



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Innovation. Collaboration. Practical Solutions.

City of Portland 2017 Recycling Program Summary

Last Update: Winter 2018

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) is responsible for managing the garbage, recycling and composting collection system for residents and businesses in the city of Portland, Oregon.

Waste collection programs are guided by the following principles:

- 1) Advance [climate action plan](#) goals
- 2) Ensure cost effective, safe and environmentally sound operations
- 3) [Establish residential rates](#) through a process that promotes operational efficiencies while meeting policy goals
- 4) Provide exemplary customer service
- 5) Develop a resilient and [equitable](#) system

For inquiries not covered by this summary, contact wasteinfo@portlandoregon.gov or 503-823-7202.

General

Population: 647,800 (per 2017 Census)
Square Miles: 145

Policy Guidance

Portland Recycles! Plan

In 2008 Portland's City Council adopted the *Portland Recycles! Plan*, which set four main goals: to increase the recovery rate to 75% by 2015, to reduce toxics and greenhouse gases, to have zero growth in the waste stream, and to make the system as a whole more sustainable. The plan included changes for both the residential and commercial systems.

The changes to residential collection identified in the plan were significant: In 2008, Portland introduced a blue Portland Recycles! roll cart for commingled recyclables (collected weekly, along with glass containers on the side) and a green Portland Composts! roll cart for yard debris (collected every two weeks). In 2011, residents were invited to add food scraps to their green Portland Composts! roll cart, which is now collected weekly. Recycling is still collected weekly, but garbage is now collected every two weeks. The amount of garbage collected from residents dropped 30 percent when these



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changes were implemented, while the material collected in the composting roll cart more than doubled. The *Portland Recycles! Plan* can be accessed at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/43052>.

Changes to the commercial system require businesses to recycle, focusing primarily on food scraps, paper, and construction materials. The Portland Recycles! Plan included new recycling requirements for businesses for these target materials while maintaining the competitive system for waste hauling services. Waste hauling companies are required to offer their business customers collection services to meet the requirement, including collection of the materials subject to mandatory recycling.

In the summer of 2017, BPS presented Portland City Council with a *Portland Recycles! Progress Report and Action Plan*: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/711977>. The document summarizes achievements and progress towards the Portland Recycles! Plan goals and highlights new efforts and next steps to sustainably manage materials in Portland.

Climate Action Plan

The 2015 *Climate Action Plan* picks up where the Portland Recycles! Plan leaves off and adds a focus on Consumption in addition to waste generation and recovery. Objectives include:

- #8 Reduce consumption-related emissions by encouraging sustainable consumption and supporting Portland businesses in minimizing the carbon intensity of their supply chains.
- #9 Reduce food scraps sent to landfills by 90 percent.
- #10 Reduce per capita solid waste by 33 percent.
- #11 Recover 90 percent of all waste generated.

Collection and Processing

- All waste and recycling collection is conducted by 27 private haulers regulated by BPS. All customers pay their haulers directly for collection services.
- Portland significantly revamped its residential program in 2011 to include weekly collection of food scraps and switched garbage collection to an every-other-week basis.
- Haulers deliver garbage to local transfer stations and most of it is then sent to Columbia Ridge Landfill, located 150 miles away, operated by Waste Management through contracts with Metro, the regional government. The current tip fee at Portland transfer stations is \$97.45/ton, plus a \$10.00 transaction fee.
- Haulers deliver recyclables for processing at over 60 facilities; the top ten receive ~70% of the recyclables. Six of the facilities are material recovery facilities (MRFs) that process commingled recyclables collected from businesses and residents.
- Metro, the regional government, maintains a database of all drop-off locations for recycling and composting. Residents and businesses can access this info through the “Find a Recycler” searchable database, <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/tools-living/garbage-and-recycling/find-a-recycler>, or by calling 503-234-3000 Monday thru Saturday.
- In Portland’s solid waste and recycling system, “residential” includes all single-family through four-unit dwellings. “Commercial” includes all multifamily dwellings (5 units or greater) and businesses.
- Residential customers are serviced by 11 franchised haulers. These haulers have exclusive service areas, and rates are set by the City. In contrast, commercial collection is provided in an open, competitive market where service is provided by 27 haulers, plus a number of independent recyclers (companies that collect recycling, yard debris, and food scraps, but not garbage).
- 41% of garbage is generated by businesses and other commercial organizations, 27% is from residential customers that live in single-family homes and small plexes, 17% is from construction and demolition, and 15% is from multifamily customers.



