

Impact Report 2022

Complex Problems Require Bold, Integrated Solutions



**The Recycling
Partnership**
SOLVING FOR CIRCULARITY

The Recycling Partnership was built for problem-solving, and the time for system change is now.

The Recycling Partnership was built to get things done, and over the years we've excelled by taking big challenges head-on. We have been connecting needs to solutions, building robust data-driven tools, engaging policymakers, and collaborating with the full spectrum of stakeholders to accelerate change.

We know how to create a system in which:

- all households can recycle,
- people know what and how to recycle,
- materials recovery facilities (MRFs) are fully modernized,
- stakeholders work together to overcome material-specific obstacles to recycling,
- packaging that enters the system is designed for, or on a path to, recyclability, and
- recycling has a sustainable public-private funding stream based on smart policy.

With these solutions working in concert—solutions described in the following pages—we are building the system of the future. But we will not get there with piecemeal efforts that only chip away at the problem; we need bold systemic change. We need a \$17 billion overhaul. What's the return on that investment? \$30 billion in jobs, climate protection, and resource conservation. That's an investment we can't afford **not** to make.

While our solutions are interdependent, so are our stakeholders. System change requires collaboration—solving with communities, MRFs, materials and packaging manufacturers, brands and retailers, and people. We're partnering with NGOs, researchers, the

investment sector, and other stakeholders who share our commitment to a circular economy.

When companies make commitments to reduce waste, improve recycling, or advance the circular economy, it's our job to insist and assist. That means we hold companies accountable for their commitments, but we also help them make the most meaningful investments of time and money. I believe that is a critical role of the NGO community—to uphold and to help by bringing a range of entities to the table in the name of system change and by working hard to bring accountability to the reality of change.

Confronting a challenge this big requires the courage to be clear about current barriers. We call that being a "recycling realist." But it also takes optimism to keep trying, day after day. With courage and optimism, we are driving toward the system of the future, one with a fully functioning U.S. residential recycling system, which is an essential step on the path to a circular economy.

Unless we acknowledge the need for bold systemic change, we'll only see incremental adjustment, leaving us frustrated that a brighter future didn't unfold. That future is one that cannot be left to chance; it requires our full spectrum of solutions delivered at scale. The Partnership was built for problem-solving, and the time for system change is now.

There is no time to be timid.

