

The Art of Recycling:

City employees adopt-a-recycle bin program to expand single-stream recycling

Submitted by Alicia Archibald, BETTR Recycling, Inc.

Colorado Springs, Colorado, City employees have been recycling paper for years. At the same time, many employees have cared enough to take recycling a step further by collecting and sorting the recyclables generated in their office areas for recycling at home. Now that all of the community's waste providers offer single-stream recycling, the City is embracing this new way to recycle—with a creative twist. Single-stream recycling and recycling bins can come with a cost. So, the City has launched an employee volunteer-driven effort to make the change, despite current budget constraints.

These recycling bins are created out of shipping containers from a company in Longmont. SBM Site Services, LLC, issued a notice in the Colorado Association for Recycling list-serve, stating that a company in the Broomfield area that is generating a large amount of Fiber Barrels on a regular basis. SBM was interested in finding a reuse opportunity for these fiber barrels, rather than just recycling them into cardboard and metal. Local recycling leader Alicia Archibald, of **BETTR Recycling**, suggested creating a “new beginning” for the bins – decorating the bins in order to create a common theme for recycling in the City's facilities. In essence, highlighting the “Art of Recycling” as a way to generate enthusiasm and support for doing the right thing.

This strategy included an art contest to jump-start the program. Bins were decorated by City employees, professional artists and a local community youth group. While functional, the bins



don't start out all that attractive—in fact, they resemble an artists “blank canvas”. The City of Colorado Springs Green Team, a group of passionate volunteers, worked with the Cottonwood Center for the Arts to find professional artists willing to volunteer their services and decorate a bin. City employees also took these bins home to decorate, encourage team building and put employee creativity on display. The winners of the art contest were revealed on Thursday, July 16, 2009. The City's Stormwater Enterprise shared first place with the youth of Hillside Community Center.



BETTR Recycling paid for the bin delivery and information decals. Nearly 100 employees agreed to “adopt” a recycling bin, meaning that they’ll decorate the bin and take their area’s recyclables to one of a few single-stream roll-off bins located strategically throughout the City. Not only are the containers made from recycled materials, but once they serve their second life as a recycle bin, they can also be recycled. The bins can be found in employee and public facilities throughout the city.

BETTR Recycling is working on future plans to help the broader community embrace the same strategy in public and private buildings, as well as along downtown roadways to show that recycling is an art form, and that reuse is a big part of landfill diversion. Alicia encourages, “We must buy products made with recycled content; reduce our overall consumption; find reuse options, whenever possible, for unwanted materials; and recycle end-of-life materials into commodity streams.”

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