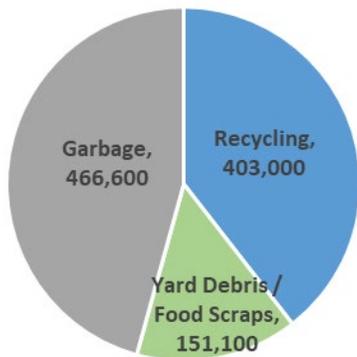
Recovery Rate Calculation

In addition to the many residential materials recycled curbside in Portland, there are other materials recycled by other means and counted in Portland's recovery rate (see Appendix for a complete list of eligible materials).

In calculating the City's recovery rate, BPS tracks quantities on the residential side including hauler-reported curbside recycling and composting and adds in an estimate of bottle bill recycling from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (Oregon DEQ). Residential solid waste disposed includes amounts reported by franchisees as well as estimates for self-hauled garbage.

On the commercial side, recycling tonnages include materials collected by haulers and material sorted at recovery facilities, as well as a jobs-based estimate of material collected via independent recyclers that is reported to the Oregon DEQ. Commercial solid waste disposal tonnages are computed by adding tonnages of waste reported by haulers, residue at recovery facilities, and estimates of material that is self-hauled to transfer stations.

2017 Waste Generation
(tons)



Recycling	403,000 tons
Yard Debris/Food Scraps	151,100 tons
Solid Waste	466,600 tons
Total Generation	1,020,700 tons
2017 Recovery Rate	54%

Regulatory Framework & Compliance

Oregon state law requires communities of more than 4,000 to have a curbside recycling program (1983 Opportunity to Recycle Act). In Portland's residential sector, there is no requirement that residents participate in the recycling program; however, it is estimated that more than 90% of residential customers recycle. Even before the City began to regulate residential rates in 1992, Portland has always had a "pay-as-you-throw" (PAYT) rate system which provides a direct financial incentive for reducing a household's garbage.

According to current Portland City Code, all commercial businesses are required to recycle. In addition, Oregon state law mandates that a hauler cannot charge more for recycling than would be charged for the same quantity of garbage pick-up. While the City does not currently receive reports of the number



of businesses participating in the mandatory program, it is estimated that 85-90% of the commercial sector participates in recycling to some extent.

Though it is stipulated in Portland's Commercial Administrative Rules that failure to implement a recycling system is an Infraction, subject to a penalty of up to \$600 for non-compliance, the City focuses primarily on education and outreach efforts. City regulations do not provide for penalties unless a business has refused to comply by 30 days after being notified. Enforcement has historically been complaint-based and penalties have rarely been levied because businesses typically respond within the 30 days.

Residential Collection

- ✓ 161,500 households - single-family through fourplexes - are signed up for curbside garbage, recycling, and yard debris/food scrap service
- ✓ Sign-up is voluntary, except for rental dwellings
- ✓ Yard debris/food scraps and recycling are collected weekly, both on the same day; garbage is collected every two weeks for most (every-four-week garbage collection is also an option).
- ✓ 90%+ participation in recycling
- ✓ Each household is given a blue 65 gallon roll cart for mixed recycling and a green 65 gallon rollcart for composting. Glass is collected weekly on the side in a yellow 14 gallon bin.

Curbside Collection System

65-gallon Recycling Roll Cart

- Paper (Magazines, Newspapers, Cardboard, Scrap paper)
- Metal (Aluminum, Tin cans, Scrap metal)
- Plastics (Milk jugs, Bottles, Yogurt-type tubs, Potted plant containers and buckets)
- Roll cart supplied by hauler, costs included within basic rate

14-gallon Glass Bin

- Glass bottles and jars

On the side

- Motor oil in a see-through rigid container

65-gallon Composting Roll Cart

- Food scraps, food soiled paper towels and napkins, tea bags, coffee filters, pizza delivery boxes and kitchen pail liners including newspaper, paper bags and five approved brands of BPI-certified compostable bags
- Yard debris
- Roll cart supplied by hauler, costs included within basic rate

Residential Rates

- 11 franchised hauling companies operate within the City, each within an exclusive territory.
- Pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) volume-based rate schedule, reviewed and set annually by City Council (before City regulation, private haulers used PAYT system on their own): <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/65110>.
- Close to 70 percent of the City's residential customers subscribe to 20-gallon can or cart, 32-gallon can, 35-gallon roll cart, recycling-only, composting and recycling, on-call, or every-four-week service level.