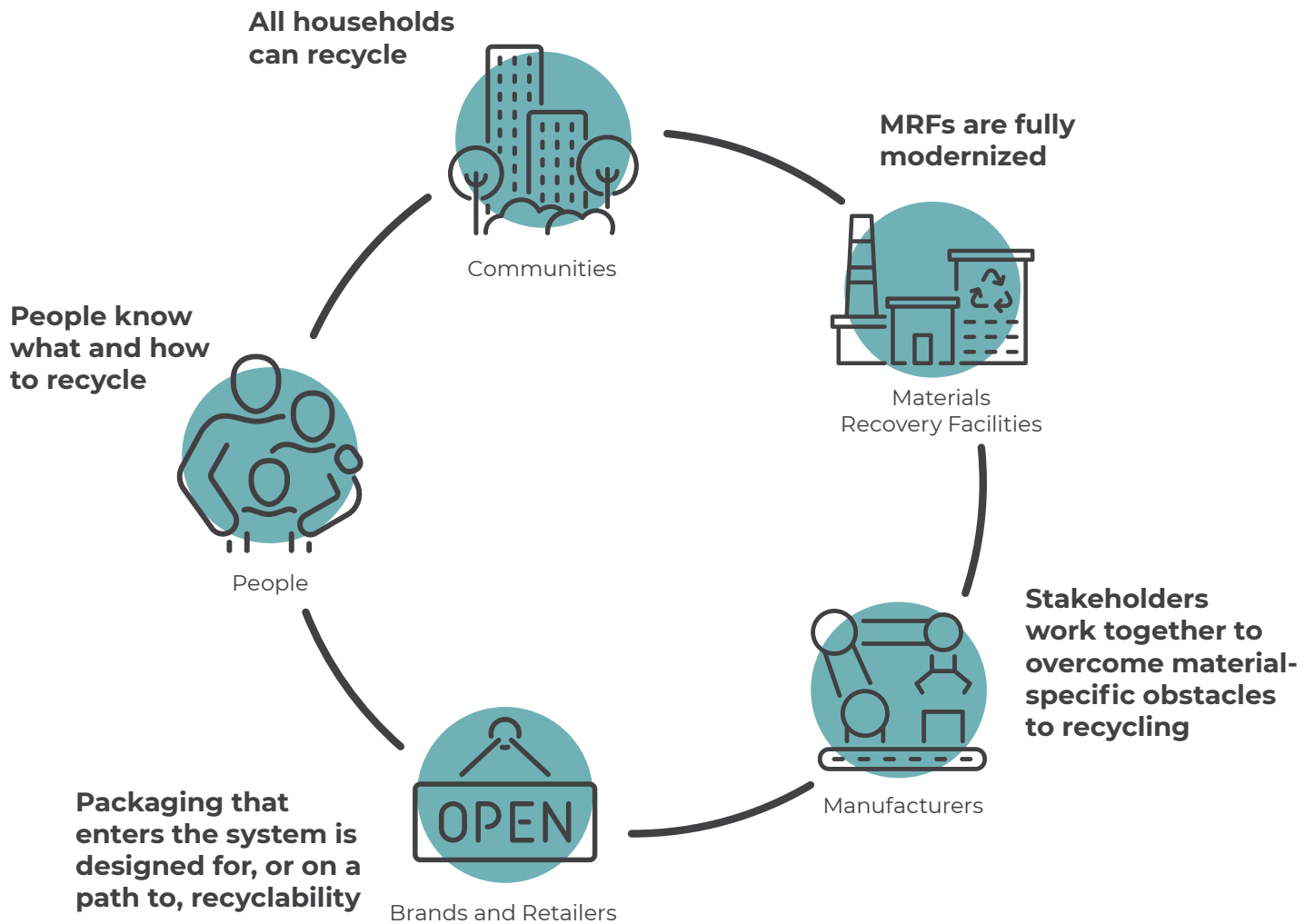


Keefe Harrison
CEO

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With the full spectrum of stakeholders, we can build a system in which:



Recycling has a sustainable public-private funding stream based on smart policy

There is no time to be timid.

Return on Recycling Investment: Economic Impact

Economic Impact

- \$95 million** Total invested in The Recycling Partnership to date
- ▼ **Value Creation**
- \$163 million** in capital and state investments in recycling
- \$24 million** in new recyclables collected
- \$19 million** in technical assistance to cities and states
- \$16 million** in carbon savings
- \$13 million** in avoided landfill costs
- \$6 million** in member consulting

\$241 million Total value creation

Total invested in
The Recycling
Partnership to date



\$95 million



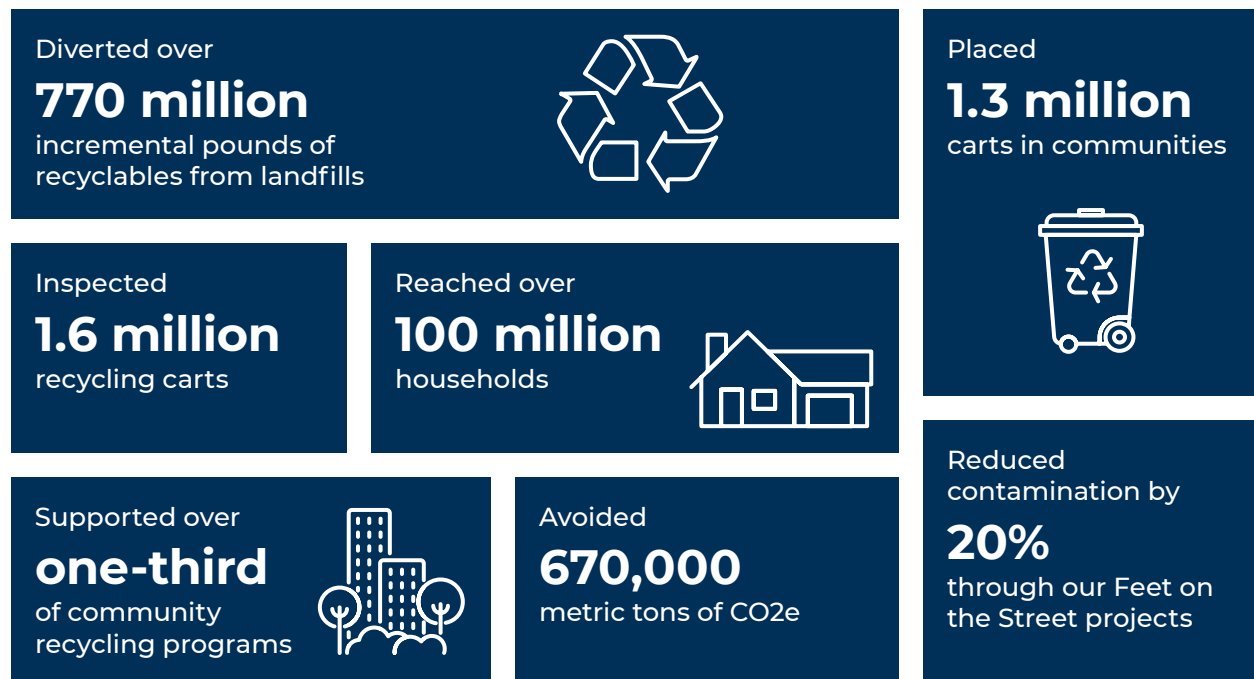
Total value
creation



\$241 million

Return on Recycling Investment: Further System Impact

Circular System Benefits Since 2014



Impact Since 2019

- Maximized community reach through expanded **free tools and resources**
- Pioneered best practices in **multifamily recycling**
- Founded the Recycling Inclusion Fund to address the **recycling equity gap**
- Established **the roadmap** to U.S. residential recycling transformation
- **\$23.6 million** in catalyzed MRF funding
- Delivered **\$12 million** value of new recyclables to MRFs
- Increased polypropylene curbside access by **7%**
- Galvanized **material-specific** recycling coalitions
- Constructed a framework to **assess packaging recyclability**
- Analyzed **20% of all U.S. plastic packaging** (by weight) using Plastic IQ
- Created the-first-of-its-kind comprehensive **national recycling database**
- Established the Circular Economy Accelerator as the leader in **smart recycling policy**
- Spearheaded work to strengthen **recycling behavior in homes**

Solving with Communities

Transforming the U.S. residential recycling system requires close partnerships with communities of all sizes and types.

