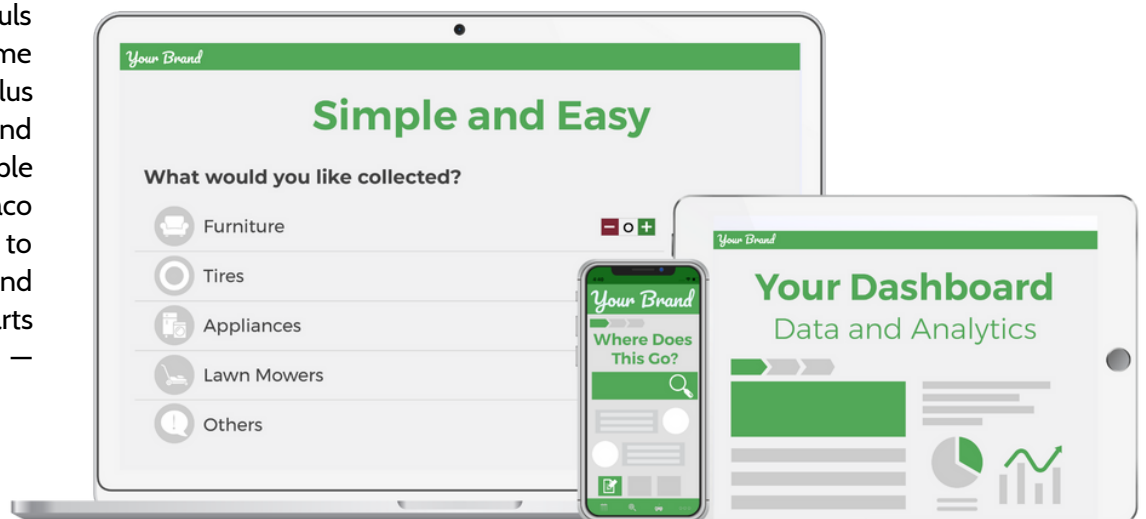




CUSTOMER STORY | Waco, TX

In central Texas is the city of Waco, home to more than 138,000 people. There, the city's Solid Waste Department provides a variety of services, from running a recycling center and providing roll-offs to managing and owning a landfill & gas plant, funding the nonprofit Keep Waco Beautiful, and more.

Waco collects and hauls solid waste for some 51,000 households, plus many businesses and organizations. For people who wish to recycle, Waco provides blue carts to recycle paper, plastic and aluminum and green carts for brush and leaves — with no extra fees.



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“It’s a participation, feel-good program,” says Ashley Millerd, Outreach Coordinator and Solid Waste Administrator with the City of Waco. “We mainly want to keep those things out of our landfill and potentially put it back on the market.”

Providing such a variety of services to a large area poses many challenges. All in all, Millerd says, “it’s a lot to keep track of.”

Like other large municipalities, the City of Waco also battled large call volumes, expensive postcard mailers that never seemed to work, miscommunication and schedule confusion. But city officials were up to the task.

To better serve its community, help people recycle right and alleviate stress on city employees, Waco tapped into digital tools for recycling from ReCollect, including the [Mobile App](#), [Collection Calendar](#), and [Waste Wizard](#) in 2019 and rolled them out to the community in 2020.

A difference you can measure



Since Waco deployed its suite of digital tools, “our call-in percentage has dropped by 20%,” Millerd says, freeing up time for employees to carry out other work.



Above all, the tools have made life easier for the people of Waco. Now, folks can easily find the information they need whenever they need it, from when and where to place their trash and recycling carts, to the details regarding upcoming district cleanups.



“There’s just lots of unique ways that I think the residents prefer the app, too,” Millerd says. “They love the reminders. There’s no miscommunication of what carts go where” as the city alternates picking up recyclables and yard waste.



The tools have also helped Waco save money. “We spent a ton of money ... (on) postcards,” Millerd says, when the city first began hosting its district (5) cleanups. There was no way to know whether people had gotten the message, and many cards were returned in the mail, she says.



Using digital tools, from the Collection Calendar to the App, “is a really unique way to just touch base with each household or target a particular neighborhood/district,” Millerd says — especially when the city needs to communicate timely information.



Millerd says Waco saw a “huge increase” in app usage and downloads after last year’s freeze, which had shut down the city for a couple of days. “No one knew when they were going to get their trash picked up, so the service alerts were amazing,” she says.



The “folks that downloaded it from last year heavily relied on it this year,” she says, adding that the city was more prepared for action, too. “(We) already had the templates going and everything.”



The app has helped the city and its community in other ways, too, Millerd says, including helping people figure out which bin to use when they’re gathering their trash and recyclables.



Deploying the Mobile App and Waste Wizard (called *What Bin?* in Waco) cut down on the community’s frustration and emails asking for help, which in turn also cut down the number of emails the city needed to field.

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“We saw our contamination rate drop,” Millerd says. “which has always been a challenge since we initiated curbside services for recycling.”



Making the most of resources

Millerd says she and the team in Waco are learning all of the ways in which they can lean on their app and tools. She says the city is in the process of setting up a waste audit, and once they have the results, she can use the app and tools to deliver better education — directly to the neighborhoods who need it most.

The Waste Wizard tool has also helped Waco’s recycling drop-off center, Millerd says, helping to inform the community of what items they can drop off, and what items they can’t.

“Having that Waste Wizard in there just really helps,” she says

She also used the app and Waste Wizard to help spread the word about the city’s addition of Styrofoam to their acceptable material list at the recycling center. “I used the app to help launch our ribbon cutting and demonstration of our newly installed densifier,” Millerd says. “The majority of people that were present learned about the event from the notifications they received.”

Meeting people where they are



Waco's digital tools and app have helped the city become more transparent with the people they serve, Millerd says, and she enjoys being able to help people not just during business hours, but any time, day or night, too.



"I don't know about you, but the majority of the questions I have are at 9:00 at night, when we're not open," she says. Now, people don't have to call and leave a message and wait for an answer — and employees don't have to return a flood of voicemails at the beginning of each shift.



She says the Collection Calendar has been a particularly big hit with the community. "People love the fact that they don't have to print out a calendar anymore; it's all just there," she says.



In the future, if enough users download the app and use the calendar, the city could move to sending its yearly paper calendar to only the folks who request it rather than the city in its entirety.

'It's free advertising for us'

Since their roll out, Millerd says she has plugged any and all collection events into the Collection Calendar, from scrap tire days to household hazardous waste days.

Having that campaign is a game changer in the Calendar, especially when the city adds links to pre-registration forms and more to help them estimate how many roll-offs they need at any given event.

"It's free advertising for us," Millerd says.

Then, once everything is set up, they can "let the app do the work. It really has made my life a ton easier."

Millerd says she also called on the app to help spread the word about a recent reroute — the largest of its kind in some 20 years. Millerd says she ran an "extensive" campaign for it and called on the app to help her spread the word.



"We got a few calls the first week, but it's nothing like it could have been...with just paper education," she says.

Help for the whole city



Not only do Millerd and the Waco team use their digital tools from ReCollect to aid the Solid Waste Department, but they have been able to use the tools to communicate messages for other city departments, too.



In the future, Millerd says she'd like to build on the city's suite of ReCollect tools, perhaps adding the Special Collection scheduling tool to their lineup.



Millerd says she helped the water department by alerting the community to cut back on their water usage. By not using excessive amounts of water, Millerd says, "we didn't have to go to a boil, (a) water boil, because we were able to relay the notice through the app."



"I would love to utilize that [the Event Calendar]," she says. "We only do a few events here and there, but, I mean, our city is growing, and events may increase."



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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.



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