



New Recycling Facility in Alabama Will be Catalyst for Expansion

Baldwin County, Alabama: Case Study



More than half of all households in Alabama lack access to residential recycling according to [The Partnership's 2024 State of Residential Recycling Report](#). In Baldwin County, on the state's Gulf Coast, a few cities offer curbside collection, but all the material ships out of state, usually to Florida, which increases costs.

Baldwin County is leading the way toward expanded recycling with a new MRF. The first of its kind in the

county and southwest Alabama, the facility will serve a growing population of over 100,000 households and can process up to 40,000 short tons (80 million pounds) of material each year. That is far more than what the county's households will produce, which allows room for commercial material and neighboring communities to expand recycling access.

Projected to be operational by the fall of 2024, the **new MRF will enable Baldwin County to capture an estimated 1.3 million new pounds of PET every year.** The county is already planning to roll out expanded curbside recycling to unincorporated towns and other areas that have not had coverage. Through a grant from the Coalition to support a new optical sorter, the facility can separate PET, where before it could only deliver mixed plastic bales.

The optical sorter will enable Baldwin County to capture as much PET as possible from household recycling streams, preventing unnecessary material losses and ensuring the economic value of PET can be realized. Research from The Recycling Partnership shows that as much as a quarter of PET bottles and half of thermoform PET coming into a MRF can be lost to other waste streams such as paper. This application of best-in-class technology ensures a healthy PET recycling stream and mitigates risks of contamination in other recycling streams.

"Baldwin County's new MRF will act as a model for other rural counties throughout the state and other rural counties across the nation," said Terri Graham, Development and Environmental Director for the Baldwin County Commission. "The facility model will be particularly valuable to counties that, like Baldwin County, want to reduce the burdens on local landfills."

Baldwin County is a prime example of how The Partnership layers its initiatives across access, engagement, and processing to yield the biggest impact through targeted system change. Two additional grants are supporting recycling in the country: one grant supports upgraded drop-off sites, giving residents more access to recycle all materials; another grant helps the MRF capture more aluminum packaging.

[Click here to learn more about the Coalition and download the 2024 PET Annual Report.](#)