DIVERTED

Over 770 million

incremental pounds of recyclables from landfills since 2014

REACHED

Over 100 million

households since 2014



Scaling Statewide Transformation in Michigan

The state of Michigan established the goal of increasing statewide recycling from 14% in 2019 to 45% by 2030. To reach this target, the state increased funding for recycling support, leading to a multiyear collaboration between the state's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and The Partnership.

Michigan, just one of the states with whom The Partnership is working on the ground to lead statewide change, has entrusted The Partnership to drive systematic change by developing programs with communities, local and regional MRFs, haulers, solid waste management authorities, environmental nonprofit organizations, and industry partners. The programs provide a range of support, including carts for curbside recycling, improved drop-off recycling, enhanced MRF operations, and The Partnership's Feet on the Street program to improve the quantity and quality of material captured (see page 11).

In the first year of this collaboration, the recycling quality improvement program resulted in a 35% average reduction in contamination for curbside collection programs, a 26% average contamination reduction for drop-off programs, and a 10% increase in participation across most involved communities.

The Partnership continues to work with EGLE to design and execute additional recycling projects to strengthen residential recycling across Michigan.

MICHIGAN PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS:



400,000

carts inspected in Michigan through Feet on the Street



35%

average reduction in contamination for Michigan EGLE curbside collection projects

SUPPORTED

3,100

out of 9,000 U.S. community recycling programs since 2014

Expanding Equitable Recycling Access in Orlando

When it comes to recycling access, multifamily communities are among the most underserved in the U.S. Members of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community are approximately twice as likely to live in multifamily housing as non-BIPOC community members. That's why The Partnership is leading the charge to develop scalable solutions that will help multifamily residents nationwide. A 2019 Orlando, Florida, ordinance addresses this by requiring recycling at all commercial properties and at the city's 75,000 multifamily residential units.

When it comes to recycling access, multifamily communities are among the most underserved in the U.S.

To implement a mandatory recycling ordinance for multifamily residents, direct and consistent communication with multifamily property managers is essential, not only to get the program started but to maintain it. With this in mind, as part of The Partnership's grant to Orlando, we funded a full-time city employee to serve as the multifamily recycling project manager. With this new role, the city was able to communicate directly and consistently with property managers through letters, phone



calls, site visits, and consultations. The project also provided extensive education and outreach to residents, including info cards showing approved recycling items and how to recycle, customizable bilingual FAQs, and recycling signage.

Overall, the city added recycling services to 21,500 multifamily units in the first year of this four-year project. By increasing participation in the city's recycling program, Orlando diverted an additional 2.2 million pounds of recyclables from landfills in the program's first year. Furthermore, a case study on contamination and educational intervention showed that for properties with expanded access to recycling, contamination decreased at two-thirds properties as a result of this project. In addition, The Partnership's project team forged relationships with the participating multifamily property managers that will help the city's recycling program for years to come.

ORLANDO BY THE NUMBERS:



21,500
multifamily units in Orlando in the first year were provided recycling service



Over 2.2 million
pounds of recyclables diverted from landfills in Orlando's first year of the program

Big City Modernization in Baltimore

The Partnership's unique model of bringing communities and funding partners together, creates meaningful opportunities to drive large scale change in big cities. Prior to the fall of 2021, Baltimore, Maryland, residents lacked a consistent solution for recycling access, making it difficult for them to recycle as easily as they could throw something away. As the eighth largest U.S. city without universal recycling carts, Baltimore needed a bold solution.

Through a groundbreaking \$10 million-plus public-private partnership, brought together by The Partnership, Baltimore delivered nearly 200,000 free curbside recycling carts to households in the city. This is the largest partnership to modernize recycling to date and enables safer and more efficient collection while minimizing waste in waterways. The new recycling carts also

provide residents with more capacity to store recyclables at home.

With the delivery of recycling carts to every eligible Baltimore household, 609,000 Baltimore residents now have adequate access to recycling, proving that big city change is possible. Baltimore's recycling transformation is expected to increase the amount of recovered recyclable material by 80%, generating more than 40 million pounds of new valuable recyclables every year.

"Making Baltimore more sustainable through diverting waste from our landfills and incineration is key as we lay the groundwork for future generations. By providing our residents with the proper resources and education thanks to this partnership, I know that more Baltimore households will do their part to reduce waste and recycle."

