



The Recycling Partnership Builds a Roadmap for Cleaner Recycling in Portland

Designing the City's Path to Minimized Contamination and Measurable Impact

Portland, Oregon

When Oregon's new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program began allocating funding to address recycling contamination, the City of Portland didn't wait to react—they prepared to lead. Based on The Recycling Partnership's deep experience in reducing contamination across the country, the City contracted with The Partnership to develop a comprehensive plan for minimizing contamination in its single-family collection program.

A Strong System, Ready to Go Further

Portland's single-family recycling program is already robust, with curbside carts, weekly pickups, and the option to drop off materials at two transfer stations. The system drives strong participation and provides a solid foundation to tackle contamination, refine collection practices, and take the program to the next level.

Why It Matters

With Oregon's EPR program set to provide dedicated contamination reduction funding starting in July 2025, Portland wanted to be ready on day one. Proactively addressing contamination ensures that new resources translate into measurable results, helping the City maximize participation, improve recycling quality, and build a strong foundation for future program growth.

What We Did

To meet the city's needs, The Partnership developed a data-driven Contamination Reduction Plan, ensuring resources translate into measurable impact during the first full funding cycle (July 2025–June 2026) of the EPR program. The plan incorporates city feedback and provides a clear, actionable roadmap for testing, implementing, and tracking contamination reduction strategies in single-family recycling carts.

The final plan included:

- Recommended cart-tagging strategies and duration testing
- Community and route selection guidance
- Detailed project implementation timeline
- Staffing and labor models with supporting training materials
- Data-tracking and measurement framework



Putting the Plan into Action

Portland has begun implementing the plan, starting with recruiting a new Recycling Contamination Operations Coordinator role in addition to the dedicated Project Manager already hired. Currently, they are gathering routing data from haulers and preparing an RFP for a cart-tagging vendor. Each of these steps were informed by The Recycling Partnership's recommendations.

By laying this groundwork early and receiving ongoing guidance from The Partnership, Portland is positioning itself for a smooth, impactful rollout in 2026.

Portland's forward-looking strategy shows how preparation pays off. By combining proven best practices, strong local leadership, and EPR-driven investment, the City is setting a new benchmark for contamination reduction—and ensuring that every collected item has the best chance to become something new.

Use proven best practices. Reduce contamination. Strengthen the recycling system.

PARTNER WITH US. LET'S BUILD A BETTER RECYCLING SYSTEM, TOGETHER.