



Frequently Asked Questions

What led Metro to propose changes to multifamily regional service standards for garbage and recycling collection?

In 2017, Metro completed a first-of-its-kind assessment of multifamily garbage and recycling service volumes at over 70 percent of multifamily properties in the region, as well as the first statistically significant multifamily waste characterization study. The data informed project recommendations that were vetted by Metro and local governments, which then evolved into a set of [Regional Waste Plan](#) actions. These actions were supported by community engagement and input from advisory groups, including local governments and collection companies. In addition, Metro spoke with residents of multifamily homes to get their input on improvements that would help them better navigate their garbage and recycling system. The changes Metro is proposing are a result of the recommendations and input provided by these groups.

Why does this matter?

Twenty-five percent of people in the Portland metropolitan area live in apartments and condominiums. Garbage and recycling services for these multifamily homes have not met the needs of its residents for many years, and are not nearly as good as services provided to people living in single-family homes. The garbage and recycling bins are inconsistent and confusing, and often there are not enough of them. This results in loose garbage in and around garbage and recycling areas, which creates safety issues for both residents and collection companies. This has also led to a 21 percent contamination rate of the mixed recyclable stream—which means that 21 percent of items put in the recycling bins are not actually recyclable.

The changes Metro is proposing will help meet the needs expressed by people living in multifamily homes so they can effectively navigate their garbage and recycling system. It will also create safer conditions for residents and collection companies, and decrease the contamination rate of the mixed recyclable stream.

What does this require of me?

If you would like to weigh in on these changes, we invite you to do so. Between September 15 and October 15, you can visit www.oregonmetro.gov/servicestandards to share your thoughts directly on our website. You can also email us at ServiceStandards@oregonmetro.gov or mail written comments to:

Metro
Attn: Service Standards WPES
600 NE Grand Avenue
Portland, OR 97232

If you are a multifamily housing resident or community-based organization: Nothing is required of you.

If you are a local government official or staff person: Local governments may need to update their own provision of service standards, which may be documented in local code, administrative rule or procedure, or hauler franchise or license agreements. They will also need to ensure properties are meeting the required standards.

If you are a property manager or owner: You will need to ensure that services at your property meet the new standards.

If you are a collection company: You will need to provide the services required in the new standards for multifamily housing.

When will the new changes go into effect?

The first change residents will see will be the new decals and signs for bins, launching in Spring 2021. These will be rolled out over the next two years, with full implementation required by December 31, 2023. Old decals and stickers must also be removed during this period to reduce visual clutter and avoid confusion. Within seven years, all multifamily housing roll carts and containers will meet the new color code.

Why is Metro doing this now?

People living in multifamily homes have not received garbage and recycling services that meet their needs, and that should change. The proposed updates to Metro code and rules ensure that people living in multifamily homes receive quality service that meets their needs. This project has been underway for the last five years, and changes will be implemented over the next seven years.

Will this increase my utility costs or raise my rent?

Minimum service volumes should not result in additional costs, and the changes shouldn't immediately or substantively affect your garbage bill.

However, if you live at a site that has not had enough garbage and recycling services to meet the needs of residents, new containers may be added, and the frequency of garbage and recycling collection may need to increase to ensure you have the right level of service. Your property owner or manager makes the decision about how the costs of garbage and recycling are shared. They are limited by state law in how much they can charge you ([Oregon Revised Statutes, Title 10, Residential Landlord and Tenant, Chapter 90.315](#)).

What will the new signage look like? What languages will they be in?

The new decals and signs use images of the type of items that can be disposed of in the garbage and recycling, so residents can correctly identify which bins the materials belong in. The design is informed by recent Metro bilingual (Spanish) research and was user-tested with residents of multifamily homes. They will include English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese and Chinese languages.

What is the timing for color standard implementation?

