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Going green is
a **BRIGHT** idea

Tips For a Greener Multi-family Recycling Program

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As a city way ahead of much of the country in “Green” initiatives, Austin is a great market to set the standard for successful multi-family recycling programs. Since 1999, recycling has been mandatory for apartment communities with 100 units or more in the City of Austin. Although the ordinance was a positive step in making recycling a priority in multi-family environments, building and managing a truly successful recycling program at your communities is no small challenge.

Apartments Face Three Big Challenges with Recycling

1. Resident Participation
2. Onsite Logistics
3. Costs

Resident participation is critical for a recycling program to be durably effective. Without consistent, proper participation, material diversion rates are low and contamination (i.e. trash in recycling containers) is high. In practice, maintaining resident participation has been a huge challenge for multi-family recycling programs. A study by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) titled “Multi-family Recycling – A National Study” found that the average multi-family diversion rate was only 14.6 percent. With residents being the origination point of recycling materials at your community, increasing diversion rates heavily depends on motivating residents to use the program.

Logistics is a common - and often complicated - challenge in apartment communities and it strongly correlates to resident participation. By logistics, we are referring to the storage and transportation process onsite to ensure recyclable materials end up in the proper containers – not strewn across your common areas. At multi-level apartments, space availability for staging

recyclables prior to deposit in centralized containers and the accessibility of collection containers can present formidable obstacles.

Costs are another consideration. Although recycling has a public reputation as being a money saver, in practice recycling can be costly from a collections and processing standpoint. The EPA study found multi-family recycling costs per ton to be almost three times more expensive in comparison with landfill disposal of municipal solid waste. The waste industry’s infrastructure for multi-family recycling is much thinner than its mainstream processes for land filling waste. The cost disparity between recycling and land filling waste should narrow over time with increased

adoption of recycling and subsequent industry efficiencies, but economics dictate it will take paying customers to make it happen. The simple message here is that recycling may be most healthily viewed as an investment today versus a way to cut costs.

Don't Forget About Household Hazardous Waste

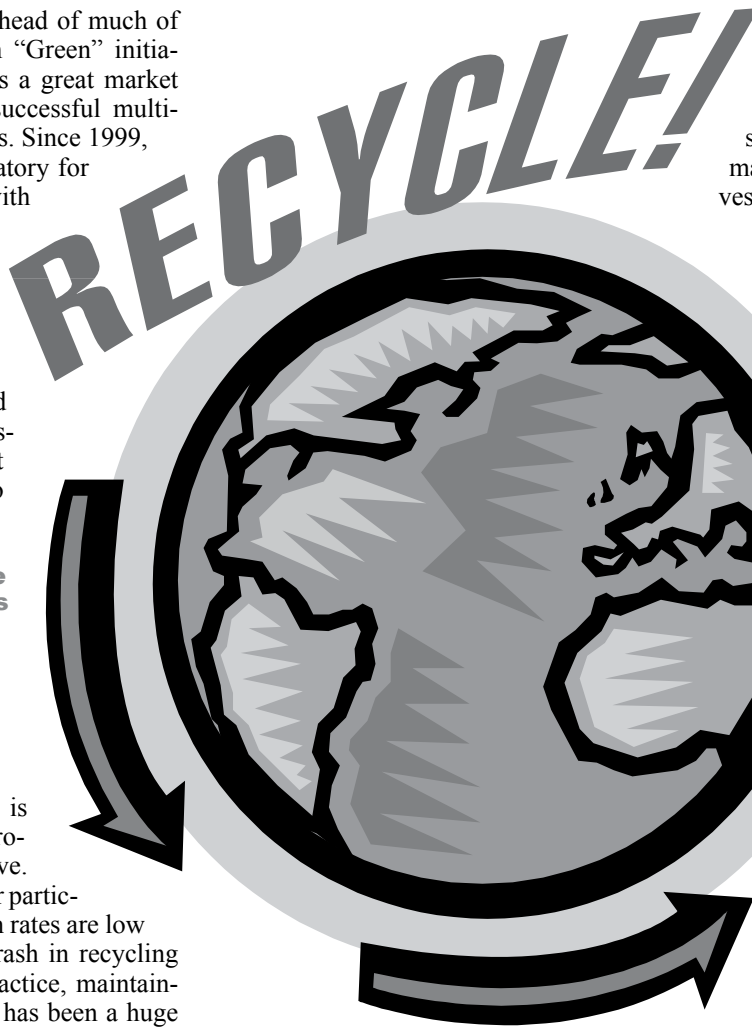
Historically, waste has been viewed as a fairly simple industry. Put out some dumpsters, throw away your trash and forget about it. But a renewed strength in the nationwide green movement is bringing more awareness and new legislation to increasingly de-

fine waste into more specific categories. Household Hazardous Waste (HHW), which falls under an umbrella category of “Universal Waste,” is becoming a greater concern for apartment communities. In 2004, UNITS magazine (National Apartment Association) published an article warning owners and managers of the environmental, safety and legal hazards of properly managing household hazardous waste items such as cleaning agents, pesticides, bulbs and batteries – all of which are common materials in apartment communities. It is common for these items to end up in trash containers today, but the time has come for owners and managers to address household hazardous waste from an environmental and risk management perspective.

