



Recycling Update, 2022



Season Greetings Refuse & Recycling Customers!

This fall, the City of Oberlin conducted residential recycling audits and a cart tagging program to increase resident recycling knowledge and decrease recycling contamination.

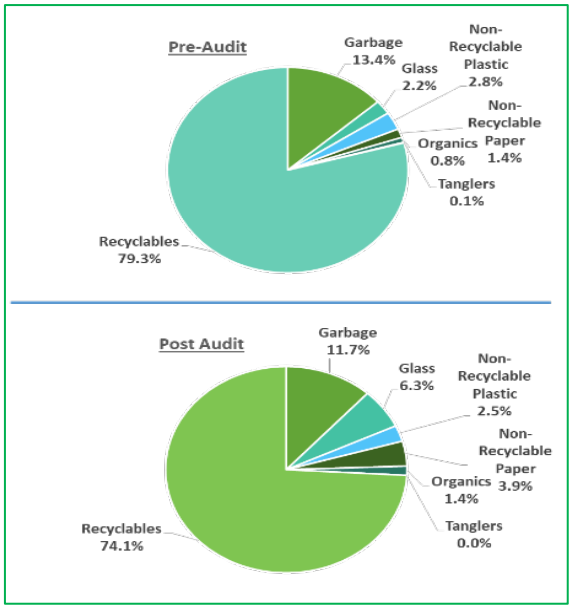
Nation-wide, contamination is a major issue of concern. Contamination occurs when garbage and non-recyclable materials are placed in the recycling carts with good recyclables. Contamination increases the cost of processing the recycling materials, undermines the good habits of those who practice proper recycling, and limits the ability of the recyclables to be made into new products.



The Tagging Program is a recycling contamination reduction effort modeled after *The Recycling Partnership's* successful 'Feet on the Street Program'. The program combines recycling audits, inspections at the curb and education to help drive positive behavior change and improve residents' understanding of what causes contamination and what to

recycle. It also will help to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of our recycling program while reducing costs for the City and rate payers.

This collaborative effort between the Lorain County Solid Waste Management District, GT Environmental & the City of Oberlin was funded by a grant from the Ohio EPA to evaluate contamination recycling levels, establish a baseline waste composition of the City's curbside recycling stream and identify the top 5 contaminants in curbside recycling. The audit will help direct future recycling education efforts.



As a result of the tagging program audits, the **top 5 contaminants** are:

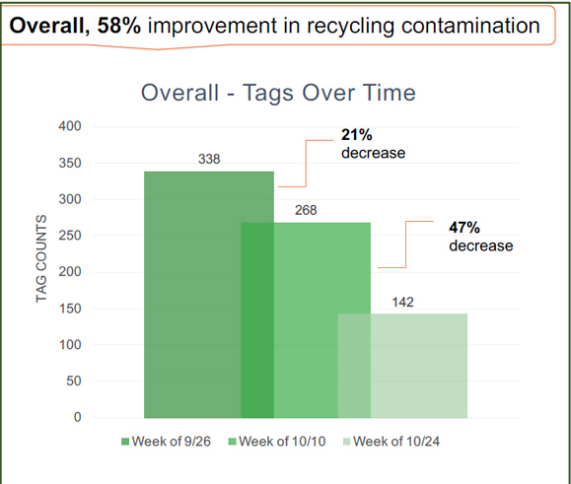
1. Garbage
2. Non-accepted plastic containers - #1, #2 **non-** bottle & jugs; #5 plastics; mixed rigid plastics; plastic bags (including bags used to contain recyclables) & plastic wraps
3. Glass
4. Non-recyclable paper (such as milk cartons)
5. Organics (food waste & yard waste)

Recycling carts containing non-recyclable contaminants were tagged with an 'Oops Tag' over 3 consecutive recycling weeks in September and October to identify the presence of non-recyclable materials. Once the non-recyclable materials were removed, carts were serviced later in the week. During the 5th week, an educational postcard was sent to each subscribed household focusing on acceptable & nonacceptable plastics. The Public Works Department received a lot of resident calls and most were interested in learning how to recycle right and it shows by our results.

"Overall what we saw was a 58% decrease in the number of carts with recycling contamination"

- Jamie Zawila – GT Environmental

The results were presented to City Council at the November 7th, 2022 meeting and can be viewed on the City's website under City Government, Minutes & Agendas.



Mixed, single-stream has made recycling easier but we’ve got to be diligent about making sure only properly prepared and acceptable recycling materials are in our carts. Just because a product has a recycling symbol on it or we think that it should be recyclable doesn’t mean it can be recycled through the City’s program. “Wish cycling” does not ensure materials recovery, when we “wish-cycle”, it actually impairs our ability to cost effectively recover those materials that we can recycle.

In the future, as local and regional markets improve, we hope to be able to expand our list of acceptable recycling materials to support a more circular economy. In the meantime, it’s very important to follow all program guidelines.

For more information on the city’s program and resources regarding where to take items that can’t be recycled through curbside recycling, please visit: www.cityofoberlin.com/recycling. If you aren’t recycling in your household we encourage you to subscribe to the City’s recycling program by taking the online recycling pledge and opt-in! If your business is not yet recycling, contact us to discuss the available options.

Stop by City Hall, 85 S. Main Street for a recycling sticker to place on your recycling cart so you know what to throw and when in doubt, leave it out!



Oberlin Recycling Drop-off Programs at City Hall, 85 S. Main Street during business hours:

- **CFL & LED bulbs** - Both CFLs & LEDs.
- **Used tooth brushes, empty toothpaste tubes, empty floss containers and their packaging.**
- **Metal lids** - From glass jars & bottles. Not recyclable curbside.
- **PakTech 2, 4 & 6 ring carriers recycling program** - Beverage plastic ring carriers in the marked container.



Turning Plastic Grocery Bags into *Compassionate Carpets* for the Homeless



April 22nd is Earth Day and for the past 5 years I have held a plastic bag swap at the Oberlin IGA. Shoppers can bring 3 or more plastic bags and exchange them for a reusable bag. Last February I was contacted by Oberlin resident Jean Shannon, saying that she had heard about the bag swap and asked me what I did with the bags collected. My response, *I drop them off at Giant Eagle grocery store for recycling*. Her next question was: *Can I have them?* I told her that I collected 5000+ bags and that the 5th graders at *Oberlin Elementary School* were joining in to collect plastic bags from classmates & staff as well. That’s when she told me about knitting sleeping mats for the homeless from plastic bags. That got my attention! Jean received all the collected plastic bags and she quickly secured a work space and got the word out, looking for volunteers. It quickly gained traction and there are now 10-20 women that meet each Wednesday afternoon in the basement at *First United Methodist Church* working at the various stations - flattening bags, cutting strips and knotting them together for making ‘plarn’, plastic yarn that gets rolled into a ball that is then either knitted or crocheted into a 4x6 foot, afghan-like, plastic *Compassionate Carpet* sleeping mat. It’s amazing what these woman have done in a short amount of time and continue to do! Twenty seven carpets have been completed to date which are then donated to Lorain County *Neighborhood Alliance* that operates the *Haven Center Homeless Shelter* and given out to homeless people along with a tent. Not only do these Compassionate Carpets fill a humanitarian need and keep plastic bags out of the landfill, new friendships are made and a sense of community by doing something good for the earth, shines through brightly. Many thanks to Jean and the team of volunteers - **Good job ladies!**



Recycle Non-Working Holiday Lights, Power Strips & Cords – Drop-off Nov. 28 through Jan. 9, 2023 at the OPD/Court lobby in the marked box, under the bulletin board.