

# Waste Reduction Ideas for Businesses

## Small Changes, Big Impact

Have you ever looked at your dumpster and thought about the money you're throwing away? Just think about the money you can save by avoiding disposal costs — waste reduction (or prevention) is the key to success! By making small changes, many businesses have found ways to improve their bottom line.

- Provide convenient/accessible recycling stations for employees, located where recyclables are generated. Near desks, at the copier, and in the break room are examples of convenient locations.
- Purchase less toxic cleaners. Avoid hazardous waste disposal fees by substituting less toxic materials for toxic materials (e.g., vegetable-based inks, water-based paints).
- Dispense cleaning solutions in refillable containers like pump spray bottles.
- Consider using hot air dryers in restrooms, or buy unbleached, recycled-content paper towels.
- Stop using disposable serviceware. Use durable towels, tablecloths, napkins, dishes, flatware, cups and glasses. Buy reusable coffee filters or unbleached disposable filters.
- Use plastic trash can liners made of recycled plastic.
- Use refilled or rebuilt printer cartridges and other office supplies when possible.
- Install reusable heating, ventilation and air conditioning filters and use rechargeable batteries where practical.
- Incorporate waste reduction into special projects. For example, minimize discards from construction and demolition by reusing materials and providing extra containers for recycling.
- Get off unwanted mailing lists.
- For external mailings, design pieces so the address can be printed on the document you're sending and skip the need for an envelope. For internal mailings, reuse envelopes.
- Use rechargeable batteries when possible.
- Keep mailing lists current to avoid duplication or mailing to invalid addresses.

- Don't pre-stuff packets for meetings/conferences. Let participants take the handouts they think they'll use or direct them to a website for more information.
- Donate old magazines or journals to hospitals, clinics or libraries.
- Consider digitizing communications, rather than keeping hard copies of everything. Save documents electronically instead of printing hard copies. When hard copies are needed, make double-sided copies and set printer defaults to duplex/double-sided.
- When printing, set document margins to "narrow" on all office computers.

## Consider Offering Consumer Choices

It's happening all over the country. More and more businesses are encouraging consumers to join the reduce, reuse, recycle movement.

Your business can do this too! For instance, consider offering customers a rebate when they reuse grocery bags, containers, mugs and cups. Or, if your business generates recyclable discards such as cans or bottles, place recycling bins in convenient locations for customers, like near the door so they can recycle as they leave.

Most importantly, to make it work you'll have to teach customers about recycling at your business. It can be as simple as having signs, simple brochures, or an e-newsletters support your recycling message.

The City of Fort Collins is committed to helping businesses increase their recycling and composting. The City's Waste Reduction & Recycling Program (WRAP) provides free on-site assessments and communication materials to improve an existing recycling program or help start a new one. For additional information or to schedule an on-site assessment, contact Caroline Mitchell at 970-221-6288 or [cmitchell@fcgov.com](mailto:cmitchell@fcgov.com).

- Circulate memos, periodicals and reports, rather than distributing individual copies. Better yet, email them.
- Proof documents on-screen when possible and use print preview and spell check before printing. Edit documents electronically using track changes.
- Encourage waste prevention by purchasing durable, concentrated, reusable, or recyclable materials.
- Eliminate unnecessary purchasing. If your business is service-based, consider using digital receipts and records. If your business is retail, consider using optical scanners, which give more detail about inventory, allowing more precise re-ordering.
- Purchase equipment that comes with a warranty so that you're fixing instead of replacing and consider renting equipment that is used only occasionally. Or, consider purchasing quality used or remanufactured equipment. Check out used-item exchange websites such as Craigslist for office supplies and/or equipment.
- Avoid bright or deep colored paper. "Astrobrights" and other brightly colored papers can cause problems at paper recycling mills. Pastel colors (light green, light blue, canary yellow, light pink) can be recycled and stand out just as well.
- Use retreaded tires on business vehicles and rotate tires on a regular basis to prolong tire life.
- Order merchandise with minimal packaging. Contact manufacturers directly to request recycled content, recyclable packaging and durable or returnable packaging. Or consider using lightweight or reusable packaging.
- Ship products to customers in boxes you've received from suppliers. Ask customers to return boxes for reuse. You won't have to buy as many new boxes. Print a message on products to encourage consumers to recycle or reuse packaging.
- Packing materials (e.g., foam peanuts, bubble wrap and cardboard boxes) can be reused or donated to a local packing store for reuse.
- Return, reuse and repair wooden pallets and spools.
- For information on hard-to-recycle items such as print cartridges, wooden pallets and more, visit our [Who Recycles What](#) website.

## "Green" Landscaping Can Save Money and the Environment

Of course a vibrant landscape is "green" right? Not always. A good, green landscape in our area uses Xeriscape and other easy to implement practices.

Xeriscape helps conserve water and maintain soil integrity through the use of native, drought-tolerant plants, rocks and stone. By xeriscaping, you can reduce the production of plant debris and minimize water and fertilizer use.

Consider planting summer and winter perennials that give year-round color without the cost and waste of replacing annual plants. And when planting, reuse containers or return them to a local nursery for reuse.

You can also leave grass clippings on the lawn or consider composting, which significantly reduces waste and saves fertilizer costs. Compost creates a high-nutrient soil additive used for landscaping.

For more information about xeriscape visit [fcgov.com/xeriscape](http://fcgov.com/xeriscape), or on compost visit [fcgov.com/recycling/composting.php](http://fcgov.com/recycling/composting.php).



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