- The most common service level (44% of customers) is a 35-gallon roll cart, collected every other week. It includes weekly collection of commingled and glass recycling and weekly collection of yard debris and food scraps. It is priced at \$31.80/month.
- Information related to the ratemaking process is published annually in the Rate Study: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/683962>.

Commercial Collection

- ✓ 25,000 businesses
- ✓ Approximately 4,000 multifamily complexes (five or more units), totaling more than 90,000 households.
- ✓ 27 private, commercial permitted haulers collect commercial waste and recycling in a competitive system
- ✓ A number of independent recyclers are also registered with the City to collect source-separated recycling from businesses.
- ✓ In Portland, businesses and multifamily complexes may choose their garbage hauler and recycler and negotiate prices for these services.
- ✓ Since 1996, businesses and multifamily complexes are required by City Code to recycle 50% of their waste. The Portland Recycles! Plan established a goal of 75%.
- ✓ If requested by a business, haulers must offer recycling collection for:
 - Food scraps
 - Cardboard
 - Glass bottles & jars
 - Newspapers and magazines
 - Mixed paper (including office paper, junk mail, aseptic boxes and cartons)
 - Plastic bottles
 - Scrap metal
 - Tin and aluminum cans
 - Yard debris
- ✓ The Portland Composts! commercial food scrap collection program began in 2005, with about 1200 businesses participating as of end of 2017.
- ✓ All Portland multifamily complexes are required to have recycling for a full range of residentially-generated materials.
 - For buildings with 5 or more units, City rules require a two-sort recycling system of commingled recycling and glass containers. Recycling containers must be as conveniently-located as garbage containers with clear signage.
 - The landlord/manager must provide written recycling information to all residents at least once per year and to all new residents within 30 days of their move-in.

Commercial Customer Rates

Since the commercial sector is a competitive marketplace, the City has no information on the rates that haulers charge commercial customers.

Construction and Demolition

All building projects are required to take separate lunch waste from other job site materials and clearly label all recycling containers on the job site. Larger projects must also submit a plan describing



how materials at the job site will be handled. More information can be found at www.recyclingnutsandbolts.com. BPS provides technical assistance to contractors and property owners on how to maximize recycling efforts on job sites.

In order to increase the potential for salvage and reuse of high-quality lumber and other building materials, the City of Portland requires projects seeking a demolition permit for a house or duplex to fully deconstruct that structure if it was built before 1917 or is a designated historic resource: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/70643>.

Public Trash Collection

Currently, BPS contracts for collection of garbage from approximately 700 public trash cans located downtown and in nine other business districts. In addition, 165 public recycling containers along the downtown transit mall provide convenient recycling and boost overall public awareness of recycling.

To meet its goal of becoming the cleanest city in America, the City of Portland plans to expand public-place garbage collection to all high-pedestrian traffic business districts throughout the city. The expansion will add approximately 950 additional garbage cans citywide by 2022. In the expansion, the City is first prioritizing traditionally underserved areas that have higher populations of communities of color and lower income levels.

Training & Outreach

Commercial organizations

Portland's Sustainability at Work program, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork>, provides assistance, resources and recognition to businesses in the City. The program features sustainability advisors that can come on-site to complete a comprehensive sustainability assessment, highlighting opportunities for more efficient commuting and energy and water use as well as increased sustainable purchasing, waste prevention, recycling, and food scrap collection. In a typical year, the program serves 1,000 businesses.

Since 2005, businesses in the City of Portland have contracted with waste haulers to collect food scraps through the Portland Composts! program. Sustainability at Work provides technical assistance, training for employees, and free resources like posters and stickers for labeling collection sites.

Multifamily

A multifamily program team provides outreach to multifamily complexes to assist them to transition to a well-functioning program. Many educational materials are available for property managers to order, including tenant door bags with refrigerator magnets and information, common area posters, and metal signs to hang above recycling containers. Examples can be found at <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/529954>.

