



Developing an Equal Space Recycling Policy

Ensure your Equal Space Recycling policy provides the most benefit to your community by following these best practices on policy intent and language.

CORE ELEMENTS:

Issue: Should the policy call for adequate space or equal space?

Recommendation: Equal space

Requiring equal space for the collection and storage of recyclable materials provides a clear and easy standard. Equal space also places an equal emphasis on recycling. Requirements for adequate space, if not quantified further, may allow for too much interpretation, and this can lead to less than ample recycling areas.

Recommended language: 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 and storage of trash materials within and adjacent to buildings.

Issue: Should the policy apply to remodels as well as new construction?

Recommendation: New construction and remodels over 25%

The majority of equal space ordinances include some remodels in their requirements, along with all new commercial construction. The goal is to reduce the burden on smaller renovation projects while still targeting a large share of remodel projects. Remodel projects that increase the size of a space by 25% or more are significant enough to mandate the equal space requirement.

Recommended language: Applies to all new non-single-family structures or existing non-single-family structures proposed to be enlarged by 25% or more.

Issue: Should the policy include multi-family properties as well as other commercial buildings?

Recommendation: All non-single-family buildings

Multi-family residents should have the same convenient access to recycling as other residents and businesses. These properties should be included in the Equal Space policy. Having a consistent recycling program at home, work, school, and public places helps recycling become accepted as a widespread community practice.



Recommended language: Applies to all new non-single-family structures or existing non-single-family structures proposed to be enlarged by 25% or more.

Equal Space Policy Elements in U.S. Communities

Location	Requires equal space	Requires adequate space	Includes multi-family units (MFUs)	Includes remodels	Requires collection space be convenient and accessible
Boulder, CO	X		X	X	X
Broomfield, CO	X			X	X
Superior, CO		X	X		
Fort Collins, CO		X	X	X	X
Lafayette, CO		X			X
Charlotte, NC	X		X	X	
State of California		X	X	X	X
State of Wisconsin		X	X	X	
State of Vermont	X			X	X

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

In addition to the core elements of a successful policy detailed above, the following elements further strengthen an Equal Space policy and its impact:

Recommendation: Storage areas should be “convenient and accessible”

Convenience is paramount to the success of a recycling program, which means collection and storage areas must be convenient and accessible. It is important that this requirement takes into consideration not only tenants but also collection vehicles, so that collection areas may be easily serviced. Some communities further require that the recycling collection and storage areas be adjacent to trash collection areas to ensure convenience for tenants and collection vehicles.

Recommended language: Recycling area should be at least as accessible and convenient as the trash area for tenants and collection vehicles.



Recommendation: Storage areas allow future space for composting

More than 200 U.S. communities collect food scraps for composting. This means storage areas should also be designed to allow enough room for compost collection containers. This can be accomplished by adopting a broad definition in the policy of what is recyclable, so that it applies to yard trimmings and food waste, as well.

Recommended language: Definition of recyclable materials includes all common recyclable materials and organic materials (yard and food waste).

Recommendation: Recycling containers are required in public spaces

The state of Vermont requires recycling containers be provided in equal number to waste collection receptacles in and on all public property. Having recycling bins outside and in public areas across the community shows a strong public commitment to recycling.

Recommended language: When a container or containers in a public building or on public land are provided to the public for use for solid waste destined for disposal, an equal number of containers shall be provided for the collection of mandated recyclables...and shall be placed as close to each other as possible in order to provide equally convenient access to users.