

How can municipalities simplify recycling and composting? Which causes you to recycle more frequently?

- [Description](#)
- [Topic Details](#)

The City of Riverside aims to create or tap into existing markets for recycling and re-purposing of materials to promote diversion of food and other solid waste from landfills.

How can municipalities simplify recycling and composting? Which causes you to recycle more frequently?

Choose up to 3

- Develop streamlined recycling and composting signage for public places
- Develop education program for schools and public
- Enhance the recycling and composting collection system

SINGLE-STREAM TECHNOLOGY IS KEY TO INCREASING RECYCLING RATES

Waste Management's Lynn Brown explains how technology holds the key to increasing recycling rates through comingled recycling collections...

When it comes to recycling, it's critical to think about how we push the boundaries of innovation. Not only because it is good for the environment, but because converting waste into raw materials through recycling creates jobs, builds more competitive manufacturing industries and adds significantly to the economy, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Although the U.S. is making great strides in increasing recycling rates, from about 6% in 1960 to 34% in 2010, less than half of packaging today is actually recycled, which leaves much room for growth.

Single-stream recycling first appeared in California in the late 1990s and has quickly expanded across North America to more than 100 communities today.

The technology, which enables consumers to place all recyclables in a single container for collection, achieves recovery of up to 50% more materials than traditional recycling. This means that more natural resources are conserved and fewer raw materials need to be used.

Single-stream systems also help lower transportation costs and fleet emissions since the process reduces transportation needs.

It's also far less complicated than perceived. After comingled materials are collected, they are typically separated by magnets, screens, optical scanners and manual sorting at a single-stream MRF. Like with traditional recycling methods, the output is then sold and shipped for reuse in manufacturing.

Many cities, companies and communities across the U.S. have been turning to single-stream recycling, which has helped them extract the highest possible value from materials. When the City of Denver switched from traditional to single-stream, it increased the amount of recyclables by 61% in just two years. Similar programs are under way in cities including Houston, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and Phoenix.

For colleges and universities, single-stream recycling has dramatically increased recycling rates of cans, bottles and other materials commonly thrown out. This has helped campuses reduce the amount of trash that goes to the landfill and is driving progress on their sustainability goals.

For instance, a single-stream recycling program at Arizona State University, which is part of its campus-wide Zero Solid Waste program, helped the university successfully divert thirty streams of its materials from the landfill. Today current diversion rates on campus are about 25%, and the university aims to reach zero waste by 2015.

At Waste Management, the nation's largest recycling services provider, we're hopeful that our investments in new single-stream plant technology will help to quadruple the amount of material processed in this way, from 722,000 tons (655,000 tonnes) in 2002 to more than 3 million tons (2.7 million tonnes) this year.

As more municipalities, organisations and institutions welcome these facilities, this technology will continue to become a more economical and environmentally sustainable option and will bring us closer to our collective goal of increasing recycling rates even further.

Lynn Brown is VP for corporate communications and community relations at Waste Management.