Tips For a Better Green Program

1. Education, Education, Education
2. Be Proactive
3. Resident Investment
4. Consider a Waste Industry Partner

Education takes work with recycling,



but it is a necessary commitment for success. Educating the onsite staff is extremely important, and making the Community Manager your "Green Team Leader" shows residents the importance of the initiative to the community. Community Managers can keep a recycling dialogue active and fresh onsite with the maintenance staff and also provide an excellent source of excitement, awareness and accountability for staff and residents.

Being proactive means staying current on recycling information, upcoming industry changes and new service products and providers. It also means using this information to organize green efforts outside of your standard recycling services. Many proactive efforts can be free, easily implemented and great "green" press for your community with residents. Examples include educating residents on how to remove themselves from junk mail lists for material reduction, organizing an e-waste day to make it easy for residents to get rid of old electronics that shouldn't go in your trash containers and educating residents on options for their old analog televisions with the upcoming HDTV programming switchover. It also means collaborating regularly with current recycling service providers to capitalize on program efficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

Resident investment from a financial

standpoint has been correlated with higher success recycling programs. You may only charge a few dollars per unit per month for recycling, but paying for a recycling program has been shown to increase resident involvement and proper usage of the program. And, the additional revenue from resident involvement is a nice boost to Net Operating Income.

A Waste Industry Partner - Understandably, waste and recycling service management is not the core focus of a multi-family management company. And as such, the internal investment to effectively spearhead this area is not always practical. To that end, establishing a partnership with a capable waste expense management company can be a good solution. A company focused purely on waste and recycling expense management should have the industry knowledge, focused resources and vendor relationships to help your communities manage business-practical green initiatives. In evaluating a waste and recycling expense management partner, it is important to find a company with no conflicts of interest that could affect recommendations to you. For example, many companies in the waste expense management space are also in the equipment business. Also beware of "shared savings" fees. While these services can appear to be "free" on the surface, shared savings billing is quite nebu-

lous for the customer and often costs more in fees and headaches than a simple flat fee service arrangement. Lastly, it is important to choose a company with multi-family experience. Apartment environments present unique challenges for recycling. A firm that understands the overall goals and priorities for a clean and profitable community is paramount.

In the end, multi-family recycling is a matter of consistent education, commitment and problem-solving. Kermit the Frog was right when he said, "It ain't easy being green." But, with the right focus and resources your communities can maintain a healthy recycling program.

Source: EPA530-R-01-018 Multifamily Recycling - A National Study

Source: UNITS - A toxic solution: proper disposal of dangerous household waste can shield apartment owners from health, environmental and legal hazards.

About the author

Bryce Kaspar is President and CEO of WASTE REDUCTION Consultants, Inc., a national waste expense management company serving the multi-family industry since 1999. For more information about WASTE REDUCTION's services, call 1-800-332-1554; or visit www.wasteconsultants.com

GREEN FACTS

During the summer months, 50% of residential water is used on landscapes.

Creating a new aluminum can from scratch takes 95% more energy than making a can from recycled aluminum.

Making a ton of paper from recycled stock saves up to 17 trees and uses 50% less water than making paper from virgin fiber.

Only 10% of the energy used by an incandescent bulb produces light; the rest is given off as heat.

By 2025, the world must increase its water supply by 22 percent in order to meet its needs. Meanwhile, 40 percent of the drinking water supplied to homes is flushed down the toilet.

A family of four using low-flow showerheads instead of full-flow models can save about 20,000 gallons of water per year.

Almost 40% of America's waste is paper and could be recycled, meaning fewer trees cut down.

A leaky faucet can waste up to 20 gallons of water per day, and a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons a day.

Swapping 16 incandescent bulbs for compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) saves emissions equivalent to taking a car off the road for a year.

Recycling Centers Info

FACILITY DROP-OFF HOURS FOR BUSINESSES

Businesses may drop off hazardous household waste by appointment only. Please contact Mike Van Zandt at (512) 974-4334 for details.
2514 Business Center Drive