



CAMPUS CENTERS, UNIONS & COMMONS SITE AUDIT FOR RECYCLING

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anybody interested in starting, assessing or improving their recycling program at their campus center, student union or common areas. Please refer to our foodservice site audit guide as a resource for dining cash operations, grab and go, dining commons and café recycling issues.

CAMPUS CENTERS, UNIONS & COMMONS SITE AUDIT FOR RECYCLING



PLAN AROUND THE BUSIEST AREAS ON CAMPUS.

MAIN ENTRANCE OR LOBBY On many campuses, the main entrance or main lobby of their campus center and/or student union is one of the most prominent locations on campus. The location is key to promoting the school to the public, to prospective students, and even to alumnae. What message are you sending through the décor, furnishings, and maintenance of this space?

Bins in this location may be of more value from a messaging perspective than from the perspective of how much material you will recover [read more on this concept at our “Green but unseen” blog post].

For anything less than high-aesthetic bins, it will be a massive fight to get them placed in this location in the first place. Even if you succeed, they will likely end up hidden in an unseen corner and will go unused. [read on this concept at our “Better aesthetics = better results” blog post]

Because this area gets a lot of traffic from people not familiar with your program, you are going to need to make it very easy

[both to do and to understand] if you want folks to recycle. This is an area where parallel access and restrictive openings are critical.

STAFF & STUDENT ORG/CLUB OFFICES Throughout most campus centers and student unions there are a series of offices dedicated to one or more student organizations. Often students involved with the club will spend a considerable amount of time there so expect both recyclable paper and bottles & cans to be generated. Make sure to provide bins for both.

Will custodians have access to these offices in order to empty trash and recycling bins? If not, you’ll need to have a centralized waste & recycling location for student orgs to bring their bins and empty them into a larger container.

The specific size of the bin in the student org office will depend on the size of the offices. These are typically not high aesthetic areas. Higher aesthetic bins may be better suited for more prominent public areas of the building.

CAFES, FOOD COURTS, AND OTHER FOODSERVICE CASH OPERATIONS Many, if not most, campus centers or student unions have one or more foodservice areas in the building. They can range in size from a small coffee kiosk to large food courts that rival those in shopping malls. Those areas have some distinctive waste and resource use dynamics that must be considered.

This is typically an area that gets very distinct surges in traffic and use. For example, a food court may be completely swamped with people at lunch time, but nearly empty at 2 pm. Containers must be sized and serviced in a way that accommodates these surges.

Make sure you have included paper recycling bins in these areas. Foodservice areas are also typically areas where students will aggregate to study or meet for study groups. As such, they may have a significant amount of paper to recycle. In addition, foodservice areas are typically a distribution point for free newspapers (whether the student paper or other free community papers).

These areas will typically have a considerable quantity of food-related packaging. This can range anywhere from waxed paper sandwich/sub/grinder/hoagie wrappers to plastic clamshells, to aluminum pie plates, to “disposable” paper plates and cups. Are there opportunities to direct vendors regarding the type of packaging used, so that the majority of packaging is recyclable, compostable, or at least minimized?

Are there opportunities to change restrictive openings on your bins to adapt to changes in packaging trends? For example, you may currently need a bin with 2 compartments for trash to accommodate all of the disposable food packaging but want

the opportunity to convert one of those two compartments to become an additional recycling or composting bin in the future, if an effort to move toward more compostable or recyclable packaging is pursued.

*For more in-depth considerations surrounding issues of outdoor collection please refer to our whitepaper Site Audit for Foodservice Areas

PUBLIC MEETING ROOMS Whether it is for a large conference, or a meeting of students, faculty and/or staff, these conference rooms are often used as mini event sites.

As such, waste from these rooms is often erratic. Look at establishing a protocol for bringing in extra bins and for how these materials will be picked up after the event:

Trash: Even if you plan a zero waste event, there is going to be some waste brought in by attendees from off-site. If you don't have a place for it, it will end up contaminating your recycling or compost bins.

Bottles & Cans: Even if most beverages are served in cups, there are usually some juice or water bottles, or bottles brought to the event from off site.

Cardboard: Typically stuff is getting brought to these events from other locations and often involves cardboard boxes. Be sure to have a protocol regarding where to tell attendees to set aside their cardboard boxes, and to ensure that the custodial or campus center event staff has a protocol to collect those boxes for recycling after the meeting.

Food Waste: There is likely to be food whether it is attendees bringing in their own food, or campus catering providing food.*



Because this area gets a lot of traffic from people not familiar with your program, you are going to need to make it very easy—both to use and to understand—if you want folks to recycle.



