



## CUSTOMER STORY | City & County of Denver

Denver is the capital of Colorado and the 19th most populous city in the United States. The City & County of Denver's Solid Waste Management division operates a municipal solid waste program that provides trash, recycling and compost collection. The city's recycling collection program, Denver Recycles, launched in 1991 and transitioned to a single-stream collection format in 2005. Denver Composts, the city's organics collection program, launched in 2008.

With a multi-faceted education strategy that prominently features digital tools for solid waste provided by ReCollect, Denver Recycles is working hard toward a 34 percent residential recycling and composting rate by 2020.



Denver residents have searched the ReCollect Recycling Directory for "what goes where" recycling information more than 80,000 times in the last six years



Likewise, more than 90,000 residents have set up Collection Calendar reminders since 2014



More than 16,000 residents have played Denver Recycles' Waste Sorting Game in the last three years

I was having a hard time keeping up with 'extra trash' days

## Recycling Success for Denver – and Beyond

Denver Solid Waste Management, and its Denver Recycles and Denver Composts programs, are a shining light for waste diversion in Colorado, where getting recycling programs off the ground has been challenging historically due in part to low landfill fees. In fact, landfill disposal costs per ton in the state fall below the national average by as much as 20 percent. According to a Waste360 report, in 2017 the average disposal fee per ton of municipal solid waste (MSW) in the US was \$51.82. In Denver, fees are as low as \$17 per ton.

In addition, like many other states, Colorado collects a fee per ton of landfilled waste to help support recycling programs. However, that fee is significantly less than in other states (46 cents per ton in Colorado versus \$2 in Ohio and \$7 in Wisconsin, according to the Colorado Public Interest Research Group).

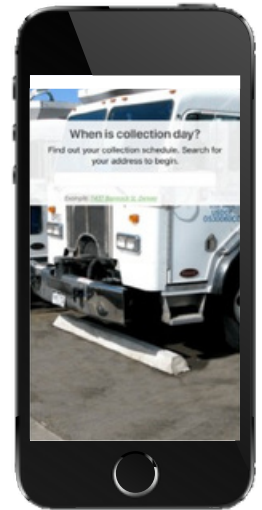
Especially when recycling markets experience a downturn as they have in 2019, communicating with customers becomes even more important.

To educate residents about these important services and their environmental benefits, Program Administrator Tay Dunklee relies on digital tools from ReCollect to empower Denver's 181,000 households to throw away less, recycle more, and compost all they can.

Unlike an digitally other 1 messaging platform available to us, we know that messages included in our collection reminder campaigns are going to a captive audience of our customers that want to be informed of their service offerings (recipients of these messages voluntarily signed up to receive these reminders).

## Getting It Right: Launch, Promote, Educate, Succeed!

The City of Denver launched ReCollect's Collection Calendar in April 2014. The calendar tool allows residents to search by address, online, or via app for their collection day and to sign up for collection reminders so they never miss a day. Through ongoing promotion and education, in the first year alone, residents had created more than 39,000 solid waste reminders, downloaded the corresponding Denver Recycles app over 3,000 times and viewed the online tool more than 180,000 times, according to a report by the city.



The calendar tool allows solid waste staff to piggy-back education on top of calendar reminders through campaigns, which further engage residents with programs and provide regular, "bite-sized" bits of environmental education to help them become better recyclers, better composters—and better stewards overall.

Dunklee has used the campaigns feature to great effect. Since 2014, more than 90,000 reminders have been set by Denver residents, and the Denver Recycles team has run 100 educational campaigns to address concerns like recycling contamination, and to promote events like composting workshops and other seasonal programs.



In addition, Dunklee takes advantage of the calendar tool's feature for scheduling service alerts ahead of time. She logs into her ReCollect dashboard each year to schedule all of the holidays that will delay collection, ensuring that residents know ahead of time when their collection will be a day late.

Residents have responded positively to the calendar reminders, says Dunklee. In fact, hundreds have shared their delight publicly, leaving five-star reviews on the App Store and Google Play.