– **Brandon M. Scott**,
Mayor,
City of Baltimore

BALTIMORE BY THE NUMBERS:



40 million

pounds of valuable new recyclables projected from the project each year



80%

projected increase in annual recyclables captured from the project



Feet on the Street Program

Our curbside education program, *Feet on the Street*, focuses on reducing contamination by providing residents with customized, real-time feedback based on the content of each household's curbside recycling cart. Through "Oops Tags" residents learn which items should be kept out of their cart.

Supporting Communities with Free Tools and Resources

With thousands of community recycling programs nationwide, many lack the funds and internal resources to fully engage and educate their residents, resulting in low capture of recyclable material and high contamination rates. That's why we provide free, customizable tools and resources for thousands of U.S. communities, large and small, equipping them to drive their own change and making best practices accessible to all.

Visit recyclingpartnership.org for free, customizable signage and outreach materials.

From our creation of the first recycling information card more than five years ago, we've tested messaging, piloted programs, and designed free open-source materials that create scalable solutions for communities nationwide. With thousands of community recycling programs nationwide,

many lack the funds and internal resources to fully engage and educate their residents, resulting in low capture of recyclable material and high contamination rates.

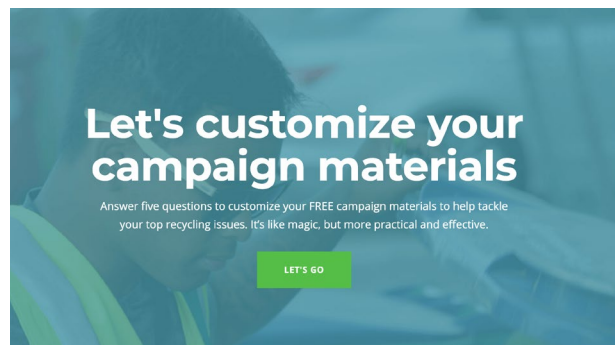
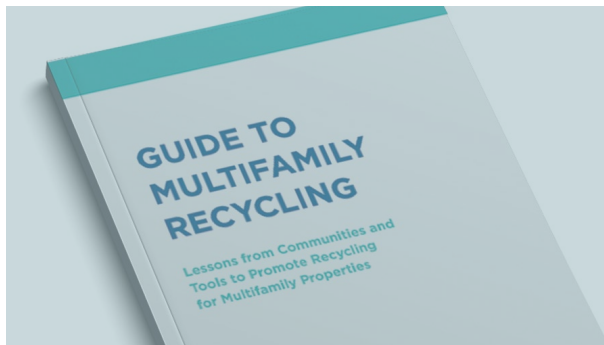
These tools and resources include:

Guides for Community Programs

- Curbside Recycling Contamination Reduction Kit
- Drop-off Recycling Contamination Reduction Kit
- Guide to Multifamily Recycling
- Guide to Community MRF Contracts
- Personal Electronics and Battery End-of-Life Management Guide
- Designing Educational Materials for Recycling Guide

Educational Resources

- DIY signs
- Recycling campaign builder
- Social media kits





Closing the Equity Gap through the Recycling Inclusion Fund

Our research shows that recycling services disadvantage certain streets, neighborhoods, and housing types along socioeconomic lines. Nearly 40 million U.S. residents lack the same level of access to recycling as they have to garbage service. That access gap is even larger for residents of multifamily housing, which has a higher-than-average percentage of members of the BIPOC community and a significantly lower likelihood of on-property or equitable access than single-family residents.

The Recycling Inclusion Fund focuses on three key areas: research, infrastructure and education, and leadership opportunities.

The Partnership created a dedicated funding stream, the Recycling Inclusion Fund, to address racial disparities and

systemic challenges in the U.S. waste and recycling industries. The national discourse on race propelled us to take a closer look at ourselves and the industry as a whole, and compelled us to stand up and speak out for equity and inclusion.

The Recycling Inclusion Fund focuses on three key areas:

- Research to identify the state of recycling access and participation, barriers, and needs in BIPOC communities across the U.S.;
- Infrastructure and education to reach and empower BIPOC populations with recycling access and education resources that meet their needs; and
- A leadership and training program to create opportunities in the sustainability sector for recent BIPOC college graduates through our Fellowship Through Partnership program.

Solving with Materials Recovery Facilities

Essential partners in the circle of recycling, many MRFs benefit from our grants and technical assistance to process a range of materials.

FUNDED

**\$23.6
million**

in catalyzed MRF grants in the past two years to expand material access and improve recovery

DELIVERED

**\$12
million**

value of new recyclables to MRFs from our programs since January 2021

Improving MRF Infrastructure to Increase Can Capture

Aluminum cans are among the most widely accepted packages for recycling. Within the packaging industry, they have leading recycled content rates and are consistently among the most valuable materials by weight in the recycling stream. However, according to Can Manufacturers Institute research, [up to 25%](#) of aluminum beverage cans are missorted at a typical MRF. Capturing these cans provides critical economic and environmental benefits to the recycling system and ensures that used beverage cans are recycled into new cans, supporting a circular economy.

