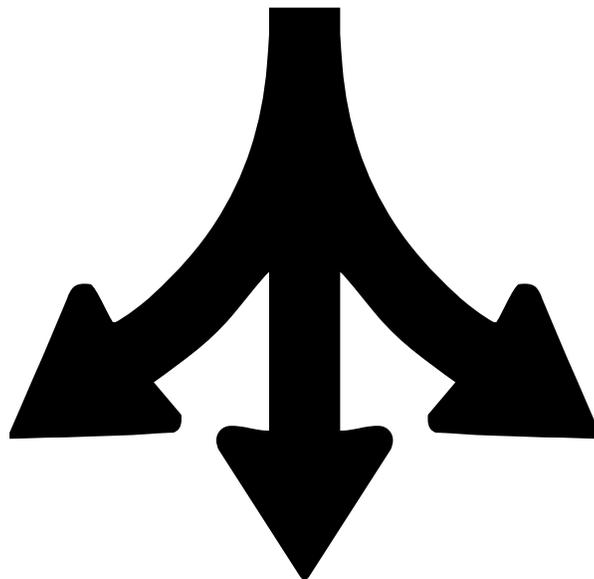


# COMPOSTING COLLECTION AT MULTI-FAMILY PROPERTIES

A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS OF APARTMENTS AND CONDOMINIUMS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY



ALAMEDA COUNTY WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

ORDINANCE 2012-01

A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR MULTI-FAMILY PROPERTIES

## INTRODUCTION

In Alameda County, nearly one third (31%) of materials residents send to landfills as garbage, are actually organic materials that can be used to create compost or mulch. In apartments and condominiums, food scraps alone account for over a quarter of landfilled waste. When “organics” like food scraps and plant debris go to the landfill, they decompose creating methane, a powerful greenhouse gas which is a cause of global warming.

Many Alameda County residents in single-family homes and some residents in multi-family buildings are familiar and accustomed to separating food scraps and food-soiled paper into their organics or green bin. Now this opportunity will be available to more residents in multi-family buildings. Since July 2012, the Alameda County Waste Management Authority Mandatory Recycling Ordinance 2012-01 has required multi-family property owners to supply sufficient recycling collection service to accommodate the bottles, cans, cardboard, and paper produced on-site. Effective July 1, 2014, multi-family buildings in participating cities are also required to provide adequate, on-site collection service for organics (food scraps and food-soiled paper), and other cities in Alameda County will likely begin to require it in subsequent years.

This guide is designed to help multi-family property owners and managers comply with the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance and overcome typical barriers to participation in organics collection programs.

### WHAT ARE “ORGANICS”?

Examples of organic materials that can be placed in separate organics collection containers:

- Vegetable and fruit scraps, bread, pasta, grains
- Meat, fish, bones, eggs, shellfish, dairy
- Cooked or uncooked leftovers
- Coffee grounds, tea bags, paper filters
- Soiled paper napkins and paper towels, pizza delivery boxes
- Flowers and plant debris



Overcome typical barriers to participation such as inconvenience and the “ick” factor. Read on to learn how to start a successful collection program today!

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

Introducing organics collection adds new considerations to your operations and may pose some challenges. Common concerns include lack of space and cleanliness. This guide provides tips to overcome such obstacles and create a smooth system that your residents will use and appreciate.

### 1. Set Up Your Infrastructure

Carefully design a system of bins and carts that minimizes costs and hassles and maximizes convenience for residents.



### 2. Get Your Maintenance Staff On Board

Equip staff with training, instructions and a plan to keep the system clean and functional.



### 3. Unveil the New System and Inform Your Residents

Get residents excited and well-informed so they can properly separate their waste using your new system.



### 4. Continually Improve Your System

Stay on top of how it's working to address any potential issues before they become a problem.

## #1 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

### Keep in mind fire code

Check with your local inspector to be sure that your system is not breaking any fire safety rules. In general, blocking egresses or hallways is often considered a fire safety hazard.

### Place organics collection containers near recycling and garbage containers

to make the trip as convenient as possible for residents. This may require changing the size, number, and configuration of your receptacles.

