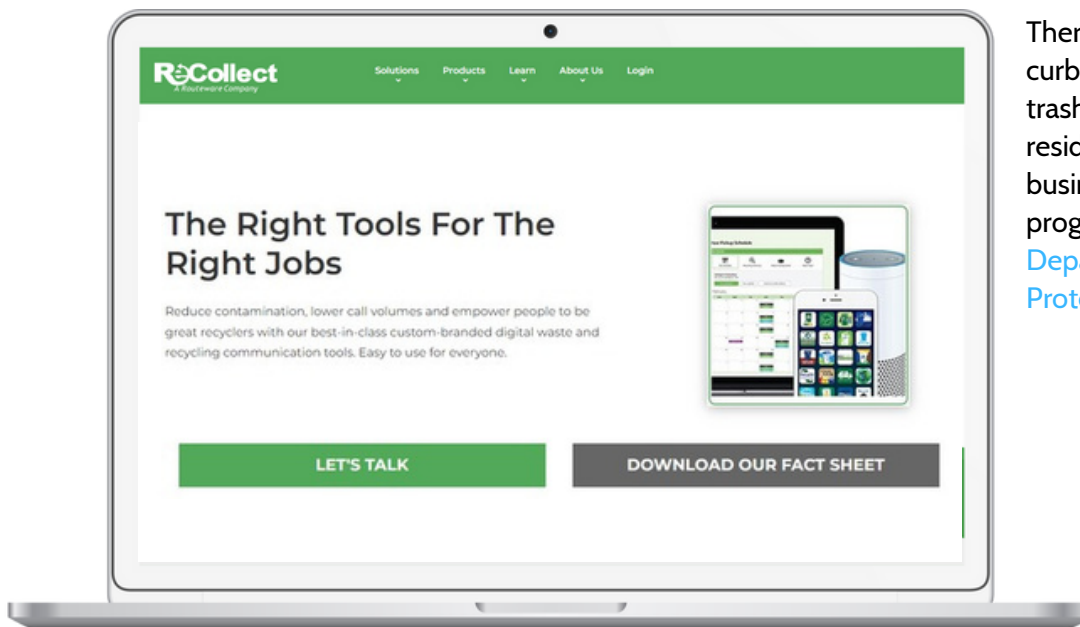




CUSTOMER STORY | Cambridge, MA

Nestled just across the Charles River from Boston is Cambridge, Massachusetts, home to about 120,000 people, Harvard University, and an impressive, mandatory and free recycling program.



There, [the city](#) offers weekly curbside collection services for trash, recycling and compost to residents and some small businesses, carefully aligning its programming with the state's [Department of Environmental Protection](#) waste disposal bans.

"The tool's incredibly helpful," Orr says. "We don't have to manually enter into a list and take in cancellation notices. I mean, it's such a load off to not have to manage any of the booking of this."



To help carry out this work and effectively communicate with its community, Cambridge has adopted ReCollect's [digital tools](#) for solid waste and recycling communications within a web widget, including the [Collection Calendar](#) for the curbside collection and street-cleaning schedules; the [Waste Wizard](#), called "Get Rid of it Right" in Cambridge; the [Special Collection](#) tool for mattress and textile collection; and the [Waste Sorting Game](#).



A few years ago, the city chose to divert even more waste from its landfill and "saw the writing on the wall" about future waste bans, says Cambridge's Recycling Director Mike Orr. The city received a grant for mattress recycling in 2019, and it joined forces with ReCollect to orchestrate it all through the Special Collection tool. Through it, residents may schedule (and reschedule) pickups for their discarded mattresses.



But not only do these tools allow the city to connect with its community about its everyday services, they've also allowed Cambridge to comply with waste bans — well in advance of the dates they take effect.



Orr says the city sees about 5,000 mattress collections per year. "Taking 5,000 calls would be very painful," he says, adding that calls to cancel, reschedule and ask questions would amount to much more than that.



Ahead of the Curve

In November 2022, mattresses and textiles will join the list of items that are banned from disposal or transportation in the state of Massachusetts.



"(It) reduces our call volume for mattresses by 99%."

And Cambridge is ready.



Plus, when the regulations for mattress disposal go into effect, “we’ll have the system in place already, and I won’t have to do anything come November,” Orr says. The community will already know how to properly dispose of their mattresses, they won’t need to learn a new system, and the city won’t need to provide much in the way of education and outreach.

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“We’ve kind of gone through a lot of it, we’ve learned a lot, and now we have a robust system that is going to serve us well — and it’s just gonna be a no-brainer and a no-effort needed for November,” Orr says.

Once the city saw how well the tool worked for its mattress collection efforts, Cambridge decided to use the same tool for its textile collections, too. They figured — “(let’s) make it as simple as possible for residents to use the same tool, the same website,” Orr says.

