



EQUAL SPACE FOR RECYCLING POLICY: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

An Equal Space for Recycling policy is a simple, straightforward step every community can take toward a sustainable future. Let's explore some frequently asked questions about adopting this policy.

WHAT IS AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY?

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. The regulation guarantees that buildings create the space needed for recycling bins to eliminate the space challenges that currently limit recycling in some buildings.

WHY IS EQUAL SPACE IMPORTANT?

An Equal Space policy creates the opportunity for everyone in the community to have convenient access to recycling bins. The lack of space for recycling is one of the biggest barriers to recycling at businesses, schools and apartments. The policy raises community awareness about recycling and is an important step toward building a more sustainable future.



Under an equal space policy, new commercial buildings must allocate space for recycling bins like this enclosure.

WHAT ARE THE EXACT REQUIREMENTS OF AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY?

Here is some sample language from a model Equal Space policy: *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 it shall be designed to accommodate collection and storage containers consistent with the recyclable materials generated.*

DOES AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY MEAN THAT THE BUILDINGS HAVE TO RECYCLE OR HAVE TO PROVIDE RECYCLING CONTAINERS?

No. An Equal Space policy only requires that an equal amount of space must be available, so that there is room to store recycling containers. The policy does not require the building owner or tenants to provide recycling containers or to participate in a recycling program.

WHO DOES AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY AFFECT?



Typically, this regulation applies to new buildings designed for *commercial* purposes. This can include multi-family properties, schools, businesses, institutions, and government facilities.

HOW DOES AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY AFFECT EXISTING BUILDINGS?

Usually, existing buildings are not affected by an Equal Space policy unless they undergo significant renovations. Commercial buildings that are substantially remodeled are required to provide space for recycling bins as a result of the renovations.

WHY DOESN'T AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY APPLY TO RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION?

Residential homes have many more options for storing trash and recycling containers in a safe and convenient location, including driveways, garages, back porches, etc. Lack of space is very rarely a barrier to recycling at single-family homes.

HOW IS AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY ENFORCED?

Enforcement usually occurs through the planning department during project design and building inspections. This policy works within the existing building code so it can be integrated into the existing enforcement mechanisms with little to no added costs.

HOW MUCH WILL AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY COST?

There are little to no public costs for implementing an Equal Space for Recycling policy. Current municipal staff already review project plans and building inspections, answer questions from developers, and post information on new policy changes. An Equal Space policy can dovetail into these existing practices. Developers may incur some upfront costs to modify designs or build additional space for collection containers.

ARE THERE MANY CITIES OR TOWNS THAT HAVE ADOPTED EQUAL SPACE POLICIES?

Yes, in fact three entire states – California, Wisconsin and Vermont – require buildings to make room for recycling. Policies are also in place in Charlotte, North Carolina and five Colorado cities: Superior, Lafayette, Boulder, Fort Collins and Broomfield.

WILL EQUAL SPACE REGULATION DRIVE AWAY COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT?

Building codes are important to the safety and well-being of a community. An Equal Space for Recycling regulation is only a minor adjustment to existing building codes. There is no evidence that adding an Equal Space requirement has an adverse effect on business. In fact, EPA-funded studies have shown that recycling actually strengthens communities. Not only are more jobs by recycling compared to landfilling, but those jobs also pay better wages. Tax revenues increase as recycling goes up and the collection of materials often attracts new businesses and bolsters economic development.



IS EQUAL SPACE PART OF GREEN BUILDING CODES?

LEED-certified commercial buildings must provide one easily accessible area to collect and store recyclable materials. An Equal Space policy expands slightly on that requirement to ensure there is adequate room for all recyclable materials.

ARE THERE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY?

Yes! Recycling saves natural resources, helps fight climate change, and reduces air and water pollution. An Equal Space policy can increase the amount of recycling collected from commercial buildings.

WHO SHOULD I TALK TO IN MY COMMUNITY ABOUT ADOPTING AN EQUAL SPACE POLICY?

Start by talking with someone from your local planning department. Bring sample language with you and ask if it is something the department has considered in the past. Inquire about the process for making changes to your community's building codes.

HOW TO TAKE ACTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Get the complete details on the steps you need to take, questions to ask and who to involve, as well as handouts, expert advice and more at ecocyclesolutionshub.org.