## STEP 1 - SET UP YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

### WHAT IS REQUIRED?

ACWMA Ordinance 2012-01 requires property owners and managers, in participating cities, **to provide containers and service for recyclables and organics**. Recycling and organics collection containers must be large enough to hold all of the recyclables and compostables generated on site. For more details on requirements for each jurisdiction and how to determine if the law applies to your property, refer to Table A on page 11.

The first key to success is carefully planning out your onsite solid waste management system. Consider these questions:

- Where will you locate the recycling, organics, and garbage containers?
- How many containers of each will you need?
- What size should the containers be?
- How frequently will you have each collected by the hauler?

The goal of this exercise is to find the right balance of enough capacity without having containers that are too large, which could take up excessive space and may cost more to have collected. Work with your hauler to plan sizes, number, and/or collection frequency and to arrange for the delivery of new organics containers. Options vary by hauler. Find your hauler contacts on your garbage bill or at [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org).

**Estimating the right volume** The best way to estimate how much volume you need is to observe how full your bins and carts are before pick-up, and the percentage of volume represented by garbage, recyclables, or organics (food scraps and compostable paper). If this is not possible, consult with your hauler and/or use the following rules of thumb to estimate weekly capacity based on the number of units or residents:

Material Type	Weekly Average per Unit
Garbage	16 gallons
Recyclables	16 gallons
Organics	4 gallons

**Tip:** There are 202 gallons in a cubic yard, so to convert gallons (used to measure the size of rolling carts) into cubic yards (the measurement used for larger bins), divide the total gallons by 202.

**If your complex has multiple garbage areas** Place recycling and organics containers in each of the garbage areas. This may mean that garbage containers need to be downsized to make room for the other containers. Smaller garbage containers may mean a need to change the frequency that garbage from the multiple locations is consolidated to a central location, or the frequency that the hauler collects the garbage. Monitor the level of waste throughout the week to gauge the needed frequency.

*Step 1 - Set Up Your Infrastructure—continued*

**If your building has garbage chutes** Garbage chutes provide easy access for residents to dispose of garbage. A successful recycling system makes it equally easy to properly deposit recyclables and organics. There are several ways this can be accomplished. Each requires investment or extra effort on the part of maintenance staff or the residents, and the best option will vary by building.

- **Close the trash chute** and locate all receptacles in a common area on the ground level (least maintenance effort and most resident effort).
- **Add recycling and organics carts** to the chute rooms or areas if there is space, and have maintenance staff bring down the contents to the main hauler-serviced bins regularly (most maintenance effort).
- **Retrofit the chute system** to accommodate multiple streams (requires investment, sufficient space to install the infrastructure, and educating residents how to use the new chute system).

## STEP 2 - GET YOUR MAINTENANCE STAFF ON BOARD

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**If you have an on-site manager or maintenance staff, they are critical to a successful recycling and organics collection system. They can ensure that your system of bins and collection is working, and keep the bins and collection area clean.**

**Schedule on-site consolidation** If your system has several garbage rooms or sites throughout your building or complex that need to be collected centrally for pick-up by the hauler, give your maintenance staff a schedule for how often that should happen. At first you may not know, so observe how quickly the containers in the satellite locations fill up.

**Provide a guide to cleanliness** Carts and bins, especially those for compostable materials, should be cleaned periodically to reduce odors and accumulation of material at the bottom of these containers. A written guide, accompanied by a verbal conversation, should define:

- **Use of bags or other physical barriers** Check with your hauler on what types of bags can be used to contain food scraps and food-soiled paper. Some allow certified compostable bags or clear plastic bags. If your hauler does not allow the use of plastic bags, brown paper bags or cardboard boxes and cartons (think cereal boxes and milk cartons) are a great option.
- **How frequently the containers should be cleaned** This could coincide with the hauler collection schedule so the containers are empty, or could just specify “as needed”.

