

Case Study: Battle Creek, Michigan



Creative Recycling Programs in Battle Creek, Michigan

Battle Creek, Michigan, has long been an active champion of environmental stewardship. An early adopter of curbside recycling, Battle Creek has, in recent years, instituted a series of innovative programs to maximize the volumes it diverts from local landfills. As a long-term partner with the city, Waste Management was eager to help the city of Battle Creek rejuvenate its recycling efforts.

Beginning in 2007, Battle Creek started the “Recycle Bin-Instant Win” program. Through the program, city residents could enter a drawing for \$100 if their recyclables were out that week for collection. If the selected resident did not set out a recycling bin, the \$100 would then roll over into the next week’s drawing. “Recycle Bin-Instant Win” created an exciting, lottery-type atmosphere that encouraged residents to recycle every week. During its run, roughly 30 percent of residents participated in curbside recycling.

Building on its recycling initiatives, Battle Creek began to offer mail-back kits for recycling cellular phones and empty inkjet cartridges in 2008. The city provided residents with these

mail-back kits at no cost, which users could store until full and mail them via USPS for processing.

In 2009, the city expanded its mail-back program to include household compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and

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batteries. It purchased 5,000 battery recycling kits and 2,000 CFL recycling kits through Waste Management’s Think Green From Home™ program. Battle Creek made its mail-back recycling kits available for residents at City Hall, and also distributed them to households in their recycling bins. Consumers could ship their boxes directly from their home or from any one of the more than 34,000 postal offices across the country. Battle Creek

expects to recycle up to 30,000 CFLs and tens of thousands of batteries as a result of this program, while residents save thousands of dollars annually on reduced utility fees from their use of CFLs.

Also launched in 2009, the “Think Green Rewards” pilot program allowed residents to track their recycling activities online and earn “Think Green Rewards” points for using their recycling bin to divert aluminum, plastic, glass and cardboard for reprocessing and reuse. Points were based on the total weight of recyclables collected in each neighborhood and then banked and redeemed online through an electronic rewards catalog that included coupons for discounted movie tickets, free or discounted meals, video game rentals and other local Battle Creek-area entertainment values. More than 1,300 households — about 10 percent of city — participated in the pilot program. Together, Waste Management and the City of Battle Creek have shown that public and private partnerships can inspire citizens to support environmental sustainability initiatives.