



## **Community Recycling Case Study: Orange County, North Carolina**

**Community:** Orange County, North Carolina

**Number of residents:** 128,000 in three municipalities - Carrboro (19,000); Chapel Hill (55,000); Hillsborough (6,600); and 48,400 in unincorporated areas.

The University of North Carolina (UNC) Chapel Hill and UNC Hospitals are the largest employers.

**Amount of paper collected by county for recycling in 2008:** 8,749 tons

**Grades collected:** old corrugated (cardboard) containers (OCC) and mixed paper. Mixed paper includes old newspapers (ONP), old magazines (OMP), and phone books.

### **How is the program administered?**

Orange County operates several paper recovery efforts as part of its overall integrated waste management system, including:

- Weekly dual-stream curbside recycling for all single family residences within city limits
- Biweekly dual-stream curbside recycling for 70 percent of rural households
- Dual-stream recycling (95 gallon roll-carts) for multi-family dwellings
- Ten drop-off sites, five of which are staffed and five unstaffed
- Government office building recycling
- Business recycling (either curbside or cart collection, depending on location and volume, for more than 200 businesses)
- Paper and can and bottle drop-off sites at all transit "park and ride" lots
- Newspaper collection from city buses and the Transit Center

Small businesses and residents that do not have access to collection services are encouraged to collect their office paper and corrugated containers and deposit them at a drop-off site.

The Solid Waste Department also provides technical assistance, landfill tours, and recycling demonstrations to interested businesses, churches, schools, and clubs.

To pay for the county's recycling program, an annual "3-R" (waste reduction, reuse and recycling) fee is charged to any habitable building including but not limited to warehouses, supermarkets, shopping center, apartments, and homes. UNC Chapel Hill

is exempt as it provides a high level of recycling on its own. The fee is billed with property taxes, but is earmarked and collected as a part of the solid waste enterprise fund. The fee has enabled the county to maintain and expand its recycling efforts and staff, including the addition of mixed paper to curbside and multifamily recycling and more recently (October 2008), curbside corrugated (cardboard) container collection. Fees vary depending on the level of service provided. For example, all properties pay \$37 per year; those with weekly curbside an additional \$44; biweekly an additional \$26; and multifamily dwellings an additional \$19.

### **How are residents educated?**

Orange County residents are educated through:

- Brochures explaining the urban and multifamily collection recycling programs
- Annual newsletters mailed to all addresses in the County
- Post card alerts to new residents
- Periodic ads and articles in local newspapers
- Door-to-door outreach for poorly performing apartment complexes identified by collectors
- “Oops” tags for residents who recycle improperly
- The Solid Waste Department’s website
- A booth at local street fairs, festivals, and events
- Annual recycling collection calendar card mailed to rural curbside residents
- Holiday reminder cards for those whose recycling day changes on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years Day

Multi-family recycling brochures are also available in Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, and Japanese.

### **How are improvements measured?**

Improvements are measured through the state-administered waste reduction per capita annual measurement. A state staff person is devoted to calculation of the annual measurement for all 100 of the State’s counties. At the local level, program improvements are measured by monthly curbside and drop-off recycling tonnages and reviews of annual household and program amounts. Volume increases can be tied directly to program improvements such as adding curbside collection of old corrugated cardboard (OCC) or converting to dual-stream recycling and providing households with a second bin. Increased educational outreach associated with these improvements, along with the addition of new materials, has been proven to further increase recovery.

### **What partnerships have been formed?**

The Solid Waste Department has partnered with phone book companies to promote the recycling of old directories, and works with the two local Chambers of Commerce to promote the availability of recycling programs to their members and other businesses. Further, the county has developed a “Shred-a-thon” program with local police and sheriff’s departments, offering residents the opportunity to shred boxes of confidential paper for free several times a year. The program is promoted through print and radio advertising, banners, the county website, and local media. Local Shred-a-thons have

resulted in the recovery of more than 22 tons of paper since the first event in the spring of 2008.

Orange County also partners with the University of North Carolina to promote recycling on campus events and at special projects. The partnership helps to educate students both on and off campus about the benefits of recycling.

**Additional Resources:**

Carolina Recycling Association Orange County Solid Waste Department Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance (DPPEA)

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