Boston

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

April 30, 2009

Ms. Rosaria Salerno
City Clerk
City Clerk's Office
City Hall
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Clerk Salerno:

Please accept the 2009 annual report for the Ordinance Regarding Access to City Recycling Program For Large Residential Buildings.

The Public Works Department Recycling Program is due to submit the annual report on March 31, 2009.

Very truly yours,

DENNIS E. ROYER
Chief for Public Works and
Transportation

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2009
ANNUAL REPORT
For
An Ordinance Regarding Access to City Recycling Programs For Large Residential Buildings

2009 Annual Report

"An Ordinance Regarding Access to City Recycling Programs For Large Residential Buildings"

March 31, 2009

Introduction

This annual report is being submitted as required by the City of Boston "Ordinance Regarding Access To City Recycling Programs For Large Residential Buildings."

This ordinance went into effect January 2003. It mandates that owners of large residential buildings, defined as apartment buildings or condominiums with 7 or more units, provide recycling to their residents. It also requires that the annual report evaluate the effectiveness of the City of Boston's efforts to provide access to recycling in large residential buildings.

Recycling Program Description

The City of Boston Public Works Department Recycling Program has offered recycling services to large residential building owners on a voluntary basis since 1994. The Public Works Department provides free weekly recycling curbside collection to all Boston residents. Public Works currently collects over 30 different items from the curb for recycling. The Large Residential Building Recycling Program works as follows:

1. The Recycling Program (Recycling) receives a telephone call from a resident or building owner asking for recycling service. Or, Recycling is notified by the Sanitation Department that a building is not providing recycling services. Or, Recycling contacts a building owner.

2. Recycling then speaks to the owner or property manager to schedule a site visit to the building. At the site visit, Recycling, the owner or property manager, and the maintenance crew look at the existing trash system and discuss options for implementing a recycling program.

3. The owner must then purchase the recycling receptacles known as wheeled-carts. One receptacle is used for mixed paper and another for bottles, cans and plastic containers. Receptacles range in size from 32 to 68 gallons. One paper receptacle and one commingled container receptacle will service 15 units.

4. The owner then distributes written notification to residents about their new recycling program. Then the building begins receiving weekly city recycling services.

The Public Works Department's contracted-recycling-haulers collect from large apartment buildings and condominiums with the same recycling truck they use to collect from smaller households, which are located on the same collection route. Residences with 6 or less units put their recycling in 14-gallon blue recycling bins. The bigger buildings put their recycling out in carts that range in size from 32 to 68 gallons.

What Happened in 2008

Continuation of Goals Set in 2006:

In September 2006, 700 buildings had either a tenant request for recycling services or had already been visited by Recycling, but no recycling programs had been established. From September 2006-September 2008, a primary goal was to evaluate or re-evaluate these buildings and work with them to establish recycling programs.

Of this original 700, in 2007, 300 established recycling programs, 83 were ruled exempt for various reasons, and 23 claimed they already had recycling programs. 294 buildings were therefore still without recycling programs when 2008 began.

Of this 294, recycling was unable to contact owners of 166 buildings due to a lack of accurate owner contact information. The remaining 128 buildings were either in the process of establishing recycling programs or had been referred to the Inspectional Services Department due to inaction on their part.

In 2008, Recycling continued to pursue these 294 buildings. Of these 294, in 2008, Recycling evaluated and/or established recycling programs at 227. By the end of 2008, only 68 remained without recycling programs. Therefore, of the original 700 buildings without recycling programs in 2006, Recycling has evaluated 632—a success rate of 90%.

North End Neighborhood Cleanliness Initiative

Last year's annual report states that "The goal for 2008 will be to contact all buildings that are greater than 19 units and in either Allston/Brighton, Fenway/Kenmore, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, Dorchester, or Mattapan." Recycling was unable to pursue this goal because the North End Neighborhood Cleanliness Initiative took priority.

The North End Neighborhood Cleanliness Initiative was an effort by the Public Works Department to implement programs that helped make the North End a cleaner place to live. In the spring of 2008, Recycling mailed letters to all large building owners in the North End, whose buildings did not already have recycling programs and informed them of the Ordinance. Of the 169 buildings contacted:

- 120 replied—a success rate of 71%
    - 29 were ruled exempt for various reasons
    - 91 established recycling programs
- 6 letters were returned and owners were unable to be further contacted
- 43 did not respond to repeated attempts and methods of contact by Recycling

Re-evaluation of Enforcement Process

Most building owners respond to violation letters sent by Recycling and/or tickets issued by the Inspectional Services Department. Even after weeks of fines, however, some do not. As a result, Recycling re-evaluated the enforcement process to try to figure out a way to reach these owners.

Recycling began visiting these buildings and posting notices of the Ordinance near the front entrance to the buildings. Recycling also looked to see if management company information was posted at the buildings. When management information was posted, Recycling sent letters to the management companies informing them of the Ordinance.

In 2008, Recycling posted notices and looked for management company information at 114 buildings. Of those 114 buildings:

- 52 replied—a success rate of 46%
    - 15 were ruled exempt for various reasons
    - 37 established recycling programs

Single Stream Recycling in Large Buildings

In 2006, single-stream recycling began expanding to select neighborhoods in the City. Single-stream could be achieved in two ways—residents could place their recycling in large wheeled carts or, in neighborhoods with limited space, clear plastic bags. Use of large wheeled carts for single stream did not affect large building recycling because large buildings have always been required to use these carts; Recycling simply notified building owners that had recycling programs in these neighborhoods that residents may now mix their recyclables together.

The new option of clear plastic bags, however, did have an effect on large building recycling. In the South End, Beacon Hill, the North End, Chinatown, and Bay Village, many large buildings simply do not have the space to store large wheeled carts. Recycling traditionally granted these buildings exemption from the Ordinance. Clear plastic bags, however, do not require the storage space that carts require. After consulting the Law Department, Recycling concluded that owners of buildings without space for carts, and in these neighborhoods, are required to provide residents with clear plastic bags.

Many building owners have preferred clear plastic bags to large wheeled carts as the bags require virtually no maintenance compared to the carts. At the end of 2008, owners of more than 150 buildings in these neighborhoods were providing their residents with clear plastic bags.

2008 Evaluation of Progress

Evaluation Process

The intention of this ordinance is for all Boston residents to have access to the City's recycling services. The ordinance, however, cites as the measure of progress "the recycled tonnage collected from Large Residential buildings." Tons recycled do not provide a measurement for recycling access for two reasons. First, recycled tonnage from only large buildings is not available because the recycling from 1- through 6-unit residential buildings is collected in the same truck as recycling collected from 7+-unit residential buildings. Second, providing access does not necessarily or immediately increase tons recycled. The ordinance mandates access, but it does not mandate participation. Access is a necessary first step, but residents can still choose whether or not they want to recycle.

Recycling has therefore measured its progress in providing recycling access in large residential buildings by counting the number of units receiving city-recycling services. Counting the units in the residential buildings was required by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as the method of measurement to be used by municipalities in order to qualify for state recycling grant funds.

Residential buildings recycling in 2008

Progress in providing recycling to residential buildings with 7 or more units is illustrated by the data below.

Year	Units With Access to Recycling Services	% of Total Units with Recycling Access
2007	65,191	62%
2008	76,414	73%

Compliance Record

Recycling has visited thousands of large residential buildings since 1998. All of the owners who wanted to recycle have worked with Recycling to identify a system that allowed them to participate in the City's program. This success continues with most owners. Unresponsive owners are referred to the Inspectional Services Department., which has the authority to enforce the ordinance.