In 2020, The Partnership launched an Aluminum Beverage Can Capture MRF Grant Program to invest in eddy-current separators, robotic sorters, other equipment, and process improvement to capture more cans during the sortation process. The Partnership made five grants in 2021 to MRFs across the U.S. following detailed grant criteria.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, we made a grant in November 2021 to the MRF serving Milwaukee and 26 communities in surrounding Waukesha County. Earlier in the year, we worked with Milwaukee to deploy more than 18,600 recycling carts and fund a citywide education and outreach effort to support the transition to universal, every-other-week collection. Through this powerful combination of MRF and collection investment, more than 10 million new pounds of recyclables, including cans, will be collected each year, and the Milwaukee area will be equipped to sort the increased volume of used beverage cans that will ultimately be made into new cans.

Overall, the equipment installed at MRFs from the five 2021 can capture grants will result in an additional 71 million aluminum cans recycled every year. According to the Can Manufacturers Institute's [impact calculator](#), that is an additional \$1.15 million of revenue generated for the U.S. recycling system and energy savings that could power more than 28 million U.S. homes for one hour.

MRF CAN CAPTURE BY THE NUMBERS:



71 million

additional cans recycled every year from the program

REDUCED

20%

contamination reduction through our Feet on the Street projects

THE POLYPROPYLENE
RECYCLING COALITION
BY THE NUMBERS:

FROM 2020-2022



20

grants awarded
to MRFs



18 million

additional Americans now
have access to curbside
recycling for polypropylene



\$6 million

granted for sorting
equipment at MRFs and
consumer education

Advancing Recyclability of All Materials through the Polypropylene Recycling Coalition

The Polypropylene Recycling Coalition demonstrates the benefits to the entire recycling system that can result from efforts to solve material-specific recycling challenges. Polypropylene is an important packaging material increasingly used for various food and nonfood products; it is estimated to be the third most prominent plastic in the residential recycling stream.

Formed in July 2020, the Coalition's goals are to increase curbside access for polypropylene, ensure recyclers can sort for polypropylene, and maintain robust end markets for recycled polypropylene. In just under two years, the Coalition made more than \$6 million in grants for sorting equipment at MRFs and consumer education programs in communities. These funds will positively impact nearly 18 million Americans and improve curbside polypropylene recycling access for nearly 7% of U.S. households. The MRF grants not only support recovery of polypropylene, but they also improve the processing of all material types, thereby reducing material sent to landfills.

The MRF grants not only support recovery of polypropylene, but they also improve the processing of all material types.

Case Study—Rumpke: Rumpke Waste & Recycling operates MRFs in Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio, locations where The Partnership also conducts curbside grant programs. By combining MRF grants with Partnership programs in both cities, recycling access and education improved for nearly 1 million households, recovering more than 1 million new pounds of polypropylene per year.

“As Ohio's recycling leader, our company processes more than 1 billion pounds of recyclables annually, and our customers have a desire to recycle even more. This Coalition grant will aid us in our efforts to responsibly grow recycling within our service footprint while providing end users with a clean stream of material for their products.”

– **Jeff Snyder,**
Director of Recycling,
Rumpke





Our Roadmap to Transforming U.S. Residential Recycling—Paying It Forward

Americans want to recycle, but not enough can. Approximately 4 in 10 Americans have little to no access to recycling. As a result, only about one-third of the 94 billion pounds of recyclables generated in homes annually actually gets collected, and the U.S. recycling rate has hovered at about 30% for years.

What will it take to transform the U.S. recycling system? Our [Paying It Forward](#) report identifies the investment needed to: provide recycling access to every U.S. household, deliver a solution for film and flexible plastics, upgrade and modernize MRFs, and deliver education and public engagement to the public. Funding these proven solutions will require a \$17 billion investment over five years.

Investments

\$17.0B Over five years

\$4.0B	Equitable recycling for every U.S. household	
\$4.0B	Create a residential recycling solution for film/flexible plastics	
\$3.0B	New/upgraded MRFs for domestic manufacturing	
\$6.0B*	Education and public engagement	

*\$1.2B annually




The benefits of this bold public-private investment will not only double the U.S. recycling rate and yield an additional 338 billion new pounds of recyclables, but the return on investment is an estimated \$30.8 billion in economic benefits over the next 10 years, including \$11 billion in wages for new jobs that will be created. The environmental impact of this investment is the equivalent of avoiding emissions from 129 million cars.

"We know that the changes outlined in [Paying It Forward](#) are within our reach; they're demonstrated in communities where we have made our own investments. We're in a unique moment where the public, policymakers, and corporate leaders are all aligned on the need for a stronger, better system. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make huge strides in recycling—let's act now."

