



Equal Space for Recycling: A Simple Step toward Sustainability

No room for recycling in apartments, schools and businesses? Let's fix that problem by designing today for a more sustainable community tomorrow. With an Equal Space for Recycling policy, all new commercial buildings are required to designate enough space for recycling bins, just like they already do for trash bins.



Problem

Building codes requires commercial buildings to set aside a minimum amount of space for indoor and outdoor areas for trash collection. These spaces are often quite small and it can be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to add recycling or composting collection bins in these areas. Lack of space is one of the biggest barriers to recycling for apartments, schools, and businesses.

Solution

An Equal Space for Recycling policy requires new buildings to design and allocate space for recycling bins, similar to the existing requirements for trash bins. This small change to community infrastructure gives everyone the opportunity to recycle in the future



How it Works

An Equal Space policy amends the existing building code requirements for commercial buildings. The policy requires new buildings to provide space for recycling (and/or composting) containers, and specifies that the space provided must be at least as large as the space provided for trash containers.

The policy affects new construction and significant remodels of commercial buildings, including businesses, multi-family properties, schools, institutions and government facilities.



"The amount of space provided for the collection and storage of recyclable materials must be at least as large as the amount of space provided for the collection of refuse materials, and shall be designed to accommodate collection and storage containers consistent with the recyclable materials generated."

*Sample language excerpted from Broomfield, CO
Refuse and Recycling Area Ordinance 17-34-060*

How an Equal Space policy Improves the Community

- Ensures space for recycling at businesses and apartment complexes (Lack of space is one of the most common barriers to recycling.)
- Requires little to no public funding
- Creates the opportunity to recycle in traditionally underserved sectors
- Avoids future costs to expand trash collection areas for recycling
- Generates awareness about the importance of recycling
- Helps teach future generations that planning for conservation is the key to a sustainable future and a better quality of life
- Emphasizes the importance of separating recyclable materials from trash and makes recycling the norm in the community
- Buildings can work toward LEED certification by including recycling collection and storage areas.
- Improves recycling programs and increases revenue from materials collected, which benefits the local economy
- Increases recycling rates and the number of jobs from recycling. Recycling jobs have a low barrier to entry, a higher than average growth rate, and wages starting at nearly twice the Federal minimum wage

Success in Other Communities

Equal Space policies have been successfully adopted statewide in Wisconsin, Vermont and California. Communities that have adopted Equal Space policies include Broomfield, Superior, Boulder, Lafayette and Fort Collins in Colorado and Charlotte, North Carolina.

Take Action

An Equal Space policy can be adopted through a municipal ordinance or a revision to local building codes. Find out more about implementing an Equal Space policy and download sample policies at www.ecocyclesolutionshub.org.