Hotline

BPS staff answer calls received on the Portland Curbside Hotline (503-823-7202) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. This phone service provides information on both the residential curbside and



commercial collection programs. BPS Hotline staff also offer email responses via wasteinfo@portlandoregon.gov. Callers to the Hotline and email correspondents are typically seeking information about residential or commercial recycling or garbage collection, but Hotline staff also handle complaints. In most cases customers and haulers are able to address issues on their own, but unresolved problems are passed on to BPS enforcement staff for investigation. In a typical year, about 6,500 calls and 1,000 emails are received.

Residential

BPS produces and mails the *Curbsider* to all residential garbage customers twice a year, in June and December. This full-color newsletter publicizes program information or changes. Find samples at <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/66089>.

BPS also houses the regional Master Recycler Program. This is a community education project to raise awareness of waste-related issues and ways to reduce waste through prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting. The program consists of an eight-week training (one night per week plus a couple of Saturday field trips) for interested community members. Upon completion of the training, each graduate must volunteer at least 30 hours to raise awareness of waste prevention in the community through education and outreach at local events and through individual projects. Master Recyclers have volunteered at Fix-It Fairs, regional compost demonstrations and bin sales, hazardous household waste roundups, computer recycling events, farmers' markets, workplace fairs, and many other events. More info at <http://www.masterrecycler.org/>.

Events

The Portland Event Recycling Program supports event recycling at all major events at Portland's downtown Waterfront Park and other community events as requested. The program provides equipment, technical assistance, resources and signage to ensure a high functioning collection system for garbage, recycling and food scraps at events: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/43211>.

Office Organization & Funding

City Waste Collections and Sustainability Engagement Staff

22.35 FTE

- ✓ Management 5
- ✓ Communications / Public Relations 1
- ✓ Customer, Hauler Oversight and Regulatory Services 3
- ✓ Program/Policy Development and Planning 4
- ✓ Engagement
 - 2.5 Residential
 - 4.1 Business
 - 1 Multifamily / Events
 - 1 Master Recycler program
 - .75 Construction and Demolition



Budget & Fees

The program is funded through a combination of resources, including the Solid Waste Management Fund and a grant. The Solid Waste Management fund is comprised of permit and tonnage fees from all permitted haulers and franchise fees from the franchised residential haulers. The total annual budget is 5.8 million. This does not include any hauler operating costs.

The residential franchise fee is 5% of gross residential revenue received by the franchisees.

The commercial tonnage fee is assessed on solid waste collected from commercial accounts within Portland. The commercial tonnage fee was increased by \$3.00 per ton to \$12.60 per ton in FY 2018-19 to generate \$1,000,000 in funds to undertake solid waste cleanup activities and dispose of waste on public properties and rights-of-way as part of the Homeless Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program.

The commercial permit fee is \$350/year.

The Solid Waste Management Fund is dedicated solely to “implement and administer Solid Waste, recycling, composting and sustainable development policies approved by the Council,” and is not mixed with Portland’s General Fund monies.

Other

In 1971, Oregon adopted the nation’s first Bottle Bill and the current redemption rate is approximately 70% of affected beer, soft-drink containers, and water bottles.

In 1990, Portland City Council banned the use of polystyrene foam containers for takeout food and food served on restaurant or food vendor premises, including grocery stores.

In 2011, Portland City Council banned plastic bags as checkout bags. Since 2012, the ban has included all retailers and food providers.

In the Portland area, a regional government agency, Metro, plays an important role in waste management. In addition to other activities, Metro has authority over all waste upon collection, owns two major local transfer stations and operates a centralized recycling and waste prevention information service by phone and website/email (mentioned above under drop-off info).

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is responsible for ensuring that all local governments implement programs that achieve the recycling goals set by the state legislature.

Appendix

Categories of materials counted toward recycling in Portland:

- Antifreeze
- Appliances
- Carpet and carpet padding
- Christmas trees
- Electronics
- Food scraps
- Glass - window/non-container glass
- Glass containers
- Gypsum wallboard (drywall)
- Milk cartons and aseptic containers
- Metal containers
- Motor oil
- Newsprint and magazines
- OCC & Kraft bags
- Office pack/hi grade paper
- Oil filters
- Phone directories
- Plastic bottles and tubs



- Plastic film
- Roofing/tarpaper
- Salvage & used building materials
- Scrap metal

- Scrap paper
- Tires
- Wood/lumber
- Yard debris

