

ReCollect

CASE STUDY | Austin, TX

Tucked into Central Texas is the state capital of Austin, the 11th most populous city in the United States and the fourth most populous city in Texas, with more than 970,000 people.

Austin is the champion recycler of the state, consistently creating and adopting best practices for waste disposal and engaging its residents with various tools to do so. Austin Resource Recovery, a department of the City of Austin, provides the city's curbside collection services for single-family homes and multifamily properties with four or fewer units. Residents pay for their curbside collections based on the size of the trash cart they select, which encourages them to recycle and compost as much as possible; a win-win for the city's goals and the environment.

Weekly, trash and yard trimmings are collected at the curbside, along with compost, a unique service currently available to 75% of its customers. Recycling is collected curbside every other week, and large brush and bulk items are collected twice per year. Austin Resource Recovery also staffs the Recycle & Reuse Drop-off Center for household hazardous waste disposal, electronics recycling and more, which further works to transform waste into resources.

In addition, Austin Resource Recovery offers voluntary, confidential, and free consulting services to area businesses to help them reduce waste and comply with the city's recycling ordinances.

“

With all of our campaigns, we always point residents back to the tools because the tools allow us to easily engage residents and keep them informed and up to date

Keri Greenwalt



In December 2011, the city council approved the Austin Resource Recovery Master Plan, which is [the city's roadmap to zero waste](#). In it, the City outlines its commitment to reducing the amount of waste it sends to area landfills by 90% by 2040.



With a plan in place and the addition of digital tools for solid waste from ReCollect in hand, Austin Resource Recovery gets closer to meeting that goal every day.



Eyes on the prize

Austin Resource Recovery team members truly are innovators when it comes to reusing and recycling. The City does not look at waste as trash, but rather as a resource – a means in which to effect change and reduce the impact it has on the planet. Its lofty, aggressive zero-waste goal ups the ante, so it is focusing more on recycling, composting, reusing and resourcing materials, and getting its residents on board to do the same.

To help it do so, Austin's Resource Recovery team called on digital tools from ReCollect, including the:



Collection Calendar which allows residents to set notifications for collection days and more



Waste Wizard to help residents determine the channel in which their waste should be disposed



Waste Sorting Game which helps teach users how to recycle in a fun and engaging way



Mobile App to organize it all.

The City launched its Austin Recycles App in March 2020. In its first six months, it saw more than 7,000 downloads, which is double the benchmark average for cities of Austin's size. Through the Collection Calendar, 85% of the city's addresses have been searched for collection information, which is 10% over the benchmark, illustrating that not only have residents downloaded these tools, they're using them, too.



Prior to enlisting the tools from ReCollect, Austin primarily relied on a print calendar to convey information to its residents. Not only does the switch to digital tools mean less waste, it yields quite a cost savings too. Annually, Austin is saving some \$66,000 without printing and mailing calendars, which has totaled a savings of nearly \$200,000 in just three years.



Like other municipalities have experienced in 2020, the Austin Resource Recovery team has struggled with service changes, including canceling special collections and more, while weathering the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, the team has ReCollect and its tools to call on to help them through. Keri Greenwalt, a Marketing Representative who handles Digital Communications at Austin Resource Recovery, said ReCollect's Customer Success Manager [Grant Smith](#) is always there to help her work through any challenges.

“
All
of ReCollect’s
tools are so easy (to
use) and innovative, Keri
said. They really help me
save time so I can focus on
strategy and planning

The Collection Calendar tool has also come in especially handy during this time. Through it, the team can help its residents recycle better, and alert them to collection changes due to bad weather, holidays and more, quickly and more efficiently than any printed calendar or mailer could. Keri’s only fear is hitting send on the wrong message, since the team knows it reaches so many people. But if you’re going to have a problem, Keri said, what a wonderful problem to have!



To help achieve its success, Keri and the rest of the marketing/PIO team has worked to thoroughly tie everything Austin Resource Recovery does back to the tools from ReCollect, including its monthly newsletters, purchased advertising, direct mail, social media promotion, integrating holidays and special events into the Collection Calendar, stepping up its education efforts with timely communications, press releases and more.

“With all of our campaigns, we always point residents back to the tools because the tools allow us to easily engage residents and keep them informed and up to date,” Keri said.

And because ReCollect’s tools are there to help the team in so many areas, it allows them to dial in on app reviews and other feedback from customers on social media so it may focus more on its customer service efforts, marketing, and more.

Easy, efficient, effective

Of all of ReCollect’s tools, Keri loves the Waste Wizard. It allows the Austin Resource Recovery team to upload photos of unique items, change an item’s waste stream as needed, alert customers about what should be done with certain materials should the Drop-off Center close, and more, all while easily and continuously ensuring that residents are receiving the most accurate information whenever they need it most.



“All of ReCollect’s tools are so easy (to use) and innovative,” Keri said. “They really help me save time and help focus on strategy and planning.”



Not only are ReCollect’s tools easy for residents to use, they’re easy for municipalities to learn, too. ReCollect offers videos and training to help staff members learn the ins and the outs of each of the tools, which Keri found helpful. The videos are great, she said, and told her everything that she needed to know.



A solid toolbox to build better future

The Austin Resource Recovery team is constantly looking to continue its efforts and work toward its zero-waste goal. “Keri is an expert, always on the ball, and is patient and motivated to continue to build on the tools and knowledge to improve Austin’s recycling goals,” said Grant.

“Austin is leading the way in terms of resident engagement. They are a city that I look at as a prime example of how to engage and educate residents on how to be better recyclers.”



About ReCollect

ReCollect Systems is a technology company specializing in digital solutions for the waste management sector.

With a focus on meeting and surpassing the expectations of residents, ReCollect has the proven experience to deliver digital products that also meet the needs of waste managers, communicators, IT specialists and governmental officials.

Launched in 2009, today ReCollect is used by millions of residents across North America. From small villages to large urban centres, from municipal services to private haulers, ReCollect is ready to make your waste management programs more efficient and successful.

ReCollect

ReCollect Systems Inc. | recollect.net | (888) 402-6936