

# Recycle Responsibly “Stick With The Six” Campaign

**R**ecycle Responsibly is the area’s first, region-wide recycling campaign to create one cohesive recycling message to help everyone in the St. Louis metro area “Stick with the Six” items that can be recycled in our region to help



The St. Louis - Jefferson Solid Waste Management District is a regional agency that was created in 1993 to assist the public, private and nonprofit sectors in establishing and expanding waste reduction and recycling. The District includes the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, Jefferson County and St. Charles County. These programs and services are funded in part by the St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. For more information, please visit [www.swmd.net](http://www.swmd.net) or call 314-645-6753.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECYCLING INFORMATION

- **City of St. Louis** - [www.stlouis-mo.gov/government](http://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government) (Departments & Agencies, click Recycling)
- **Jefferson County** - [www.jeffcom.org](http://www.jeffcom.org) (Services, click Recycling)
- **St. Louis County** - <http://www.stlouisco.com/HealthandWellness/RecyclingandWasteManagement>
- **St. Charles County** - <http://www.sccmo.org/861/Recycling>

reduce recycling contamination.

This recycling education campaign kicked off on America Recycles Day in 2018 in Forest Park. This event included an art installation made of 2,663 plastic bags tied together representing the number of plastic bags used every second in the United States. In total, this reached nearly one half mile in length! Along the half mile walk were facts about plastic bags’ impact on our environment. Various environmental organizations were also on site providing information and ways to get involved with the Recycle Responsibly campaign. With over 200 attendees, adults and children, America Recycles Day: The Truth About Plastic Bags, was a success!

Recycling can be easy if we just, “Stick with the Six!” Paper, flattened cardboard, plastic bottles and containers, glass bottles and jars, metal food and beverage cans and food and beverage cartons can all be recycled. Keep recyclables loose (not in plastic bags), clean and dry.

If it’s not on this list, don’t put it in your bin! “Wishcycling” is when you hope by putting something in the recycling bin that it will be recycled. Putting the wrong items in your recycling bin does more harm than good.

A good example of this is plastic bags. Plastic bags are one of the largest sources of contamination in single stream recycling. Plastic bags cannot be recycled in your home recycling bin, but there are other places to recycle them. If plastic bags make their way to the



recycling sorting facility (either as loose, individual plastic bags or as plastic bags containing recyclables), they jam the sorting machinery at the facility. This shuts down the sorting process for hours at a time and puts workers at risk for injury, as they manually cut out tangled plastic bags from machinery gears. Plastic bags and other plastic films should be taken to a local gro-

cery or retail store for recycling. Find a nearby collection location at [PlasticFilmRecycling.org](http://PlasticFilmRecycling.org). Help reduce plastic usage by always bringing reusable bags with you when shopping!

Other contaminants commonly found in our single stream recycling are “tangles” (e.g. garden hoses, metal hangers, clothing, wires, holiday lights, etc.), food waste, styrofoam and metal sharps or needles. These items are not recyclable in your home recycling bin, but there are other places where these items can be dropped off.

It’s easy to reduce contamination if you simply “Stick with the Six” items that should always go in your recycling bin. To find out where to recycle or donate other items not shown on the list, visit [RecycleResponsibly.org](http://RecycleResponsibly.org). On this website, residents can learn more about the campaign and access a regional recycling database hosted by Saint Louis City Recycles. This searchable database houses a number of places that accept items for recycling or donation, such as clothing, electronics, household hazardous waste and more.

The Recycle Responsibly education campaign stems from the Materials and Recycling Working Group of OneSTL. OneSTL is a regional initiative that focuses on a sustainable future for the St. Louis region. Follow @OneSTL on Facebook to stay up-to-date with the latest about Recycle Responsibly.

The Working Group includes the following entities: East-West Gateway Council of Governments, St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District, City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, Madison County, City of University City, Brightside St. Louis, Saint Louis City Recycles, EarthWays Center of Missouri Botanical Garden, Republic Services, St. Louis Composting, Earthday365, Green Dining Alliance, Recycling on the Go, University of Missouri-St. Louis and Washington University.

# O’Fallon Responds to Global Changes in the Recycling Market

**W**hen the Environmental Services team at the City of O’Fallon, Missouri, launched single-stream recycling in 2006, the hope was the City would be able to turn recycling into a break-even proposition. O’Fallon residents jumped on the opportunity, and single-stream recycling helped the City financially and environmentally, with the City’s diversion rates approaching 30 percent. It was a huge success, but global changes brought it to an end.

As the single-stream market in China tightened, essentially closing off the market to single-stream product from the United States, O’Fallon’s local recycling processor announced it was closing on October 31, 2018.

O’Fallon’s Environmental Services leadership went to work trying to find a new solution. Other single-stream options were explored, but the cost was prohibitive. Under the previous program, the City brought in about \$5 for every ton of product it collected. Estimates to continue the single-stream program had the City paying more than \$100 per ton.

O’Fallon had long been recognized for having the lowest residential trash rates in the County, featuring free curb-side recycling. Staff was determined to maintain the low rates and keep as much of the curbside collection in place. After significant research and negotiations, O’Fallon entered into a contract with the neigh-

boring city of St. Peters, a dual-stream community. St. Peters would accept O’Fallon’s glass and plastic containers and tin and aluminum cans from the City, free of charge, provided the product was clean of contamination. This solution meant the City could continue curbside collection of these materials. But paper and cardboard was another story.

Because St. Peters could not handle the City’s paper and cardboard in their facility, O’Fallon had to find a separate solution and curbside collection of these items was no longer a realistic option. The best solution was to set up drop-off locations for the City’s 88,000 residents, starting with one and expanding to locations throughout O’Fallon.



For all of this to work, staff had to educate residents on the new curbside and drop-off options. Initially, St. Peters had only agreed to work with O’Fallon for the remainder of the year. They needed to see that the product they would receive from O’Fallon was of a high enough quality that they could move it directly into their existing system without overburdening their staff and equipment. High contamination would end the program immediately.

The comprehensive education program featured nearly 60,000 pieces of direct mail, numerous social media posts, website and e-newsletter articles and educational videos all designed to both inform residents on the new

program and educate them on how it would work. Despite all of these methods clearly spelling out the reasons for the change, the initial response from residents was predictably negative.

“We answered every single comment whether it was on social media, over the phone or by email,” said Wenzara. “It was a challenging few weeks as our staff was working 24-hours-a-day answering questions and concerns. But our staff was tremendous. They saw each inquiry as an opportunity to educate our residents. I honestly think this is why we were so successful.”

The education paid off immediately. St. Peters representatives inspected every load that came from O’Fallon and were very positive about the product that they received. The contract between the two cities was soon extended, and new cardboard and paper recycling drop-off locations were added at three locations.

“When we announced these changes, we definitely had a significant number of residents opt out of recycling,” said Wenzara. “But once the anger subsided, residents began to see the benefits of the new program, and we’re seeing more carts out at the curb.”

“We definitely are not where we were with our single-stream program in terms of diversion rates, but we know we’re getting a product that’s as clean as possible. That’s something we didn’t have before.”