

PROPER DISPOSAL RECYCLING & WASTE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR MUNICIPALITIES

A Guide to doing it right in Lawrence
and Mercer Counties.



In Pennsylvania, municipalities have responsibility for trash and recycling collection. Municipalities with a population of 5,000 or more are required to have curbside recycling programs for their residents and businesses. These are referred to as "mandated municipalities." Those under 5,000 have the option to choose whether to establish a program or not.

Outside of mandated municipalities, there is a significant difference between municipal programs. Some choose not to do anything, some have contracts for waste collection only, some for waste and recycling, and some have chosen to self-mandate.

Archaic practices, such as burning and dumping, still occur in many rural areas. Changes in the waste stream make these practices potentially hazardous. The composition of trash was primarily glass, metal, and paper a few decades ago. Burning was much more common, and although a nuisance, its environmental impacts were minimal. Now, our waste stream is much more toxic. Electronics contain toxic components and the burning of plastic, which is a major portion of our waste, emits many hazardous compounds.

Residents are more environmentally aware and municipalities are often asked about trash and recycling collection. Municipalities that are interested in developing or improving their programs have many options available. Every municipality has specific needs, and fortunately, waste and recycling programs can be crafted around those needs and limitations.

Basic Drop-off Program

A basic drop-off program for waste and/or recycling is a good choice for small and very rural municipalities. This approach consists of hosting dumpsters/recycling bins in a designated location.

Pros: Materials accepted, hours and times can be set by the municipality and it can be limited to residents only. Multiple municipalities can partner on a program to share expenses.

Cons: The cost of the program is the responsibility of the municipality. Illegal dumping at drop-off sites can be a problem. Municipalities are also responsible for enforcement and cleanup.

Curbside Collection - Subscription Based

With curbside collection, trash and recyclables are picked up at a person's home or place of business. In a subscription based program, residents and businesses are free to pick the hauler of their own choosing.

Pros: The municipality is not responsible for paying for the program. It can be done with or without an ordinance. Residents recycle at their leisure without having to drive to a drop-off site. Minimal program impacts when recycling markets are down.

<https://lawrencecountypa.gov/departments/recycling-and-solid-waste>

www.mercercountypa.gov/recycling

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Cons: Not all haulers provide the same service. Some haulers offer recycling outside of mandated municipalities, some do not. Without an ordinance, gaps in service because of non-participants, will result in higher costs. Multiple trucks from multiple companies running on municipal roads. Open burning and illegal dumping could be problematic, especially without an ordinance. Theft of services may also be a problem for local businesses when residents without service deposit their trash into business dumpsters.

Curbside Collection - Municipal Collection with Ordinance

Municipalities provide curbside trash and recycling collection for their residents using municipal staff and equipment. Can be paid for with taxes, per container/bag fees, or monthly per household fees.

Pros: May be a cheaper alternative than using a contractor. All residents are required to use the program. Back door pickup, bulky items, spring/fall cleanups, yard waste, electronics, and other materials can be included as options with proper planning and budgeting. Municipality can set fees necessary for the program.

Cons: Planning is important or vehicle failures and recycling market crashes can be costly. Municipality is responsible for all aspects of the program: billing, complaints, enforcement, equipment, budgeting, vehicle repairs, etc. May be time consuming for municipal staff. Unwillingness to raise fees when necessary will result in a financial loss or loss of services.

Curbside Collection - Municipal Contract with Ordinance (Recommended)

Curbside collection of trash and recyclables with an ordinance and contract for service. The cost of the program can be paid for by the municipality via taxes or fees, or paid directly by residents to the contractor.

Pros: Everyone is required to participate (exceptions may be made) and residents are responsible for the costs. Municipalities can choose whether to have residents pay the municipality or hauler directly. The cost of contracted rate versus a subscription rate will be significantly cheaper, often up to 40-50% cheaper. Municipalities can partner together on a contract for uniform service and reduced rates. Back door pickup, bulky items, spring/fall cleanups, yard waste, electronics, and other materials can be included as options in the contract. The municipality may collect a franchise fee. The franchise fee could be used to help people who may not be able to afford their bill. One hauler is running trucks on municipal roads. The contractor can be responsible for equipment and providing all services.

Cons: Municipalities are responsible for enforcing the ordinance and may be responsible for the collection of fees if that is stated in the contract. Residents do not get to hire the hauler of their choice, but are required to use the hauler designated by the municipality.

Curbside Collection - Municipal Contract without Ordinance

In this option, a municipality would secure a contract for service without an ordinance.

Pros: Residents must use the contracted hauler but are not required to subscribe to service. Payment options are similar to a contract with an ordinance. Back door pickup, bulky items, spring/fall cleanups, yard waste, electronics, and other materials can be included as options in the contract.