Metro is proposing a seven-year timeline for color standard implementation. This timeline, developed in partnership with a local consultant, Chris Bell, who helps area governments set rates, provides a cost-effective timeline for implementation, and gives collection companies the most flexibility in meeting the requirement. It also takes advantage of the seven-year equipment depreciation schedule already built into local government franchised commercial rates.

Are there additional costs for minimum service volumes?

Minimum service volumes should not result in additional costs. For franchised commercial areas (i.e., all areas outside of Portland city limits), most commercial rate structures already provide for a one-to-one ratio of garbage to recycling collection service.

Who did you talk to as a part of this process for developing the content of the updated code and rule?

Metro completed a [collaborative analysis of garbage and recycling](#) in apartment and condominium buildings across greater Portland. This report outlined themes we heard from 20 government program interviews, 54 interviews with residents and community-based organizations, multifamily-specific data from over 4,000 garbage and recycling accounts, and analysis of recycling contamination and recyclable items in the garbage stream.

What else did you hear as a part of this process?

In addition to inadequate access to recycling services, confusing collection equipment (bins, carts, containers, drop boxes or compactors), and high rates of contamination in the recycling, we also heard concerns about how bulky waste is managed. We learned that the disposal of bulky items, such as sofas, chairs, appliances and mattresses, is a significant issue for multifamily residents. These items can create unsafe and unhealthy situations, encourage loitering, and block access to bins for residents and collection company employees. Bulky waste is handled inconsistently from building to building, and many residents don't feel empowered to approach their property managers about these items. Due to high household turnover, multifamily households may generate this waste at a greater rate than single-family households.

We don't have data yet to address the bulky waste issue, but Metro will aim to address this in the future. We want to co-identify the specific challenges and co-develop solutions alongside community members, local governments, property managers and collection companies to find solutions that best address their needs.

What other education is Metro doing to improve recycling?

For years, Metro has built partnerships with local governments to provide on-site education and outreach to residents. We have also partnered with community-based organizations and local affinity groups and associations to provide residents with a wide variety of access points for educational materials.

What's the difference between Metro code and rules?

Metro "code" is a law or policy adopted by the elected governing body (Metro Council), often related to outcomes the governing body wants to see. Metro "rule" is the detail of how the code is implemented, which is often delegated to the staff and administrative arm of an agency. By nature, rules can be more quickly updated to be responsive to the changing needs of our stakeholders. Rules do not change or make policies.

How does this connect to Metro's bigger Regional Waste Plan?

This code and rule adoption delivers on three of Metro's 2030 Regional Waste Plan (RWP) actions under Goal #10: *Provide regionally consistent services for garbage, recyclables and other priority materials that meet the needs of all users.*

10.1 Provide comprehensive collection services and supporting education and assistance for source-separated recyclables, source-separated food scraps and garbage, in compliance with state, regional and local requirements, including the Regional Service Standard, Business Recycling Requirement and Business Food Waste Requirement in Metro Code.

10.2 Implement minimum service levels or performance standards for all collected materials for multifamily and commercial tenants.

10.3 Implement regional standards for collection container colors, signage and other related informational materials for single-family, multifamily and commercial services.

The RWP sets the policy direction for the region’s solid waste and recycling system. It is very different from previous plans in that its values, principles, goals and actions specifically reflect the needs and aspirations of members of our community who haven’t historically had a strong voice in the development of environmental plans, policies and programs.

How often are regional waste standards and requirements updated?

Not frequently. Standards for multifamily housing have not been updated in over 20 years. Standards are normally updated when the region adopts a new waste plan or when significant changes in the garbage and recycling industry occur (such as a transition from a small bin to standard wheeled carts, or changes to what goes into the recycling).

There are some terms I’m not familiar with – like “minimum service levels” and “contaminants.” Where can I find out what these terms mean?

A glossary of terms commonly used when talking about solid waste can be found [here](#).

Where can I provide my input and comments?

You can visit www.oregonmetro.gov/servicestandards to share your thoughts directly on our website. You can also email us at ServiceStandards@oregonmetro.gov or mail written comments to:

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