

Multifamily Residential Recycling Program (Apartments & Condominiums Find the Cure For Their Recycling Blues)

by Cathie Chavez

The City of Los Angeles is among the growing number of cities committed to reducing the amount of trash sent to landfills. With a goal of diverting 70% of its trash from landfills by the year 2015, the city has developed specialized programs aimed at providing residents with enhanced recycling opportunities.

One such program, the Multifamily Residential Recycling Program, is Los Angeles' first attempt at providing citywide recycling services to multifamily residential properties. Starting April 2007, multifamily residential properties, such as apartments and condominiums, will be eligible to receive FREE recycling service similar to the type provided to single family residential homes.

Historically, the Los Angeles Municipal Code designates apartment buildings and condominiums of five units and larger as "commercial," which makes them ineligible for City collection services, including recycling services. Over the past three years, the City of Los Angeles has been conducting a pilot program to determine the best way to provide recycling service to multifamily residential buildings contracting with private waste haulers. City staff and residents have been pleased with the results of the three year pilot program that serviced nearly 70,000 multifamily residential units. Approximately 10,900 tons of waste has been diverted from landfills during the pilot program despite its limited service area. Property owners observed fewer overflowing trash bins and odor complaints because of their ability to store recyclables in blue bins. Some buildings were able to divert enough recyclable materials from their trash bin that they reduced the frequency of trash pickups. Ultimately, they were able to significantly reduce the cost of weekly trash collection.

With the success of the pilot program, the city has pledged to implement a permanent citywide program that would provide recycling services to the over half a million units in the city through a source separated recycling program. Participants will segregate recyclables from regular trash and place commingled recyclables into designated blue bins. In addition to receiving free recycling services and blue bins, residents will also be provided educational materials explaining what types of recyclables can be placed in blue bins. Recyclables accepted in the blue bins include beverage containers, bimetal cans, glass containers, newspaper, mixed paper, cardboard, aluminum cans and plastic bottles. The recyclables will be taken to Material Recovery Facilities where they will be sorted, baled, bundled, and shipped to companies needing recyclable material for the manufacturing of new products.

Approximately 500 buildings have expressed interest in participating in the citywide program since registration began in mid-2006. Individual property owners and project management groups have agreed to register their properties at the request of tenants or homeowner associations. Tenants, property owners or property management groups

interested in enrolling buildings in the Multifamily Residential Recycling Program can contact 1-866-933-1101 or email SRCRD@san.lacity.org.