

BOISE CITY EVENTS RECYCLING

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In 2001, Boise City identified public events as high-volume sources of trash (usually city donated services) with an equally high percentage of recyclable materials. The creation of an events recycling program was a win-win endeavor – less trash going to the landfill, less donated services (costs) to the city, and more recyclable revenues.

A typical public event attracts hundreds or thousands of attendees; generates 6-200 yards of trash; and, at the very least, generates plastic bottles and cardboard that could be recycled. From the beginning, we knew that collecting the materials would be easy and convincing event organizers to recycle would be the hard part. We were right. As easy as recycling is, there are still many people out there who think recycling outside of the home is too much effort and give up before they begin. With this knowledge, Boise City's program was designed to educate event organizers and attendees about the ease of recycling away from home; train citizens to expect recycling at public events; and divert materials away from the landfill. To that extent, our program has been successful, but not without frustrations.

In 2002, Boise City received a NAPCOR grant and purchased 20 event recycling containers. These containers were added to the 20 donated fiber barrels and soon we were able to serve larger events more successfully. In addition to providing recycling containers, the city also provided the bag liners, transported the recyclables, and provided all of the on-site volunteers – all at no cost to the event. Initially, only the largest events or those events that had a clear recycling stream were approached and offered recycling technical assistance and use of the bins.



Five years later the program has grown. Our stock of recycling containers has more than doubled, we've developed a great variety of recycling signage, we provide a tip sheet on how to conduct a successful recycling effort, and we've developed simple PVC frameworks to support highly visible "Recycle Here!" banners. We now offer these materials and our assistance to any event that requests these services. We also collect more recyclable materials including cardboard; newspaper; mixed paper; aluminum and steel cans; plastic bottles and cups; and compostable cups.



Most of our initial contacts with event organizers are through the Boise City Parks & Recreation Department who oversees the use and rental of public facilities. Event organizers wishing to hold a public event must appear before a multi-agency team and present the details of their event. The team includes key staff from city departments (police, fire, public works, and parks), the highway department, emergency services, and others. The Special Events Team meeting has become an effective platform for beginning a dialogue with organizers, and it has allowed us to offer recycling assistance to events of all sizes. We now provide assistance to events ranging from a few hundred to tens-of-thousands of attendees.

As the program has grown, demands on staff time have also grown. Most of the events occur on Saturday or Sunday, resulting in an extended work week for Public Works staff. To increase capacity, Public Works entered into an agreement with the Boise State University Environmental Health Club to provide recycling services at six of the largest events. In exchange for the services, the city gave the club \$3000.

In 2007, the city will begin to transition recycling responsibilities to event organizers. We will continue to provide signage and technical assistance and will make the containers available, but will ask the organizations to haul the containers, oversee material collection, and transport collected materials to the recycling center.



Events (short-list)

- Barber to Boise YMCA Run/Walk, 500 attendees, recycle plastic and cardboard
- Race to Robe Creek Half-Marathon, 2500 attendees, recycle plastic and cardboard
- Komen Race for the Cure, 10,000 attendees, recycle plastic and cardboard
- Women's Fitness Celebration, 15,000 attendees, recycle plastic and cardboard
- Light the Night Dinner & Walk, 1000 attendees, recycle plastic, aluminum and cardboard
- Lewis & Clark Traveling Exhibit, 3000 attendees, recycle plastic, aluminum, paper, and cardboard

Partners

- Environmental Health Club (Boise State University) – recycling services
- Allied Waste – collaboration on provision of trash/recycling services, including donated container rental and hauling services
- Lander Wastewater Treatment Plant – donation of barrels for use as recycling containers
- TechniChem – donation of barrels for use as recycling containers
- Government Buildings Division – donation of small barrels for indoor recycling; construction assistance in modifying containers/lids
- Parks & Recreation – collaboration & assistance in hauling recyclables to centralized collection points at large events

Accomplishments

- Events embracing recycling have successfully diverted 50% of their event waste away from the landfill. Overall, a great deal of recyclable material has been diverted from the landfill since implementing the events recycling program.
- Recycling messages and signage have evolved over time and more effective today. Current signage relies on graphics to deliver the message.
- More than half of our recycling containers were obtained at no cost, giving a long and useful new life to what would have been waste products.
- We are gradually increasing the recycling consciousness of Boise-area residents and training them to look for recycling opportunities in public places.

Difficulties

- Current recycling containers are awkward and space consuming for both transport and storage.
- More recycling containers are needed to effectively recycle at large events.

- Recycling is entirely voluntary. There is no incentive (or “stick”) to encourage events to implement recycling. Likewise, there is no incentive (or “stick”) to minimize their waste stream.
- Event organizers are chronically understaffed and are unable and/or unwilling to allocate staff or volunteers for the recycling effort.
- There is no composting facility in Boise area. Finding a “home” for compostables (leftover food and compostable cups) is a challenge.