Tools You Can Count On for Programs People Love

Implementing new recycling regulations before they take effect at a state level has other perks, too. “People love that we’re going the extra mile to reduce trash,” Orr says. “We’re supporting a really awesome nonprofit at the same time, who do our (mattress) collections — a company called UTEC,” which serves proven-risk young adults.

And while much of the collection tool works sort of behind-the-scenes as far as the community is concerned, “we know it’s awesome,” Orr says. Plus, “the alternative would be painful for (the community) and for us.”

While talking about collections, regulations and processes with other cities throughout the state, “any time it comes up, it’s like, ‘How do you schedule this?’ I’m like, ‘We have a tool.’ I — we cannot imagine having to add on all these different things (or) talking to people about each, because once you invite someone to call you to schedule it, you invite a longer conversation. And I love to talk to people, but this phone rings off the hook, and we don’t have time to talk to everyone.”



This way, “if you want to look up how to get rid of something, you go to the tool. If you want to look up how to get a textiles or mattress collection, you go to the tool.” Whether someone wants to take a look at their collection calendar, or the holiday collection schedule and beyond, the city can guide residents simply to “go to the tool,” Orr says.



“It’s all on the same web page. We just love the idea of being able to streamline things,” he says. Rather than navigating “multiple web pages, you just have one tool, and it’s in a small box — but it can expand into a world that gives people a lot of information.”



Working Smarter, Not Harder

As the city prepared for its mattress collection program, it found a clever use for its Waste Wizard tool metrics. The Waste Wizard allows people to search a completely customizable and intuitive database to determine how to properly dispose of any given item.

“One of the coolest things we learned was having the Waste Wizard allowed us to get the metrics on how many times people searched for how to get rid of a mattress,” Orr says. “That information — we were able to extrapolate out to give us a rough estimate as to how many mattresses we might expect. ... It just gave us a good sense of what we should be planning for.”

Armed with an idea of how many people would soon take advantage of the program, Cambridge geared up to roll it out, first by sending an informative postcard to residents to “really spread the word really widely,” Orr says.



“We had a website for the mattress recycling program, but on that website, what’s really nice is that we were able to use just the widget,” Orr says. “It would take you directly to the mattress recycling part of the widget. ... That small, little change ... made it really simple for people to go to that website, see how to schedule it, (and) go through the process.”

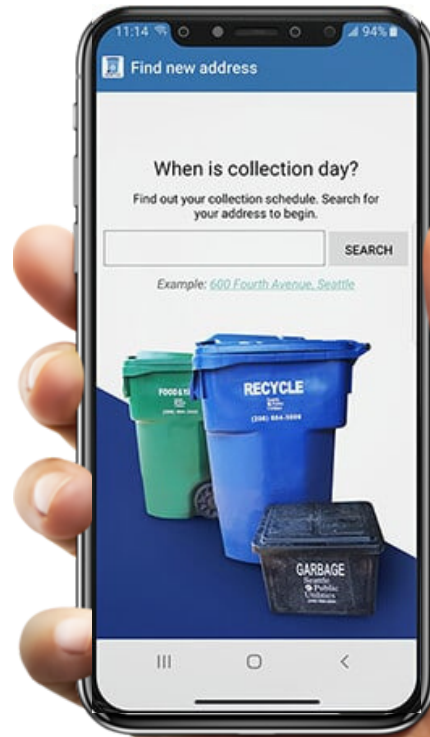
From there, compliance officers surveyed items left at the curbsides, and whenever they found a mattress that did not have a scheduled pickup date, they’d add a tag to the mattress asking the resident to schedule one through the website.

A 'No-Brainer'

By and large, Orr says he sees a lot of value in technology. However, "I am a little bit skeptical about how everything needs to be a new technology, a new widget, a new whatever. But if you have a tool that's available that can really save you time and energy?" And with "quantifiable metrics that have been helped by using this tool?" "In my mind, it's a no-brainer — especially for a city of our size," Orr says.

With tools and a working program in place as November approaches, Orr says, "we're all set, to be honest," save for a little more education and outreach efforts toward textile collections.

But the city knows that's covered, too.



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"You can see the tangible benefit" of the tools, Orr says. They allow "you to do a lot more outreach without actually having to do the outreach — the tool does it for you. So we've invested a lot into the tool, and we just love all that the ReCollect tool can do for us."

About ReCollect

ReCollect Systems is a technology company specializing in digital solutions for the waste management sector.

With a focus on meeting and surpassing the expectations of residents, ReCollect has the proven experience to deliver digital products that also meet the needs of waste managers, communicators, IT specialists and governmental officials.

Launched in 2009, today ReCollect is used by millions of residents across North America. From small villages to large urban centres, from municipal services to private haulers, ReCollect is ready to make your waste management programs more efficient and successful.