*Step 2 - Get Your Maintenance Staff On-Board—continued*

- **Protocols for washing the bins** Where and with what water source and cleaners for disposing of the dirty wastewater (it should go down a sewer drain, not a storm drain) or if the cleaning will be provided by a third party (some haulers provide this service for a fee).
- **Make sure to direct maintenance staff to include yard debris** like leaves from the parking lot and tree trimmings in the organics cart. Incorporating yard debris can also help “dry out” out dense, wet food scraps.

**WHAT IS REQUIRED?** //

ACWMA Plant Debris Landfill Ban (Ordinance 2008-01) requires multi-family properties, as well as businesses and institutions, in Alameda County generating four or more cubic yards of garbage per week to separate all plant debris from garbage and recyclable materials. If a landscaper hauls plant debris off-site, they must take materials to an approved facility and deposit the plant debris in the facility’s designated “clean green” area.

## #2 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

### **Keep in mind Wastewater Rules**

Storm drains flow directly into the local watershed without being treated. When debris and pollutants like food particles and soap residues enter storm drains, they flow directly into local creeks and the bay.

In most jurisdictions, discharge of grease, oil, and other pollutants to storm drains is prohibited. To be safe when washing collection containers, make sure the wastewater is going into a drain that heads to the sewer, not the bay. Learn more at [www.CleanWaterProgram.org](http://www.CleanWaterProgram.org).

## STEP 3 - UNVEIL THE NEW SYSTEM AND INFORM YOUR RESIDENTS

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Now that you have your infrastructure set up for a successful recycling and organics collection system, it’s time to engage your residents. Residents are more likely to participate in your new system if you make it easy and give them a reason to do it. Residents may share your concerns about space and cleanliness, and need to adjust to a new habit of sorting.

*Step 3 - Unveil the New System and Inform Your Residents—continued*

**WHAT IS REQUIRED?**

ACWMA Ordinance 2012-01 requires property owners and managers to provide information at least annually to employees, tenants, and contractors describing how to properly use the recycling, garbage, and organics containers, as well as no later than 14 days after move-in and no less than 14 days prior to move out.

**Give residents an in-unit collection pail, if budget is available. Many haulers and cities provide these at no additional cost with the organics collection service.**

Kitchen countertop containers for collecting food scraps come in many sizes and styles, including models designed to capture odors, and can highly increase residents' ease of separate organics collection. Give each unit a container when you announce the new system, accompanied by information about sorting compostable materials and keeping their pail clean.

**If it is difficult to track down every resident at once**, leave the pail and how-to-information with a resident manager or a champion resident, and leave a note on each door announcing their availability. Visit [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org) to find templates for informational materials to share with residents.

**Request that residents leave the pails with the manager** if they do not want to use them, or with the unit if they move out. If you are concerned that the pails will disappear upon turnover, consider including a fee for missing pails in the lease language.

**Give them cleaning tips** Residents should be advised to empty their food scrap pails regularly, even if the pail is not full, to prevent odors. The containers should be sized to be easily washed in their sink or dishwasher. They can also line their pails with paper bags or compostable bags, if those are acceptable by the hauler in your jurisdiction. Leave behind a handout of cleanliness tips.

### #3 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

**Many haulers and cities provide in-unit kitchen pails at no additional cost.**

Contact your hauler to ask if pails are available in your city. Find hauler contact information on your solid waste bill or by visiting your city's Recycling Rules page at [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/cities-overview](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/cities-overview).

Some residents may prefer to use compostable containers such as ice cream cartons or paper grocery bags to capture their food scraps. If residents opt out of using a pail (if provided), remind them there are other ways to participate!

*Step 3 - Unveil the New System and Inform Your Residents—continued*

**EDUCATE AND GROW ENTHUSIASM** //

Explore creative ways to educate your residents about the new system. The best approach depends on the style of community and communication you have at your building. Here are some ideas to get you started.

**Hold a training or launch event** If your community is the type to hold events, educating residents on the new system lends itself to a lively group discussion. Demonstrate what types of materials go into each cart, quiz residents about questionable items, and play games around who can sort a pile of trash most quickly. Encourage residents to try it online: The Speed-Sorter game on [www.ReadySetRecycle.org](http://www.ReadySetRecycle.org) allows players to sort as many items as they can against a clock.