I love this app. I always know what (container) to take to the curb. Love knowing when large item collection is, and what was the latest date to put out my Christmas tree

I do the win loaded app to my phone and enabled its alert feature. Haven't missed an 'extra trash' day since! Nice app!

## Amplifying Education & Outcomes with Cross-Promotion

Dunklee wisely makes the most of the ReCollect tools in concert with other channels—social and website among them—to amplify educational messages and campaigns. She also cross-promotes the Recycling Directory, the collection calendar and the city's online waste-sorting game in the popular Denver Recycles Roundup newsletter and with signage on collection vehicles—the ultimate, traveling “billboard” in solid waste education.

The solid waste team also relies upon citizen surveys to help inform and shape not only programs, but communications, too.

“One of our largest challenges for both our service and education capacities is simply connecting our residents to the programs and services that already exist. And, we know that this takes a multi-pronged approach. The more contact we can have with our residents, the better. With our ReCollect tools, we're never more than a few clicks and keystrokes away from getting a program update or offering out to 90,000+ residents. We try to maximize our reach by sharing messages with social media, newsletter, and ReCollect tools in a coordinated manner.

Dunklee puts a lot of thought and effort into ensuring that as many residents as possible receive and engage with messaging. This begs the question, then: Is it working?

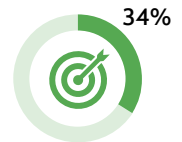
The short answer: a resounding yes.

Denver's click-through rate to campaigns—a metric that measures how many residents click on information presented along with their calendar reminder because they want to learn more—are higher than average.

This tells Dunklee that residents are getting the message, which helps them engage with programs more effectively, build a culture of sustainability, and improve behaviors around solid waste, as further evidenced by resident feedback.

## The Future: Recycling, Composting and Beyond

To reach its 34-percent diversion goal, Dunklee's messaging is focused on recycling and composting.



According to the city, about 25 percent of what residents throw away in their trash carts is recyclable and another almost 50% is compostable. To meet the city's diversion goal, residents need to compost, too—not just recycle.

That's where Dunklee really puts the Recycling Directory and the Denver Recycles' Waste Sorting Game to work. The Recycling Directory allows residents to search for proper disposal information for virtually any item online or on their phones, whether it belongs in the City's collection carts or whether it must be taken elsewhere.

The Denver Recycles' Waste Sorting Game, on the other hand, provides a fun, interactive way for residents to test their disposal know-how.

Both applications provide data to Dunklee on the back end about what residents understand—and what they don't understand yet—in terms of solid waste. In turn, this data allows her to shape future messaging and campaigns to drive the behaviors that she is ultimately charged with engendering.

It's nice not having to check t<sup>h</sup>e calendar I got in the mail

“

We love to be able to offer our customers a digital and interactive way to practice their waste sorting skills. While you might guess that the game would be most popular with our Denver Public Schools customers, it's actually seems to be just as popular with adults. And, the metrics on "most commonly confused" materials help us understand where gaps might exist in our education efforts.

Since 2014, Denver residents have searched for over 80,000 items in the Recycling Directory, answering the "what goes where" question without having to scour lengthy lists or pick up the phone. Likewise, since 2017 residents have played the Denver Recycles' Waste Sorting Game over 16,000 times, learning about waste streams and providing important info while they're at it: When reports indicate that a large number of players missed the same question, for example, Dunklee can launch a mini-campaign to educate everyone about what to do with the item in question.

## Conclusion

Most of the work Dunklee does with the ReCollect tools is resident-facing, but she also uses the data to build success stories for other key stakeholder audiences.

Working closely with ReCollect Customer Success Manager Jenica Nelson, Dunklee ties digital communications data to the outcomes her superiors and others need to see.

Regardless of the story the data helps her tell on any given day, Dunklee's commitment to using digital communications to connect with residents and help them do the right thing is unwavering. Her work and that of the larger solid waste team has helped Denver residents who are building a culture of sustainability that will serve people and the planet for a long time to come.

### 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.



ReCollect Systems Inc. | [recollect.net](http://recollect.net) | (888) 402-6936