



UNIVERSAL RECYCLING ORDINANCE SUMMARY GUIDELINES

The Austin City Council approved the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO) on November 4, 2010 to:

- Increase the life of local landfills
- Decrease trash disposal costs for businesses and multi-family properties
- Reduce environmental impacts
- Make progress toward our Zero Waste goal to reduce trash disposal:
 - 50% by 2015
 - 75% by 2020
 - 90% by 2040

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The URO requires affected property owners to provide reasonable and consistent access to recycling for residents, tenants, customers, and employees.

Though participation is voluntary, property owners should encourage participation through regular education, proper signage, and conveniently located, well-labeled containers.

Specifically, the ordinance requires affected property owners to ensure:

1. Recycling for five materials
2. Sufficient collection-container capacity
3. Informational signage in English and Spanish
4. Regular tenant and employee education
5. Annual Recycling Plans and record keeping

AFFECTED PROPERTIES

Starting in 2012, the ordinance affects large commercial office buildings and multifamily properties. Then for several years, it also affects progressively smaller properties each year.

Affected **commercial properties** include:

- Commercial office buildings
- Institutional properties including medical facilities and religious buildings
- Private educational facilities

Affected **multi-family properties** include:

- Apartments
- Condominiums
- Dormitories

AFFECTED PROPERTY TIMETABLE		
Effective Date: October 1 of	Offices and Institutions (square feet of floor area)	Multi-Family Properties (dwelling units)
2012	More than 100,000	More than 75
2013	More than 75,000	More than 50
2014	More than 50,000	More than 25
2015	More than 25,000	

The Austin City Council may expand the types of affected properties to include most Austin businesses and multifamily properties effective October 1, 2014 or later.

RECYCLING SERVICES

Affected properties either:

- Haul their own materials to a City-approved recycling or composting facility
- Contract with private haulers that are registered with the City

Affected properties may:

- Negotiate prices, collection schedules, or pickup locations with service providers
- Commingle recyclable materials to conserve space and improve efficiency

RECYCLABLE MATERIALS

Affected commercial and multifamily properties are required to recycle the following materials:

1. Paper (including mixed paper and office paper)
2. Corrugated Cardboard
3. Aluminum Cans
4. PETE and HDPE Plastic Bottles (#1 and #2)
5. Glass Bottles and Jars

Substitute Materials - Affected properties may request approval to recycle or compost substitute materials that would increase the property's landfill diversion rate (See WAIVERS). Examples of substitute materials include:

- Tin, steel, or mixed metals
- Foils (aluminum, tin, copper)
- Beverage cartons (gable-top containers)
- Shredded paper
- Pallets, wood or plastic
- Plastics #3 - #7, including plastic bags or films or expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam)
- Batteries of all types
- Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and other florescent bulbs
- Electronics (e-scrap) including televisions
- Printer cartridges (ink jet or toner cartridges)
- Compostable materials
- Tires
- Liquids including fats, oils and greases
- Textiles

On-site composting of yard trimmings, food scraps, or other compostable materials may be approved by the ARR Director as an alternative collection method, if well managed and not a nuisance or sanitation problem.

SERVICE CAPACITY

To ensure adequate storage capacity for recyclable materials, affected properties shall ensure that recycling capacity exceeds certain minimum weekly quantities.

With ARR approval, service capacities for substitute or additional materials can be counted toward service capacity requirements (See WAIVERS).

For affected **commercial properties**, the weekly service capacity for recyclables shall be at least 25% of the weekly service capacity for all materials collected at the property or, in other words, at least a 1:3 ratio of recycling to trash weekly capacity.

Starting October 1, 2014 the minimum capacity requirements for recycling expands to 50% of the weekly service capacity or a 1:1 ratio of recycling to trash weekly capacity.

The weekly service capacity of a container is determined by multiplying its volume times the number of service each week. For example, a four-yard container serviced four times per week equals 16 cubic yards of weekly service capacity.

Compactors will be assumed to have a 4:1 compaction ratio, unless proven otherwise.

Affected **multi-family property owners** shall ensure that recycling capacity exceeds 6.4 gallons per dwelling per week. This weekly service capacity can be met, for example, with either:

- Weekly service of one 64-gallon cart for ten dwelling units, or
- Weekly service of a one-cubic yard collection container for 32 dwelling units

EXTERIOR RECYCLING COLLECTION AREAS AND CONTAINERS

Recycling collection areas shall be located within 25 feet of landfill trash collection points and provide continuous access for tenants and facility maintenance personnel.

A property owner may request a waiver (see WAIVERS) for locating exterior containers because the placement or servicing of the container meets one of the following conditions:

- Site plan limitations, obstructions, physical layout, or topography
- Violation of one or more other City Codes
- Vehicle parking space or impermeable cover restrictions
- Vehicle access limitations

Service providers will place large signs, stickers, or placards in English and Spanish (and other languages as appropriate) on their exterior containers and compactors on or near the point of entry to identify their purpose (landfill trash, compostable materials, or recyclables) and the materials accepted.

PROMOTION, EDUCATION, SIGNAGE

Affected properties shall:

- Educate all employees, tenants, and businesses within 90 days after an affected property's URO effective date and annually thereafter
- Educate a new employee, tenant, or business within seven days of employment or becoming a tenant
- Inform all employees and tenants about any changes in the recycling program within 30 days of changes in materials accepted

Education shall include electronic or printed information on on-site recycling services including:

- Materials accepted
- Recycling container locations
- Service frequency

Affected properties shall document that recycling program information has been provided to employees and tenants.

For equal convenience, to minimize contamination, and to maximize participation, pair common-area recycling collection points with landfill trash collection points.

Signs, posters, and labels shall indicate locations of recycling containers and the materials accepted using graphic illustrations.

To standardize, the City recommends using blue for recycling, black for landfill trash, and green for compostable materials for containers, stickers, decals and signs.

The City of Austin may provide general promotional material such as posters, introductory letters, and signage. If requested, the City may also provide information, guidance, and training, for site-specific programs.

WAIVERS

Up to once per year, affected property owners may request that the Director grant waivers for alternate materials, placement of exterior containers, service capacity, or other provisions using the annual [Recycling Plan](#) form or other form provided by the City.

RECYCLING PLANS, REPORTS, and RECORD KEEPING

Recycling Plan – Affected properties shall submit a Recycling Plan on a City-provided form that describes the trash and recycling services and education offered at the property:

- By February 1 each year
- Within 30 days of beginning operations
- Within 90 days of being affected by the URO

Information on the Recycling Plan includes:

- Contact Information – property owner or manager
- Property Description – location, size
- Description of Services – materials, service frequencies
- Waiver Request – container placement, service capacity, substitute materials

Semi-Annual Volume Reports – Property owners who haul their own materials to a recycling facility, compost facility, or landfill must submit Semi-Annual Volume Reports with the amount and types of recyclable materials collected in the preceding six months. Semi-Annual Volume Reports are due on January 31 or July 31 for the six-month period ending December 31 or June 30.

Records – Affected properties should maintain these records to verify compliance:

- Invoices and contracts for hauling or valet service for trash, composting, or recycling
- Self-haul activities
- Scale receipts
- Educational activities

City of Austin staff has the right to visit and inspect the premises to investigate a complaint or evaluate whether an ordinance violation has occurred.

For More Information

- [Commercial Services](#)
- [Universal Recycling Ordinance, City Code](#)
- [Universal Recycling Ordinance Rules](#)
- [Universal Recycling Ordinance - Phase 2](#)