

Containers and Signage Guidelines

These guidelines are issued by the Environmental Services Department (Department), pursuant to the City Recycling Ordinance, San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) section 66.0701, *et seq.*, to ensure the City continues to meet Federal, State and local mandates. These guidelines specify the necessary service, signage, color, standards and location of recycling containers at residential facilities, commercial facilities (including City buildings), and special events to comply with the City Recycling Ordinance.

The definitions found in Chapter 6, Article 6, Division 7, Section 66.0703 apply to these guidelines.

I. Three Container Collection Service

Number of Containers:

The collection services for each property must include at minimum one (1) Recyclable Materials container, one (1) Organic Waste container, and one (1) Refuse container at each collection area.

Frequency:

Refuse and Organic Waste must be collected weekly. Recyclable Materials must be collected at least two times per month, generally once every other week.

Service Level:

The size of the containers and the frequency of collection service must be of sufficient size, type, and quantity to ensure that all Recyclable Materials, Organic Waste, and Refuse generated from the property are properly stored and contained in the designated container until they are removed for disposal or processing. Materials must not be placed outside the containers, nor Recyclable Materials or Organic Waste placed in the Refuse container.

II. Service Requirements for Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste

Minimum Container Requirements:

The default minimum container requirements for property types are stated in the tables below.

Container Requirements by Property Type	
Single Family, Multi-Family and HOA Properties with individual service for each home or unit	Minimum container requirements for each home or unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One (1) Recyclable Materials container, • One (1) Organic Waste container, and • One (1) Refuse container

Container Requirements by Property Type (Continued)	
Multi-Family and HOA Properties with centralized collection area(s)* for service	<p>Minimum container requirements per collection area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One (1) Recyclable Materials container, • One (1) Organic Waste container, and • One (1) Refuse container <p>Note: Organic Waste collection capacity from all service providers must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-gallon per unit for properties without landscaping or with landscaping services that take clippings for composting offsite, or • 16-gallon per unit for properties with landscaping not composted offsite
Commercial and Mixed-Use Properties	<p>Minimum container requirements per collection area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One (1) Recyclable Materials container, • One (1) Organic Waste container**, and • One (1) Refuse container

*A centralized collection area is a designated place with communal access to collect and store paired recyclable material, organic waste, and refuse containers, i.e., enclosures, trash chutes/rooms, etc.

** For commercial properties with more than one collection area, Organic Waste containers must, at minimum, be placed in collection areas near food-concentrated areas including, but not limited to, food production and preparation areas, food distribution and serving areas, and designated eating areas.

Shared Containers:

Commercial properties may share containers with other properties as long as the combined service is set up under one property and three container collection and service requirements are met.

De Minimis Waivers and Alternative Service:

Commercial properties may be eligible for a de minimis waiver if the amount of organic waste generated falls below the required threshold outlined on the Department's [website](#). Multi-family and Single-family properties are not eligible for a de minimis waiver. If a property does not divert all of its organic material through services provided by a Franchise Hauler and utilizes one or more alternative organic material recycling services, an alternative service application is required and must be approved by the Department. Additional information and De Minimis Waiver and Alternative Service Application can be found on the Department's website. Applications must be reviewed and approved by the Department.

III. Signage Requirements

Container Signage:

All containers shall be clearly identified as "RECYCLING ONLY", "ORGANIC WASTE ONLY", "FOOD WASTE ONLY" or "TRASH ONLY", as applicable. All containers provided by a Franchise Hauler or Recyclable Materials Collector shall prominently display the name and telephone number of the Franchisee or Recyclable Materials Collector. All Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste containers must have a label or imprinted text and/or graphic images of the primary materials accepted and the primary materials prohibited for each type of container.

Collection and Storage Area Signage:

All areas where Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste are collected and stored must have signage. The sign shall display a list and/or pictures of the types of Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste that may be deposited into each container, respectively. If Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste are collected inside enclosures or chute rooms, sign(s) must also be posted on the exterior of the enclosures and/or on the entrance to the chute rooms indicating that Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste can be deposited inside.

IV. Color Requirements for Containers

Container Colors:

Containers in use prior to July 1, 2022 can be used for their useful life or up to January 1, 2036, whichever is sooner. Containers purchased on or after July 1, 2022, shall be the compliant color, as follows:

1. Recyclable Materials containers shall be blue. Organic Waste containers shall be green. Refuse containers shall be black or gray. Food Waste only containers shall be brown.
2. Carts. The body and lid of the cart must be color compliant.
3. Bins and Dumpsters. The body must be color compliant. The lid is either color-compliant, gray or black.
4. Roll-offs. The body must be color compliant. The lid is either color-compliant, gray or black.

Functional roll-off containers purchased prior to January 1, 2022 that do not comply with the color requirements can be used through the end of the useful life or prior to January 1, 2036, whichever comes first, with approval from the Director.

5. Special event containers. All containers must have container labels that comply with the signage requirements and are encouraged to use compliant colors.
6. Containers provided by the property. All internal and external containers must have container labels that comply with the signage requirements and are encouraged to use compliant colors.

V. Standards for Containers

Containers shall meet the following standards:

For Recycling Containers Pending Final Collection (i.e. automatic lift containers, dumpsters, roll-offs)

- **Container Features:** Containers shall be equipped with close-fitting lids, be leak-proof, and rodent-proof.
- **Container Location/Placement in Waste Disposal Areas Outside Buildings:** Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste containers in waste disposal areas outside the building shall be placed in convenient locations. A convenient location means either adjacent to each Refuse container or disposal area or as close as possible to each Refuse container or disposal area.

For Recycling Containers Not Pending Final Collection (i.e. collection areas inside building)

- **Container Location/Placement:** For Commercial, Multi-Family, Hotels/Motels, and Mixed-Use Facilities, Recyclable Materials containers not pending final collection shall be placed adjacent to each Refuse container.

Organic Waste containers not pending final collection shall be placed in all food generating areas, including but not limited to food production and preparation areas, near food distribution, and around designated eating areas where customers dispose of their own waste. Organic Waste containers shall be placed adjacent or as close as possible to Recyclable Materials and Refuse containers. Restrooms are exempt from this requirement.

- **Additional Requirements for Commercial or Mixed Use Facilities with Overnight Guest Occupancy (such as Hotels/Motels, Assisted Living Facilities, and Certain Healthcare Facilities):** Recyclable Materials and Organic Waste containers shall be: (1) placed in each guest room; or (2), placed on each floor by each set of stairs, at each elevator, at all ice machines and in hallway corners; or (3) placed in accordance to a "placement plan" that has been approved by the Director.

For Containers at Special Events

- **Container Location/Placement and Capacity:** The host organization shall ensure Recyclable Materials containers are paired in a 1:1 ratio with Refuse containers throughout the event in a quantity approved in the Special Event Permit.

If applicable, Organic Waste containers shall, at minimum, be placed in food production and preparation areas, near food vendors and distributors, and around designated eating areas. Organic Waste containers shall be paired with Recyclable Materials and Refuse containers when possible.

Note: These Guidelines set forth container and signage requirements as authorized by the San Diego City Recycling Ordinance and are not intended to replace or change any laws, rules, or regulations. The Guidelines are subject to change when deemed warranted by the Department Director or designee.