



CASE STUDY | Scottsbluff, NE

The Scottsbluff public works department staff and the rest of the city's dedicated employees are changing the game for recycling and waste collection and enthusiastically employing **digital recycling tools** to help their residents and the environment.



In less than a year, since launching their digital recycling tools in August 2020, Scottsbluff reached every initial goal they set.



With their new digital tools, the city saw a reduction of calls for missed pick-ups, more opportunities to provide education for residents, a downturn in illegal dumping, and consequently, happier residents and happier staff.

In the Western panhandle of Nebraska, near the Wyoming border, the city of Scottsbluff is hard at work.

The Scottsbluff Public Works Department handles city services such as water, wastewater, stormwater, recycling and trash collection, and others for about 15,000 residents in roughly 8,000 households and businesses.

With big goals to up the ante on its public education, decrease illegal dumping and contamination and reduce the department's call volumes, the city deployed digital recycling communication tools including the [Waste Wizard](#) and [Collection Calendar](#); a [mobile app](#), Scottsbluff Sanitation; and an updated [website](#).

And in less than a year, since their August 2020 launch, they've reached every initial goal they set.



Searching for solutions

Not long ago, Scottsbluff faced the same challenges many municipalities do, said Deputy Public Works Director Jordan Diedrich. The city had trouble reaching residents to notify them about changes to collection schedules and the like. Collections worked smoothly until a holiday came along, forcing a Tuesday collection to shift to Wednesday, or a Wednesday collection to Friday.

"We just had a lot of issues with how to communicate that to our residents," Diedrich said.

The city exhausted every option they could think of, from placing notices in the newspaper, on the radio, TV, and Facebook, and on the city's website – but it didn't cut it, Diedrich said.

After holidays, city staff members weren't just returning to the office; they were coming back to hundreds of messages and voicemails, too. That system "just doesn't work for us, and it doesn't work for the citizens," Diedrich said. "We really needed to figure out a way to make that better for both sides."

Diedrich said the city also struggled with illegal dumping, educating residents about what could be recycled or disposed of and where, and which items should be placed in what container.



Digital tools that work for citizens, employees – & the planet

In August 2020, Scottsbluff launched their Waste Wizard tool in the form of a recycling directory on its

website, as well other tools that help with public education and immediate notifications, including the Collection Calendar and an intuitive mobile app.

"Having the recycling directory on our website is a huge benefit," Diedrich said. Through it, residents can search to learn what items may be recycled, the locations and hours of facilities, and more.

The city also updated its recycling and trash website URL to Scottsbluff.org/recycle, which makes it easier for residents to find. A new help feature on the site also allows residents to report problems and express concerns from their computers or phones 24/7 rather than having to wait and make a call during office hours.



Patience, passion, & persistence yield great progress

Though their tools officially launched last year, "partnering with ReCollect has been at the top of my list for the last four years of something that I think would benefit the city in a huge way," Diedrich said. "I never gave up on it."

Diedrich and the Scottsbluff team wanted to find a way to meet residents where they were and make it easier for them to find the information they needed. The city approved the digital tool additions for the 2019-2020 budget. Diedrich reached out to ReCollect's Tim Adkins, and he was later connected with Customer Success Manager Jenica Nelson.

Then they got to work.



Diedrich and other city staff knew exactly what they needed to be successful; they just needed a little help to pull it off.

"We worked through it pretty quickly," Diedrich said. "It just worked really well."

With the new tools in place, the city saw a reduction of calls for missed pick-ups, more opportunities to provide education for residents, a downturn in illegal dumping, and consequently, happier residents and happier staff.

"We've kind of hit all of those goals with our digital tools, and it hasn't even been a year yet," Diedrich said.

Administrative assistant Elisa Garton said the ability to educate the community about the items it takes at its drop-off recycling depot, paired with the Recycling Wizard, has reduced contamination for the city, too.

The tools were really put to the test last Thanksgiving, Diedrich and Garton said, when Scottsbluff completed five days' worth of pick-ups in just three days. Typically, they receive more than a hundred voicemails after the holiday when residents have missed their collection.

In 2020, however, just three months after launch, Garton, Diedrich, and the rest of the staff returned to the office the Monday after Thanksgiving, and they didn't have a single voicemail.

"Not one," Diedrich said. "That right there just spoke for itself. ... That just let us know it was all worth it."

Today, Diedrich said their interactions with the public are more positive now, and employees have more time to focus on improving programs for residents rather than playing catch up.

"Our new digital tools just do their thing, and we don't really have to think about it that much because it just works," Diedrich said.

Every staff member who could potentially field a trash- or recycling-related phone call was trained on the tools to better help residents, which has made life easier for everyone in town.

Diedrich gives kudos to the city staff, "who immediately got on board with it" all, he said.

"We're small, but we're mighty," Diedrich said. "And we're making a difference with ReCollect for our citizens."



Taking advantage of ReCollect's support and resources

ReCollect's Customer Success Manager, Jenica Nelson said the Scottsbluff team went from planning to launch in just two months. Ever since, Diedrich and the town have been model users of the tools, taking advantage of promotional wraps for their fleet trucks, sharing information on social media, and more.

"If I have a recommendation, he (Diedrich) does it," she said. "I really appreciate that about him."

At about 9 months after launch, 6% of Scottsbluff had signed up for reminders through the Collection Calendar. While Diedrich said the town would like to increase that number, “those 6% are the 6% that needed it,” Diedrich said.

Diedrich said he and the city have appreciated Nelson and her experience and expertise.

“Jenica has been awesome to work with,” he said. Any time anyone has a question, “we can email her and she’s on it – like that.”

Diedrich said the city especially appreciates the metrics the tools provide them with so they know where to focus their attention to offer a better recycling experience for their residents.

“It’s been eye opening for us to have the metrics to be able to see what people are asking about and what they are doing,”
**Jordan Diedrich,
Deputy Public Works
Director**



Finding success now and in the future

Diedrich and the rest of the Scottsbluff team are happy with the progress they’ve made thus far with their digital tool additions, and Diedrich is excited to see what the city can do in the future.

Having the ability to offer residents a better, easier experience with city services and keeping track of curbside collections is “kind of a peace of mind thing,” Diedrich said. “There’s no need to worry about it because we’ll handle it for you; we’ll tell you if your trash day is changed.”

Diedrich, who also serves on the Nebraska Recycling Council, said he hopes to find a way to implement the use of digital recycling tools and ReCollect’s expertise statewide so that other cities – especially the smaller ones – can find the same success.

In his five years with the city, partnering with ReCollect on the quest to help residents and the planet is “probably the thing I’m most proud of,” Diedrich said. “It’s made a huge difference, and you can see the difference.”

In the future, Diedrich hopes to potentially add the [Waste Sorting Game](#) to their toolkit to help the city’s school system teach recycling, and integrate more tools with Facebook for better outreach.

“There’s a lot of room to grow. I think we’ve only scratched the surface with ReCollect,” Diedrich said. “We’ve hit all of our goals. These are just extra goals.”

“It’s been eye opening for us to have the metrics to be able to see what people are asking about and what they are doing.”
Jordan Diedrich

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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