

# STRONG RECYCLING PROGRAMS BENEFIT THE ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## Recycling Creates Jobs and Other Economic Benefits



Recycling is often touted as the right thing to do for the environment, but recycling also fuels the economy and makes use of recovered materials that would otherwise go to waste. This creates jobs, provides manufacturers with feedstock, and generates economic benefits for communities and the states in which they are located. Jobs created include those that support the collection, sorting, transporting, processing, brokering, and exporting, of recyclables as well as domestic manufacturing of products with recovered materials. Such jobs create tax revenue – an estimated **\$12.3 billion** annually – with a total economic impact of **\$117 billion**. For example, one study estimates that<sup>1</sup>:

The recycling industry creates an estimated **506,139** jobs across the U.S. including:

- » **159,640** direct recycling and brokerage jobs,
- » **153,983** supply-related jobs, and
- » **192,516** induced jobs.

Wages associated with these jobs total nearly **\$34.4 billion annually**.

In addition, recycling reduces waste disposal costs and can provide revenues that help offset recycling program costs.

**CURBSIDE RECYCLING GUIDELINES** Your City Here

**ACCEPTED ITEMS:**

- Milk, juice, broth, soup and other food & beverage cartons (caps on)
- #1 & #2 Plastic bottles & jugs (caps removed)
- Glass bottles & jars
- Aluminum & other metal cans
- File folders, office paper
- Greeting cards, regular & junk mail
- Newspapers, brochures & inserts (no bags, do not tie & bundle)
- Paperboard boxes (cereal, pasta, tissue etc.)
- Loose metal (jar lids & steel bottle caps)
- Compressed cardboard (batons)
- Magazines & catalogs
- Phone books

**THESE ITEMS ARE NOT ACCEPTED:**

- X Appliances
- X Electronic waste (batteries, cell phones, computers, etc.)
- X Hazardous waste (oil, pesticides, cleaners)
- X Used oil or oil containers
- X Window panes, mirrors, ceramics
- X Medical waste (syringes, needles, etc.)
- X Yard waste
- X Food waste
- X Trash

**EMPTY ALL CONTAINERS. FLATTEN CARDBOARD BOXES.**

*Supporting recycling programs boosts local and regional economies. Further, advancements in recycling technology are expected to make recycling more cost-effective over time.*

**What are the Economic Benefits of Recycling in Your State?**

To see the economic benefits of recycling in your state, see ISRI's [website](#), which includes an interactive map, or the [2021 ISRI Economic Impact Study Executive Summary](#).

The bottom line is that products we buy and the packaging they come in have value at end of use – **they are resources** – many of which can be reused or recycled. By adopting measures that support the development of robust reuse and recycling programs, state and local governments strengthen local and regional economies, conserve resources and support environmental protection

<sup>1</sup> [John Dunham & Associates for ISRI, "2021 U.S.- Based Scrap Recycling Industry Economic Impact Study."](#)

## Recycling Conserves Natural Resources, and Reduces Disposal Costs and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The environmental benefits of recycling are more important to achieve now than ever. In a world facing rising population, resource scarcity and climate change, strong recycling programs enable individuals and communities to help protect the environment for future generations. For example:

- » *Community recycling programs support greenhouse gas reduction and energy conservation initiatives, helping communities achieve their waste reduction and sustainability goals. The [U.S. EPA WARM Model](#) can help estimate benefits of recycling vs. disposal.*
- » *Recycling reduces the need for landfill space. While there is adequate space for landfills in some areas of the country, other areas lack space. Transporting waste to a distant landfill is costly, consumes energy and results in greater greenhouse gas emissions. Further, even where space exists for landfills, siting new landfills is often challenging.*
- » *Manufacturing products using recovered materials reduces the need to mine and harvest natural resources, saves energy and further reduces greenhouse gas emissions. (See table below)*

### Greenhouse Gas Impacts of Recycling vs. Landfilling One Ton of Material<sup>2</sup>

MATERIAL	MTCO <sub>2</sub> E REDUCED	GALLONS OF GAS REDUCTION EQUIVALENCY	EQUIVALENCIES
Aluminum Cans	9	1,027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Emissions from driving a passenger car 21,570 miles</li> <li>» CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from burning 9,604 pounds of coal</li> </ul>
HDPE Containers	1	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Emissions from driving a passenger car 2,397 miles</li> <li>» CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 40.9 home barbeque propane cylinders</li> <li>» CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 2.3 barrels of oil consumed</li> <li>» Carbon sequestered by 26 seedlings grown for 10 years</li> </ul>
PET Containers	1	128	
Mixed Plastic Containers	1	117	
Mixed Paper	4	412	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Emissions from driving a passenger car 9,587 miles</li> <li>» CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from consuming 450 gallons of gasoline</li> </ul>
Corrugated Cardboard	3	378	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Carbon sequestered by 2.8 acres of forest in one year</li> <li>» CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from consuming 6.9 barrels of oil</li> <li>» CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 106 lightbulbs switched to incandescent</li> </ul>
Cartons	3	362	

### Resources to Help You Maximize the Benefits of Your Recycling Program

Programs have the greatest positive impact when participation is high and contamination of collected material is minimal. Free resources are available to support such goals. They include:

Supporting Policy Tools by the Carton Council: <a href="http://cartonopportunities.org">cartonopportunities.org</a>	Information about Pay As You Throw <a href="http://payasyouthrow.org">payasyouthrow.org</a>	Tools to Reduce Contamination and Increase Participation <a href="http://tools.recyclingpartnership.org">tools.recyclingpartnership.org</a>
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Your community might also consider requesting additional assistance in the form of technical assistance or grants from [The Recycling Partnership](#)

<sup>2</sup> Based on U.S. EPA's WARM model, with landfilling vs. recycling and U.S. EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator