify how much trash is in your recycling, and how much recycling is in your trash. This is the best way to measure your progress and find opportunities for improvement. You can do your own study by taking a representative sample of collection containers at random, sorting and weighing the contents, and doing the math. Or you can hire a specialized firm to do it.

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

Track these basic metrics to monitor the effects of this program.

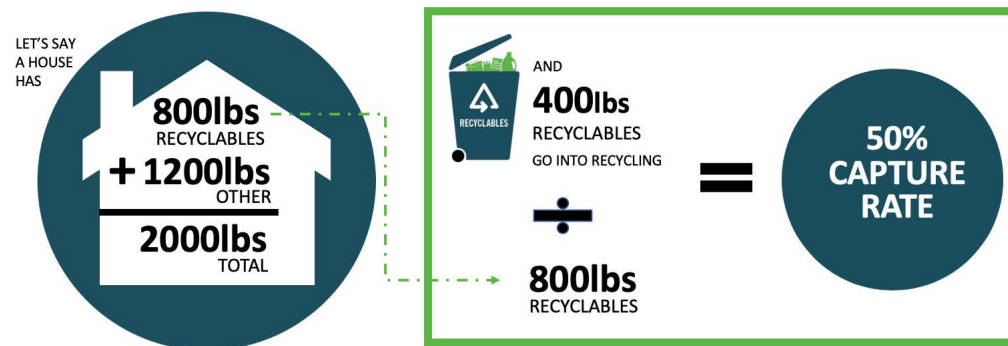
**Contamination rate:** Work with your MRF to get this on a regular basis. Use the **MRF TRACKING FORM** and protocol.

**Drop-off visitation:** Capture visitation – the number of residents using your site each day with clickers, tally counters, or an app.

**Maintain:** Check in with your staff to answer their questions and make sure everyone is still on the same page.

**Follow-up:** Don't forget to let the residents know how the program changes are going! Keep them up to date and thank them for their patience and help in creating a cleaner recycling stream. Consider a press release, social media post, or [interview with your local news outlet](#).

### CAPTURE RATE: How much of recyclables are really going where they should?



### ARTWORK

Design files for both the core tools and general promotion tools.

### ASSESSMENT FORM

Are you ready to improve the quality of your recycling?

### BUDGET

Use this generic budget form to consider the costs of implementing and maintaining your new quality-control program.

### CAMPAIGN BUILDER

Create your info card and top issue mailer using our free online campaign builder. Download the final files and send them straight to your printer!

### CHECKLIST

Put the plan and the components to work.

### CONTRACT CONSIDERATIONS

Tips for smart contracts.

### FAQ

Train your staff and others involved in the program with these FAQs.

### MRF SURVEY

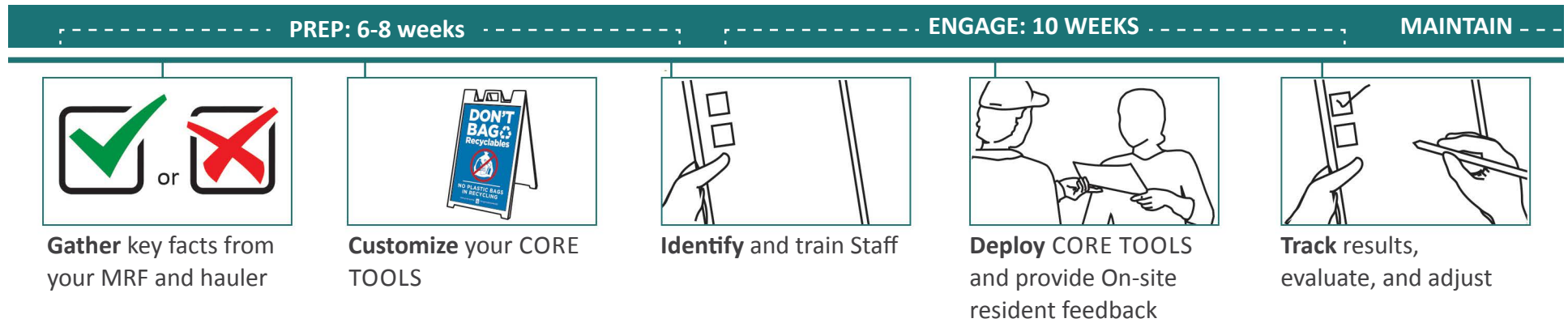
Start improving quality by working with your MRF to identify issues and goals.

### MRF TRACKING FORM

Track contamination metrics.

# QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE: INCREASING QUANTITY AND IMPROVING QUALITY

Surveys show that most residents want to recycle right, but many don't know how. Use this kit and **CHECKLIST** to help recyclers do the right thing.



## CORE TOOLS

Consistent messaging and direct feedback at the drop-off center encourage better recycling.



### TOP ISSUE SIGNAGE

Target your most problematic contaminant by posting eye-catching temporary signage at your site. These signs should stay up for 6 to 8 weeks.



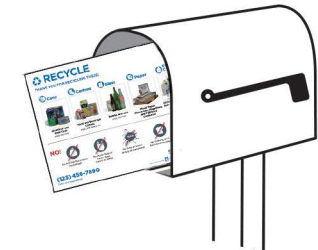
### IN-PERSON FEEDBACK

Direct feedback is extremely powerful in changing behavior. Train your staff, and provide them with handouts and talking points.



### SITE SIGNAGE

Clear and simple signs help residents know what to do. Consider updating overly detailed signs with simple messages.



### ANNUAL INFO CARD

Residents need to know what you want, as well as what you don't want. Mail this INFO CARD annually to give residents current reference guide to your basic YES and NO lists.