**Post a pledge board** If your community has space in a lobby or other common area where community information is often posted, add a recycling and organics sorting pledge board. Residents can post their intent and commitment to properly separate their trash and do the right thing. Studies have shown that a simple public pledge like this can increase rates of participation, even if nobody is monitoring them.



**Use a compelling message** Why should they separate their food scraps and food-soiled paper? Explain with words or pictures the impact of sending organics to compost versus landfills. For example, if your community cares about—

- **Climate change** Tell them that food waste in the landfill causes methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.
- **Gardens and landscaping** Tell them about the benefits of compost to the soil.
- **Organic or local food** Tell them about the benefits of compost to farmlands and urban food gardens.
- **Regulations to decrease materials sent to the landfill** Tell them that the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance requires multi-family properties and businesses to set up recycling and organics collection to reach the long-term goal of reducing waste by ensuring that recyclables and compostables make up less than 10 percent of material sent to landfill by 2020.

*Step 3 - Unveil the New System and Inform Your Residents—continued*

**Show pictures (or have a live sample) of the “black gold”**, the compost that results from food scrap collection, to make their impact tangible. See [www.ReadySetRecycle.org](http://www.ReadySetRecycle.org) for more information.

**USE VISUALS** //

Post prominent signs on or near the recycling, organics and garbage containers clearly indicating what goes into each of the bins. Use pictures of the materials to catch their attention, convey the information quickly, and cross language barriers. Many haulers can provide posters and decals that are specific to the materials accepted in your city. Downloadable posters and a Sign Maker Tool to make customized signs choosing from a library of pictures are available at [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org).



**WELCOME NEW RESIDENTS** //

Since organics collection is relatively new to multi-family buildings, your new residents may not have had access to it in their previous home. Give them a good start with detailed instructions and advice for successfully sorting their food scraps and food-soiled paper into the correct bin.

**Give them a tour** Show your new residents where the recycling, organics, and garbage bins are located on your property. Show them examples of what types of materials should go into each bin, and prompt them to ask about specific materials that they may be unsure about. If you don't know the answer, seek one from your city or hauler and get back to your resident.

**Give them information in writing** Moving into a new place is a busy time and your residents may forget the useful information you gave them verbally. Follow up with a written piece describing your recycling system. The best pieces have examples of materials and uses visuals to communicate the information. You can find templates for handouts and letters at [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org).

## STEP 4 - CONTINUALLY IMPROVE YOUR SYSTEM

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Careful planning and training upfront should make for a smooth launch of the new system. However, all of the nuances of how the system works and how your residents behave cannot be anticipated ahead of time. It is important to be observant and flexible to allow for continuous improvement and adjustment.

### OBSERVE

**Observe for yourself** Stop into the property before garbage collection day to peak inside the containers. Does it look like the residents are using them correctly?

**Seek feedback from the resident manager or maintenance staff** Ask them to keep an eye on how full the containers tend to be right before collection, and whether the contents are sorted correctly. Ask them for feedback on how the cleaning schedule and practices are working, or if they've needed to make adjustments.

**Seek feedback from residents** Ask a few residents whether they find the system to be easy to use, whether they have any questions about proper sorting, and if there is anything else that would help make participating easier.

### ADJUST

**Is there contamination** Garbage in the recycling or organics bins, or too much “good stuff” (recyclables and organics) in the garbage bin? What do the residents seem to be having trouble sorting? If the residents aren't sorting correctly, make adjustments to your bin locations, accessibility, or signs; and try new ways to communicate the message on how and why to sort.

**If the contents are properly sorted** Are some containers half empty during collection, or are some overflowing? Figure out how much volume is needed to manage each type of material for your property and call your hauler to make the necessary service changes.

### SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE!



Have you fine-tuned your system with some creative approaches and problem-solving? Help other property owners find success by sharing your lessons learned and best practices. Send them to [info@recyclingrules.org](mailto:info@recyclingrules.org).

