



# MAYOR'S LIST OF RECYCLABLES AND COMPOSTABLES

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### What is the Mayor's List of Recyclables and Compostables and why is it important?

The purpose is to provide a single comprehensive list of recyclable and compostable materials for DC residents and businesses.

In 2014, the DC Council enacted the **Sustainable Solid Waste Management Amendment Act**. The Act requires that:

- the Mayor's issue a list of materials that are considered to be recyclable or compostable;
- Solid waste materials be source-separated into three categories: recyclables, compostables (once a city-wide composting program is established), and trash;
- Guidelines be developed for signage and labeling to support source separation, and that education and outreach materials be developed; and
- Training be provided to the enforcement team on these source separation guidelines.

Together, the implementation of these requirements will reduce confusion about recycling and make it easier for District residents, visitors, and businesses to successfully participate.

### How was the Mayor's List of Recyclables and Compostables developed?

A survey was performed involving eight material processing facilities (MRFs) within a 45-mile radius of the District for 70 product types using a modified version of the [Recycling Partnership Survey \(http://bit.ly/2h3bltE\)](http://bit.ly/2h3bltE). For each material, MRFs were asked to indicate which materials they **accept**, **accept but do not want**, or **reject**. Materials added to the list were accepted by the majority of MRFs in the region. Materials removed from the list were not accepted or not desired by a majority of these facilities.

### What are key dates?

Foodservice establishments are required to use only recyclable or compostable foodservice ware beginning **January 1, 2017** (<http://www.doe.dc.gov/foam>). The Mayor's List defines what disposable foodservice ware products are considered to be recyclable or compostable.

Starting **January 1, 2018**, businesses, government, and residents will be required to source separate and recycle all materials included on the Mayor's List of Recyclables and Compostables.

The list is being issued now to allow ample time for education and outreach and for public and private entities the opportunity to adjust or renegotiate service contracts.

## What are the main differences between existing materials accepted for recycling and the new Mayor’s List of Recyclables and Compostables?

The following table is a summary of the key differences between existing recycling rules and requirements and the Mayor’s List.

Addition to Commercial and DPW-collected Recycling	Removal from Commercial and DPW-Collected Single Stream Recycling	Addition to Commercial (already required for DPW-collected recycling)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pizza boxes</li> <li>• Paper &amp; plastic plates, cups, cup lids, to-go containers</li> <li>• Plastic produce, deli &amp; bakery containers, cups, and trays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Plastic bags, film, and wrap</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic tubs &amp; lids - Tub containers and lids for items such as yogurt, and margarine</li> <li>• Milk and juice cartons</li> <li>• Bulky Plastic Items such as plastic milk/soda crates, plastic buckets with metal handles, and plastic laundry baskets</li> <li>• Aerosol cans</li> <li>• Aluminum foil and aluminum pie pans</li> <li>• Paperback and telephone books</li> <li>• Wrapping paper</li> <li>• Plastic toys (no metal or electronic components)</li> <li>• Hardback books</li> </ul>

### Why are Plastic Bags, Wraps, and Film no longer accepted in the recycling stream?

According to DPW’s and DOEE’s spring 2016 survey of regional material recovery facilities (MRF), plastic bags and wraps present a challenge to facilities processing recyclables arriving in a commingled load. These items tend to clog facility equipment, imposing downtime and safety hazards to facility employees. Furthermore, the final condition of such bags and wraps, once recovered, often renders them unmarketable, leading inevitably to disposal. For more information, please visit [dpw.dc.gov/plasticbagremoval](http://dpw.dc.gov/plasticbagremoval).

### What should I do with plastic bags and film?

Collected and recycled separately from other materials, plastic bags and film can be recycled into a variety of products, including new plastic bags. Many supermarkets and large retailers have plastic shopping bag return/recycling bins in their stores. Please visit [Plastic Film Recycling Directory \(plasticfilmrecycling.org/s01/s01dropoff.html\)](http://PlasticFilmRecyclingDirectory(plasticfilmrecycling.org/s01/s01dropoff.html)) to find a store near you that recycles plastic bags. While recycling of plastic bags through store drop-off programs is preferred, the District also allows plastic bags to be disposed of with trash.

### **Do other municipalities recycle foodservice packaging and non-bottle plastics?**

Based on the findings of the [2015-2016 Centralized Study of Availability of Plastic Recycling \(http://bit.ly/2i7RHj0\)](http://bit.ly/2i7RHj0), commissioned by the Sustainable Packaging Coalition, more than 40% of the U.S. population had access to residential recycling of all of the non-household non-bottle plastics included in the Mayor's List of Recyclables.

While the percentage of the US population with access to residential recycling in the US is estimated to be less than 20%, acceptance by municipalities and the list of municipalities currently considering acceptance of paper foodservice packaging is growing. Seattle, WA is an example of one municipality that does this. A case study about Seattle's experience can be found [here \(http://www.recyclefsp.org/seattle\)](http://www.recyclefsp.org/seattle).

### **How will the District support compliance?**

In the coming months the District will issue education and outreach materials to assist public and private entities with implementation of the Mayor's List of Recyclables and Compostables.

### **How will the District enforce compliance?**

The District will be emphasizing outreach and education strategies to encourage proper recycling and composting. Enforcement rulemaking related to source separation requirements of the Sustainable Solid Waste Management Amendment Act are under development.

### **How often will the list be updated?**

The Act requires that the list be reviewed on a biannual basis to determine if materials should be added or removed.

### **Do I have to separate my recyclables out for pickup?**

Yes. The District of Columbia has required residents and businesses within our city to separate recyclables from trash since 1989.

### **Do I have to start source separating compostables for composting now?**

Separation of food waste, yard waste, and compostable packaging at your home or business is not required at this time.

### **Where can I find out more information if I have questions?**

Please visit us at [www.dpw.dc.gov/recyclingcompostlist](http://www.dpw.dc.gov/recyclingcompostlist) or email [zero.waste@dc.gov](mailto:zero.waste@dc.gov) with additional questions.