– Karen Bandhauer,
Chief Corporate Engagement Officer,
The Recycling Partnership

The ROI

\$30.8B Over 10 years

\$8.8B	Value of recyclables	
\$9.4B	Landfill savings	
\$1.6B	Other (tax revenues)	
\$11.0B	Wages	

Solving with Materials Manufacturers

Different material types have distinct experiences on the journey to recyclability, but regardless of material type, industry knowledge from across the value chain is essential to the success of the recycling system.

FACT

2/3

of highly recyclable materials still end up landfilled. That's why we're creating material-specific coalitions.

INCREASED

7%

polypropylene curbside access increase since 2020



INSPECTED

**1.6
million**

recycling carts inspected
for contamination
nationwide since 2014

Overcoming Recycling Challenges through Coalitions

When a package or material does not meet the criteria for recyclability (see page 23, Pathway to Circularity), companies are encouraged to take action. Coalitions can address the recycling challenges of today and consider solutions for the challenges of tomorrow.

...industry knowledge from across the value chain is essential to the success of the recycling system...

The Partnership currently leads three material-specific coalitions:

The Polypropylene Recycling Coalition

(see page 16) is an inspiring example of stakeholders catalyzing rapid change to improve recycling access.

The Film and Flexibles Recycling Coalition

concentrates on proving and scaling solutions to efficiently recycle these materials, focusing on every aspect of the recycling journey from design to sortation to end markets. Just 1% of U.S. households can recycle this material from home today and with nearly 95 pounds found in each American home per year, system improvements are crucial. The Coalition led extensive research in collection methods and is actively leading projects to recycle film collected from homes through curbside recycling.

The PET Recycling Coalition, formed in 2022, aims to improve current systems and increase opportunities to change the paradigm of PET recycling. While PET bottles are highly recyclable, there is broad recognition that recycling rates must double—or increase even more—to achieve meaningful circularity. The opportunity to improve

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circularity of non-bottle PET formats such as trays, cups, and clamshells is even greater.

The PET Recycling Coalition will improve the recyclability of non-bottle formats while increasing the capture of all PET packaging, resulting in additional recycled content.

Advancing recyclability of one material type improves the system for all.

Advancing the recyclability of one material type improves the system for all by increasing the amount of material captured and reducing contamination. The Partnership is committed to working with all material types to address their unique challenges. The Partnership also has informal working groups and is open to forming task forces and supporting the creation of new coalitions.



Accelerating Impact through Policy

Our goal at The Partnership is to deliver the U.S. residential recycling system of the future in which all homes have adequate access to recycling, and we double the national recycling rate. But we cannot wait decades to get there while as much as two-thirds of residential recyclables are dumped into landfills each year. We know what it will take to fix the U.S. residential recycling system, and with smart policy we can accelerate change. That is why we created the Circular Economy Accelerator (CEA), the policy arm of The Partnership. Members of the CEA include more than 30 companies and organizations across the value chain.

Over the past three years, the CEA received input from diverse industry leaders to test, refine, and rally around solutions, developing a vision for a new, uniquely American approach using public-private partnerships to bolster U.S. recycling and advance the circular economy—one that creates jobs, protects natural resources, and reimagines how we design and deliver goods. Through this work, we have become a recognized leader in developing smart policy solutions across the U.S.

We know what it will take to fix the U.S. residential recycling system, and with smart policy we can accelerate change.

We're excited to continue collaborating with companies, communities, organizations, and lawmakers to keep moving toward comprehensive policy solutions. Now is not the time to be timid. It's time to be transformative and create a robust, sustainably funded U.S. recycling system.



Improving the Quality of Recyclables in Orange County

When it comes to capturing the different materials that enter the U.S. residential recycling system, it is as important for residents to know what cannot be recycled as it is to know what can be recycled. Excessive contamination can cause a host of problems once the material is collected.

Together, they are exploring new technologies that could enable the MRF to correlate quality with the Feet on the Street contamination data. Based on these positive results, the county secured funding to enable the entire county to adopt the strategy by 2023.

The curbside recycling program in Orange County, Florida, had a nearly 40% contamination rate, which threatened the long-term sustainability of the program. For that reason, the county began working with The Partnership in 2019 on an initial Feet on the Street contamination reduction program, with the goal of expanding the program to its 220,000 households by 2023.

The curbside recycling program in Orange County, Florida, had a nearly 40% contamination rate, which threatened the long-term sustainability of the program.

The program succeeded in reducing the contamination rate by 29%, improving material value by 23%, and generating 40 million pounds of recyclables annually. From 2020 to 2021, loads processed at the county's MRF increased tenfold, and the partnership between the county and MRF processor has deepened.

The project drove a transformation of the county's recycling system, resulting in a better connected and more efficient program that will ultimately provide recycling to 1.3 million residents and with the potential to recover \$3.6 million in recycled material value when implemented countywide.

ORANGE COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS:



Tenfold

increase in materials processed by the MRF in one year



23%

increase in material value resulting from the program



\$3.6 million

projected value of recycled material when program implemented countywide

Solving with Brands and Retailers

We believe in a future where 100% of packaging is circular and unnecessary packaging is eliminated. Consumer brand companies that require packaging and retailers that sell packaged goods are critical partners in that journey.