## TABLE A: MANDATORY RECYCLING REQUIREMENTS BY CITY

Cities and municipalities were given the option to fully participate in the Ordinance, opt-out entirely from participation, or delay all or portions of the Ordinance. Due to this flexibility, the timing and scope differs among the 17 jurisdictions in Alameda County. The following table provides an overview of the recycling requirements for multi-family properties (five or more units) and businesses in each jurisdiction at the time of print. Visit [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/cities-overview](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/cities-overview) for more information.

CITY	<b>RULES OVERVIEW</b> For more information, view the "Rules in Detail" key on the back of this brochure.
Alameda	Recycling and Organics required for all businesses and multi-family properties.
Albany	Recycling and Organics required for all businesses and multi-family properties.
Berkeley	Recycling and Organics required for all businesses and multi-family properties.
Castro Valley Sanitary District	Recycling required for all businesses and multi-family properties. Organics collection requirements effective January 1, 2016.
Dublin	N/A – City of Dublin has chosen not to participate in the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance.
Emeryville	Recycling and Organics required for all businesses and multi-family properties.
Fremont	Recycling required for all businesses and multi-family properties. Organics collection requirements effective July 1, 2017.
Hayward	Recycling and organics required for businesses with 4+ cubic yards of weekly garbage service and multi-family properties. Businesses with less than 4 cubic yards of garbage service: organics collection requirements are currently in effect; recycling requirements will be effective July 1, 2016.
Livermore	Recycling and Organics required for all businesses and multi-family properties.
Newark	Recycling required for all businesses and multi-family properties. Organics collection requirements effective July 1, 2017.
Oakland	Recycling required for all businesses and multi-family properties. Organics collection requirements effective July 1, 2016.
Oro Loma Sanitary District (L1 District only)	N/A – Oro Loma Sanitary District has chosen not to participate in the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance for its unincorporated area (L1). Oro Loma Sanitary District businesses and multi-family properties located in the City of San Leandro and City of Hayward must follow the rules for those cities.
Piedmont	Recycling and Organics required for all businesses and multi-family properties.
Pleasanton	Recycling required for businesses with 4+ cubic yards of weekly garbage service and multi-family properties.
San Leandro	Recycling required for all businesses and multi-family properties. Organics collection requirements effective July 1, 2016.
Unincorporated Alameda County	Recycling and Organics required for all businesses and multi-family properties.
Union City	Recycling required for businesses with 4+ cubic yards of weekly garbage service and multi-family properties.

## RECYCLING RULES OVERVIEW FOR MULTI-FAMILY PROPERTIES

### Recycling Requirements

Provide containers and service of sufficient number, size and frequency for recyclables.



### Organics Requirements

Provide containers and service of sufficient number, size and frequency for organics.



This law applies to multi-family properties in the following jurisdictions:

Alameda  
Albany  
Berkeley  
Castro Valley Sanitary District  
Emeryville  
Fremont  
Hayward  
Livermore  
Newark  
Oakland  
Piedmont  
Pleasanton  
San Leandro

Unincorporated Alameda County (except areas within the boundaries of the Oro Loma Sanitary District)  
Union City

Rules vary by city. Learn the rules for your city at [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/cities-overview](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org/cities-overview).



### Notification Requirements

All multi-family and businesses properties with recycling and/or organics collection requirements must also:

Provide information at least annually to employees, tenants, and contractors describing how to properly use the recycling, garbage, and organics containers, as well as no later than 14 days after move-in and no less than 14 days prior to move-out of tenant businesses.

#### STAY INFORMED

Sign up for email alerts and more information about the new ordinance.

[RecyclingRulesAC.org/stay-informed](http://RecyclingRulesAC.org/stay-informed)

SIGN UP

## Alameda County Waste Management Authority Mandatory Recycling Ordinance

Visit [www.RecyclingRulesAC.org](http://www.RecyclingRulesAC.org) for more information about the Ordinance and to find downloadable resources, including posters, employee/tenant letters and more! To learn more about the State's recycling regulations, visit [www.CalRecycle.ca.gov](http://www.CalRecycle.ca.gov).