

# RECYCLING

## IN RESTAURANTS AND BARS

### FACT SHEET

#### ■ CORRUGATED CARDBOARD DISPOSAL BAN

Corrugated cardboard is not garbage. Starting **April 1, 2018**, the landfill will **not accept** clean and dry corrugated cardboard.<sup>1</sup> It must be reused or recycled. Corrugated cardboard (pictured below) is defined as three or more layers of paper with the middle layer rippled or corrugated.



#### ■ CHALLENGES TO RECYCLING IN RESTAURANTS AND BARS

This fact sheet provides useful information to help restaurants and bars keep corrugated cardboard out of the landfill and overcome typical recycling challenges, including: infrastructure challenges, adequate bin labelling and capacity, training and buy-in of staff and customers.

#### ■ VALUE OF RECYCLING FOR RESTAURANTS AND BARS

- **Reputation.** Recycling is a visible way restaurants and bars can show their commitment to environmental stewardship. In Lincoln, companies can earn public recognition for their recycling leadership through the [Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program](#).
- **Cost Savings.** For every ton of garbage diverted from the landfill, \$34.75 in disposal costs is avoided. Collection fees must still be paid when recycling, but the tipping fee is often less than landfilling or non-existent. Sometimes recycling high-value, clean materials, such as cardboard and metal, earn businesses extra revenue.
- **Save Energy and Protect the Environment.** The energy spent to recycle materials like aluminum, plastics and paper is far lower than the amount of energy it takes to produce these products from raw materials.

#### ■ OVERCOMING RECYCLING CHALLENGES IN RESTAURANTS AND BARS

- **Develop a Plan for Cardboard.** If your business does not currently recycle corrugated cardboard, begin planning as soon as possible (corrugated cardboard disposal ban effective as of April 1, 2018). Discuss convenient options to contract on-site recycling with your current garbage or recycling collector, or search for better services by contracting a new collector. Every [garbage collector](#) is required to offer recycling services to their commercial customers at least twice per year. You may also choose to self-haul cardboard to a recycling processor (see Links &

<sup>1</sup> LMC 8.32.040, Sect. C / Recyclable cardboard\* shall not be accepted by the City for disposal in the City's public sanitary landfills effective April 1, 2018. (\*Clean and dry corrugated cardboard.)

Resources below). Public recycling sites are provided for **residential** use and should not be used by commercial establishments.

- **Inspect Your Garbage.** Assess your garbage and make a list of recyclables, organic and landfill items that are being generated by your facility. If you have a recycling program in place, inspect recycling for contamination (the presence of garbage in recycling bins). Inspect all areas of your property, noting where certain types of recyclables are generated to focus your efforts.
- **Avoid Surplus.** Reduce waste at the source when you purchase products. Develop a flexible system of ordering to acquire perishable products that you know will be used and not thrown away. Contact local food banks to donate food that you know will not be served.
- **Bulk-order Long-lasting Items.** To minimize waste, try to reduce packaging over time by purchasing long-life items in bulk. When shipped, these items should be bundled into as few containers as possible. Contact your vendor to request minimal packaging.
- **Always Offer To-Go Boxes.** Any facility that serves food will have a significant amount of waste leftover from customers. To minimize food waste, always offer To-Go boxes to divert the food from your garbage stream.
- **Compost.** To divert any remaining food waste, consider beginning a compost program. Composting can reduce the frequency of garbage pickups. Adding compost pickups may reduce or offset garbage and recycling collection costs. Click here for a list of [organic waste services](#) in Lincoln and Lancaster County.
- **Develop a Single-stream Recycling System.** Analyze your waste stream in the kitchen and dining area to determine how much material being thrown away is recyclable. All #1-7 plastics, aluminum, and tin that is generated in your restaurant or bar can be recycled in a single-stream system. Contact your current garbage collector to get a quote on how much it will cost to add recycling to your pickups. Ask if it would be possible to reduce the size and amount of your current garbage containers to help offset the additional cost.
- **Strategically Place Indoor Containers.** Using a consistent container system is crucial to the success of a waste diversion program. Consider reducing garbage bins in the dining area and in the kitchen to represent the changing waste stream. Then, place a recycling bin and compost bin directly next to each remaining garbage bin.
- **Use Consistent Bin Colors and Labelling.** Color coding of recycling and garbage bins is important. The industry standard is that garbage bins are black and recycling bins are blue. This color coding helps people know which materials go where. Uniform bin size is also important. Each bin should be labeled with a color-coded sign that includes images of what is recyclable. This will assist employees and patrons in putting garbage and recycling items in the correct bins. Including images of acceptable materials for each container will help overcome language barriers. [Recycle Across America](#) provides uniform labels for purchase. Click [here](#) for more information on recycling signage.
- **Maximize Space Efficiency.** On the exterior of your building, consider reducing the size of your garbage dumpster to accommodate additional recycling or composting dumpsters and carts. Contact your garbage collector to inquire about types and sizes of containers available. A great way to lower your monthly collection service costs and maximize space is to work with