FACT

59%

of plastic packaging purchased at retailers is not accepted in a resident's primary recycling program

ANALYZED

20%

of all U.S. plastic packaging (by weight) has been analyzed using Plastic IQ



AVOIDED

670,000

metric tons of CO₂e
avoided due to
The Partnership's
granting projects
since 2014

Creating Clarity on the Pathway to Circularity

Navigating the recycling system has historically been challenging, in part because there are no widely accepted recyclability standards. Our Pathway to Circularity for Packaging, another example of collaboration to solve a complex challenge, was created to wash away the gray and bring necessary clarity to advance a circular economy for packaging.

“Together, we are building the roadmap to the packaging system of the future—a guide to advance package design, improve community access, help policymakers define what is recyclable, inform recyclability claims, and drive new innovations.”

– Sarah Dearman,
VP of Circular Ventures,
The Recycling Partnership

The Residential Recyclability Framework, the first element of the Pathway to Circularity for Packaging, provides users with a step-by-step process to assess packaging recyclability. Through a series of “building blocks” that a package must meet to be considered recyclable, the framework identifies opportunities to take action and solve challenges where necessary.

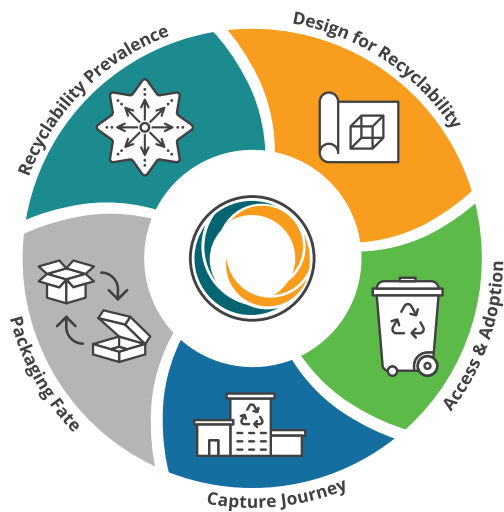
The Framework was created with valuable input from the Circularity Council, 35 leaders from across the recycling system. It also references existing design guides and protocols from industry associations. But we didn't stop there—in August 2021, we opened

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the Framework for public comment and received over 750 individual comments from 70 organizations, demonstrating the critical need for the Framework as well as the recycling industry's desire for these guidelines. We incorporated that feedback into the Framework and brought it to life through the Circular Packaging Assessment Tool. This tool serves as an interactive version of the Framework to help assess a package's recyclability and understand actions needed to "pass" through all requirements.

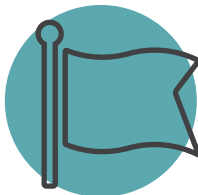
RECYCLABILITY FRAMEWORK BUILDING BLOCKS



PATHWAY TO CIRCULARITY BY THE NUMBERS:



750+
comments received from 70 organizations across the value chain, NGOs, and government representatives on Residential Recyclability Framework



35
industry leaders provided input on Residential Recyclability Framework

Driving Packaging Strategies with Plastic IQ

As U.S. companies seek to reduce waste, meet sustainability goals, and stay competitive, many are committing to ambitious packaging strategies designed to end plastic waste. But not all companies have data-driven resources to define these strategies. Plastic IQ is a free, digital strategy-building tool that allows U.S. companies to discover ways to make their packaging more circular. In a time of immense change in the packaging space, planning tools are increasingly important to drive progress and help companies devise solutions.

Plastic IQ allows packaging professionals to upload baseline data about their packaging composition to assess their current packaging portfolio, model solutions, and build a customized strategy to achieve packaging goals by 2030 or earlier. Designed with input from over a dozen consumer brand and NGO advisers, the tool scores company strategies for effectiveness and provides a detailed summary of results for users. Plastic IQ's powerful customization capabilities and action-oriented recommendations help companies develop an effective circularity strategy.

In its first year, more than 180 companies are leveraging Plastic IQ's free Pro Version while the Lite Version has been utilized by hundreds of professionals, from packaging engineers to sustainability managers. In 2022, the tool will be expanded for global use and for multiyear tracking, enabling companies to gauge progress toward 2030 packaging targets.

PLASTIC IQ BY THE NUMBERS:



1,000
Plastic IQ users in the first year

Expediting Circularity through U.S. Plastics Pact

Plastic pollution is a global crisis. To confront this emergency in the U.S., industry leaders recognized that individual action would not be enough; transformative, systemwide change is required to establish a path toward a circular economy for plastic.

The U.S. Pact is achieving its vision of a world in which plastic is kept in the economy and out of the environment.

Founded as a solutions-driven consortium by The Partnership and the World Wildlife Fund and launched as part of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's [global Plastics Pact network](#), the [U.S. Plastics Pact](#) (U.S. Pact) unites diverse public and private stakeholders across the plastics value chain to rethink the way we design, use, and reuse plastics.