- If you have a food compost infrastructure in the building, look to make post-event food composting a function of catering cleanup.
- Consider developing a “do it yourself” protocol for student groups on a budget or meetings/events for which attendees are expected to bring in their own food (and thus catering not involved). Make host organization designate a responsible person who will be given access to the back dumpster area to dump the food waste that they collect.

*For more in-depth considerations surrounding issues of food waste please refer to our whitepaper Site Audit for Effective Recycling and Composting in Foodservice Operations

OUTSIDE LOCATIONS By design, many campus center locations have outdoor spaces as well as indoor spaces.

For these outdoor locations, is there enough traffic aggregating to justify year-round recycling and trash bins? Or is the building better served by removing all trash and recycling from the outdoor location and having additional trash and recycling containers just inside the campus center or student union

If you do have outdoor bins, look to curved roofs or slanted roofs so that rain and snow (as well as unwanted coffee cups) do not accumulate on top of the bins.

If you are in a region where snow removal is an issue, who will be responsible for clearing a path to the bins and brushing excess snow or ice off the bins?

Who will empty the bins? Is there sufficient access for a waste hauler or grounds crew to access the bins from outside? Or must campus center staff bring materials back through the campus center to a central aggregation point for the building?

*For more in-depth considerations surrounding issues of outdoor collection please refer to our whitepaper Site Audit for Outdoor Collection

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS Remember that this is an area that will get a lot of traffic from visitors to the campus.

- This provides a special opportunity to use recycling to showcase your commitment to sustainability.
- It Requires extra attention to signs and labels on bins to ensure that folks unfamiliar with the program can easily figure of what goes into each bin (and what doesn't).

TAKEAWAYS

As a highly visible public space on campus:

- Student unions and campus centers may benefit from high-aesthetic bins
- Smaller student org offices within campus centers may not warrant high-aesthetic bins
- Lack of recycling in these areas may undermine your program elsewhere on campus
- Some users may not be familiar with your recycling program making good labeling key
- Low-aesthetic bins may be considered an eye-sore and relegated to locations where they are harder to find, thus negatively impacting the program

From an operational standpoint:

- Servicing small waste bins throughout the small student org offices may prove to be labor intensive
- Opting for clusters of larger centralized waste/recycling bins may be worthwhile

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

PARALLEL ACCESS Having the same system for both trash and recycling. Involves co-locating the trash and recycling in visibly different well-labeled bins.

- If you have a trash can without an adjoining recycling bin, too often recyclables will be thrown into the trash.
- If you have a recycling bin without an adjoining trash can, too often trash will be thrown into the recycling, contaminating the recycling and resulting in an entire bin full of recyclables being discarded as trash.

RESTRICTIVE OPENINGS Having different shaped openings that easily communicate which material goes into which container.

- Typically involves long thin slot for paper and round hole for bottles & cans.
- Size of bottle and can hole can be a big issue. Too small and

it can't accommodate a standard 2-liter bottle. Too big and it's not obvious that it's a restrictive opening.

- Restrictive slots can also be cut into cardboard dumpsters (a much thicker and wider version of the paper slot). Encourages or forces people to flatten their cardboard box to get it into the dumpster.

SEMI-AUTOMATED CARTS Made by several different companies (e.g. Toter).

- Typically come in some variation of 90-gallon, 60-gallon, and 30-gallon sizes.
- Designed to be dumped hydraulically by special cart dumper attached to a truck or compactor. There are also some stand-alone cart dumpers that can be used to dump into other containers.
- Typically have two large rear wheels that can be tilted back onto like a handtruck. Most come with only the two rear wheels, but some (e.g. Toter) are available with front casters so they can be wheeled without tipping.

DUAL STREAM Collecting recyclables in two categories, typically one for mixed paper (including cardboard) and one for commingled bottles & cans.

DUAL STREAM PLUS A modified version of dual stream in which cardboard is kept separate from either paper or bottles & cans.

SINGLE STREAM Collecting all recyclables (paper, cardboard and bottles & cans) together in one bin and sending to special facility to sort it all out.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROGER GUZOWSKI Roger has spent more than 20 years in the recycling field and has managed award-winning campus recycling programs in both Massachusetts and California. Throughout that time, Roger has been one of the more prolific public speakers about recycling in the country, having presented in almost every region of the country and for a broad spectrum of organizations. Roger has also been a frequent contributor to several recycling list-servs and an author or contributor to several publications and primary writer of Max-R's recycle blog.

Roger has played a leadership role in several state and national collegiate recycling councils, and has been actively involved with a variety of recycling organizations including MassRecycle,

the California Resource Recovery Association, the Northeast Resource Recovery Association, and the National Recycling Coalition.