neighboring businesses to implement a shared waste hauling system. For an example, refer to this [shared waste hauling case study](#) from the Nebraska Recycling Council.

- **Continually Train Employees.** Employees will be the catalysts to implementing a sustainable waste reduction program. Be sure to train all employees during start-up, and include training during new employee orientations. Managers and employees alike should become recycling experts to help customers with any questions when discarding items.
- **Set a Goal.** Set a goal to increase your restaurant or bar's recycling rate. This is not only important for tracking purposes, but can also get your staff excited about recycling. In order to set a goal, it's necessary to establish your baseline waste diversion rate. Estimate your diversion rate using the handy [Waste Diversion Rate Calculator](#).
- **Get Financial Assistance.** Take advantage of the City's [Waste Reduction and Recycling Assistance Program \(WRRAP\)](#), which provides rebates of up to \$750 to start a waste reduction program. Look for local or state grants to help with additional funding if needed, such as those provided by the [Nebraska Recycling Council](#).
- **Celebrate Your Success.** Create an atmosphere of pride by continually promoting the success of your recycling program. Report the amount of recyclables diverted from the landfill to employees and customers. Apply to the [Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program](#) and earn public recognition for your efforts.

## LINKS & RESOURCES

- **Commercial Recycling Self-Assessment and Waste Diversion Rate Calculator**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/self-assessment.htm>  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/waste-diversion-calculator.htm>
- **Corrugated Cardboard Disposal Ban FAQ**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/corrugated-cardboard.htm>
- **Guide to Selecting / Contracting for Garbage and Recycling Collection**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/commercial/fact-sheets/pdf/collection-contracting.pdf>
- **Local Garbage and Recycling Collectors**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/collectors.htm>
- **Multilingual Resources**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/multilingual-resources.htm>
- **Nebraska Recycling Council**  
<http://www.nrcne.org>
- **Nebraska Recycling Council: Restaurants and Bars Guide**  
[http://nrcne.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Best\\_Practices\\_Restaurant\\_Guide\\_to\\_Waste\\_Reduction.pdf](http://nrcne.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Best_Practices_Restaurant_Guide_to_Waste_Reduction.pdf)
- **Nebraska Recycling Council: A Restaurant & bar Manager's Guide to Recycling**  
<http://nrcne.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Restaurant-Managers-Guide.pdf>
- **Recycle Across America**  
<http://www.recycleacrossamerica.org/>

- **Recycle Lincoln Leadership Recognition Program**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/wrrap/recognition.htm>
- **Recycling Guidelines by Material**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/wrrap/recognition.htm>
- **Recycling Processing Centers**
  - Firststar Fiber, 402-894-0003, <https://firststarrecycling.com/>
  - Mid-America Recycling, 402-476-8502, <http://www.midamericarecycling.com>
  - Recycling Enterprises, 402-421-6655, <http://www.recyclelincoln.com/>
- **Waste Reduction and Recycling Assistance Program (WRRAP)**  
<http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov/wrrap/>

For more information about recycling and Lincoln's corrugated cardboard diversion efforts, visit [recycle.lincoln.ne.gov](http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov), email [recycle@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:recycle@lincoln.ne.gov) or call the Recycling Office at 402-441-8215.