Cons: Higher costs, largely due to bidding haulers not being sure of participation rates. Residents not participating. Open burning and illegal dumping could be problematic, especially without an ordinance. Theft of services may also be a problem for local businesses when residents without service deposit their trash into business dumpsters. Lack of options such as recycling or bulky item collection may discourage people from participating.

These are brief descriptions of the most common options available for a municipal program.

Feel free to contact us for assistance investigating or developing potential options for recycling and waste management that will meet your specific needs.

Businesses and institutions may be included in a municipal contract. Most municipalities opt to let businesses and institutions select their own hauler.

Carts, Containers, or Bags?

Wheeled carts are easy to move and come in a variety of sizes and colors. Lids prevent litter.

Wheel-less containers come in a variety of sizes and colors as well. More difficult to move, especially if using a large size.

Bags alone aren't recommended as an option because of their small size.

Bags may be used as an option for seniors and others who don't generate much waste.

Municipalities are encouraged to partner on contracts and programs. This can help reduce cost and add program and education consistency.

MISCELLANEOUS OPTIONS THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED FOR PART OF YOUR PROGRAM

Multi-family Dwelling

Mul-family dwelling units are those with five or more families. These are considered commercial buildings and the owners or landlords are responsible for arranging appropriate recycling and trash services. Municipalities may include these types of units into a municipal contract.

Leaf Waste

Mandated municipalities are required to provide opportunities for leaf waste, which includes leaves, garden residue, tree trimmings, shrubbery, and similar materials. It does NOT include grass clippings. Leaf waste collection is an option for non-mandated municipalities. Grass can be collected as well as long as the compost facility is permitted to accept it.

Leaf waste can be included in a municipal contract and often includes the use of a wheeled cart. Municipalities can also opt to collect leaf waste on their own. In all situations, an authorized site must be utilized for the materials.

Spring/Fall Cleanups - Central Drop-off Point

This option is best suited for small and rural municipalities. Numerous roll-off boxes are placed on site, usually a municipal building and residents bring the materials directly to the site. Sufficient space will be needed to place the dumpsters and stage vehicles without disrupting normal traffic.

Pros: Residents may be charged or the service can be operated at the municipality's expense. It gives residents an opportunity to clean out their homes.

Cons: Cannot accept certain materials such as electronics, tires, and hazardous wastes. Residency will need verified. Sufficient municipal staff will be necessary to run equipment, help unload, check IDs, etc. Residents without a truck or trailer may not be able to participate. Usually a once per year program. Illegal dumping may be a problem after hours and before the dumpsters are removed.

Spring/Fall Cleanup/Bulky Item Collection - Curbside with Municipal Contract

Annual cleanup days established when residents can put bulky items out to the curb for disposal. This option is best paired with a municipal contract. Without a contract, the cost can be prohibitive for a municipality.

Pros: It give residents an annual, or more frequent depending on the contract, opportunity to get rid of large items. Fairly easy to include in a municipal contract. All residents have access and they don't need to pack and haul their waste to a different location. Adding this option to a contract will increase the cost slightly, but it is usually deemed worth the expense by residents. Waste limits may be set, to discourage outside participation.

Cons: Cannot accept certain materials such as electronics, tires, and hazardous wastes. Usually a once per year program. Will increase the contract price slightly. If limits are not set, non-residents may try to use the program.

Bulky Item Collection - Tag Program

Tags are purchased by residents to place on bulky items for curbside pickup. Tags can be included in a municipal contract or as part of a municipal provided collection. Some haulers offer bulky item collection for their subscription based customers.

Pros: Provides bulky item disposal year-round. Can be used as a standalone program or to supplement an annual cleanup program. Materials are collected at residents' homes. Relatively inexpensive for residents versus the cost of a spring cleanup or renting a dumpster.

Cons: Residents must purchase pre-printed tags from a designated point or points. Cost to residents, usually \$5 to \$10 per item.

Special Items

Municipalities and haulers may also offer disposal and recycling opportunities for appliances, tires, electronics, and household hazardous wastes. Municipalities may choose to host on-going or periodic programs. Curbside collection of electronics and household hazardous wastes is becoming more common and is frequently added to municipal contracts. Some haulers offer special curbside pickup for their customers.

Pros: Good method to remove potentially toxic materials from the waste stream. Variety of ways to offer the service. When the service is provided as part of a municipal contract, the resulting per household cost is lower.

Cons: Materials such as electronics and household hazardous wastes are expensive to manage. One-day collections do not provide on-going solutions for residents. Will increase the cost of the contract.

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