Since August 2021, the U.S. Pact has identified [four ambitious 2025 targets](#), published a [baseline report](#), and created [a list of packaging that is problematic or unnecessary](#), aiming to eliminate such items by 2025. Already, more than 66% of the U.S. Pact's more than 100 Activators are taking action to eliminate these plastics.

As it looks toward its three remaining 2025 targets, the U.S. Pact is achieving its vision of a world in which plastic is kept in the economy and out of the environment.

U.S. PACT BY THE NUMBERS:



66%

of U.S. Pact Activators already taking individual action to eliminate problematic and unnecessary plastics

Delivering Comprehensive Recycling Information

The U.S. recycling system encompasses more than 9,000 separate local programs, each with its own rules and parameters for what and how residents can recycle. Such a disjointed system makes it difficult for people to recycle the right items in the right ways and for retailers and brands to design circular packaging. That's why we envisioned one national source of truth to empower everyone to recycle better.

Our National Recycling Database—a real-time, comprehensive source for recycling information across the U.S.—is the first of its kind. The many tools that will be based on this database will empower people, manufacturers, retailers, brands, policymakers, NGOs, and government officials to understand how individual recycling programs are conducted, which materials are recyclable locally, and ultimately how to improve packaging recyclability.

The first in a series of digital tools harnessing the database is a [chatbot](#) that answers household recycling questions, providing hyper-local information to address common sources of confusion. The database will also be used in tandem with the Pathway to Circularity Recyclability Framework, which provides companies with information on ways to take action to make more products recyclable.

NATIONAL DATABASE BY THE NUMBERS:



97%

of the U.S. population is covered by the National Recycling Database

Solving with People

Human behavior is at the heart of any successful recycling system—if we want to improve recycling, we need to strengthen recycling behavior in homes.



FACT

40%

of all Americans lack equitable access to recycling

FACT

30 billion

pounds per year of residential recyclables are unrecovered from homes because of behavior gaps



FACT

60%

of Americans
are confused
about recycling

Empowering People to Recycle Right

If every home in the U.S. had convenient access to recycling, more than half of recyclable material would **still** be lost. Why? Because most Americans are confused about what and how to recycle. No recycling system performs at a high level without winning the hearts and minds of consumers to use it properly and to its fullest extent.

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To address this need, The Partnership is launching the Center for Sustainable Behavior & Impact. The Center will drive measurable change by leveraging our National Recycling Database (see page 25), including targeted pilots of the newly launched chatbot, community partnerships, proven recycling education, and established track record of improving local recycling programs.

Critical drivers of behavior include communication and consumer education, physical and in-home support, packaging design, labeling for true recyclability, and trust in the recycling process. Given these drivers, the Center will initially focus on: expanding our research on barriers and sentiments toward recycling, testing solutions to improve recycling behavior, and creating a playbook and accompanying online tool to make best practices and key insights widely available.

Ultimately, the Center will become a hub for innovative consumer-focused solutions that improve recycling, empower recycling leaders to optimize their programs, and advance circularity.



1 billion+
pounds of new
recyclables each year



Improved
consumer participation
and trust in recycling



Transformation
of thousands of packages
to recyclability and
reduction of tens of millions
of pounds of packaging
through improved designs

Looking Ahead—Our Three-Year Plan

There has never been a more compelling time to take bold action. That's why our three-year plan will:

Transform the U.S. recycling system by expanding equitable access to recycling, improving recycling behavior and trust, making smart investments in MRFs, advancing state and federal policy to unlock circularity, and testing new recycling business models; and

Accelerate the circular packaging system of the future:

- a) through transparent, comprehensive, and adaptable guidelines, and tools informed by real industry knowledge and expertise that empower retailers, brands, producers, policymakers, communities, and households to advance circularity and
- b) by creating a framework that serves as an on-ramp for different material types and innovative packaging to achieve circularity, including reduction, reuse, and recycling.

We will **measure our impact** through meaningful benefits to the world including:

- Recovery and collection of more than 1 billion pounds of new recyclables each year;
- Improved consumer participation and trust in recycling and improved recyclability claims and labeling;
- Creation of new scalable and systematic approaches to recyclability for currently hard-to-recycle items;
- Initiation of effective and efficient policy that improves recycling system performance; and
- Transformation of thousands of packages to recyclability and reduction of tens of millions of pounds of packaging through improved designs.

“ We have a clear vision of what it will take to transform U.S. recycling and accelerate the circular packaging system of the future. We also have the people, data, and proven solutions to drive bold, measurable impact. All we need now is the commitment from all stakeholders to deliver full-scale system change.”

– **Jeff Meyers**,
Chief Strategy Officer,
The Recycling Partnership

Each year we forfeit up to two-thirds of residential recyclable material—that's a huge loss of environmental benefit and economic value.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

With commitment and action from all stakeholders, and The Partnership's proven solutions, we can deliver a robust, fully functioning system.

The time for action is now.

**We forfeit
two-thirds
of residential
recyclable
material
each year.**



We are grateful to our funding partners for their commitment to creating the recycling system of the future.



Solving for people and planet

