



CAPS ON Case Study – Columbia, SC

MUNICIPALITY: City of Columbia, SC

WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.COLUMBIASC.NET/SOLID-WASTE/RECYCLING](https://www.columbiasc.net/solid-waste/recycling)

POPULATION: 129,272

HOUSEHOLDS SERVED: 52,539

IMPLEMENTATION OF CURBSIDE RECYCLING: 1991

INITIAL MATERIAL LIST:

- Newspaper
- Magazines
- Plastics #1-2, no caps
- Aluminum
- Aluminum Foil
- Glass
- Steel
- Aerosol Cans

CURBSIDE RECYCLING EXPANSION: 2007

EXPANDED MATERIALS LIST:

- Plastic Bottles, Jugs, and Jars (including caps and lids)
- Glass
- Plastic Tubs and Trays
- Steel and Aerosol Cans
- Aluminum Cans
- Cartons
- Office Paper and Junk Mail
- Paperboard Boxes and Tubes
- Cardboard Magazines
- Paper Bags
- Telephone Books

REASONS FOR EXPANDING:

- The City is aligned with the efforts of their local materials recovery facility (MRF), Sonoco Recycling, as they have continued to expand their accepted waste stream. As the MRF expands, the city has grown the materials they are accepting as well.
- The City began accepting caps in their stream, starting in 2007.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH:

While the City did not specifically educate residents on leaving caps on, the City continues to educate all residents through sending out flyers and keeping their website up to date with specific promotion for residents to leave caps and lids on. The City also promotes their efforts by using their mascot, Waste Wizard, to help educate residents and schools on their programs and at city events.



PLASTIC RECOVERY VOLUMES:

The City has seen an increase in their overall recycling tonnage since their expansion in 2015, however they do not specifically track data of plastic caps.

CHALLENGES:

- It is hard to change human behavior and the city has continued to have issues of confusion among residents because of conflicting messages from the state's very own recycling promotion. The city actively promotes their recycling program and educates their own residents on the "do's and don'ts," however, the State's suggested acceptable or not-accepted list does not align.
- The state of South Carolina educates communities on their "Dirty Dozen" list which consists of common recyclables, including plastic caps and lids, residents cannot recycle in their state. In the case of City of Columbia, plastic caps are listed in the Dirty Dozen and they accept in the City which can be confusing for residents.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Adding a material like caps was an easy transition. Accepting plastic caps allows residents to simply put the cap back on and place in the recycling bin rather than having to put the bottle in one recycling bin and the cap in another trash bin. It's easy for residents to do.
- With any recycling program, it can be expensive to add a new material to a program because of the costs to update educational materials and spread awareness, but the City believes this cost is completely worth it.
- Keeping a simple and consistent message out there for residents on how to recycle has resulted in residents coming to the City and asking questions and staying active with the program. The City's recycling coordinator fully believes "people just want to do the right thing," so giving them the right message allows them to recycle right.

**EXAMPLE OF EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES:
CITY'S RECYCLING GUIDELINES:**



CITY OF COLUMBIA, SC
JUSTITIA VIRTUTUM AMICA
We Are Columbia

City of Columbia Curbside Recycling

803-545-3800
www.columbiasc.net/solid-waste/recycling



		
Office Paper and Junk Mail	Paperboard Boxes and Tubes	Glass (clear, brown or green)
		
Plastic Tubs and Trays	Cardboard	Steel and Aerosol Cans
		
Plastic Bottles, Jugs and Jars	Aluminum Cans	Juice or Milk Cartons
		
Magazines and Newspaper	Paper Bags	Telephone Books

Recyclables should be visibly clean of any food waste.

CAPS ON WEBSITE INFORMATION:

Plastic Bottles, Jars, & Jugs



ACCEPTED:

Soda, water, shampoo and soap bottles (give a quick rinse to remove any leftover soap)

Peanut butter and mayonnaise jars (must be visibly clean of food waste)

Milk, laundry and cat litter jugs

Lids: If the lid is plastic, then it can be secured to the container and recycled together. If the lid is a different material, it must be larger than 2 inches and loose from the container to be recycled. Any lid under 2 inches should go in the regular garbage because it gets stuck in the sorting machine at the recycling facility and can't be processed.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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