



# Food Scrap Recycling at Multi-Family Properties

## Case Study: Riderwood Village



### Background

Riderwood Village is 120 acres of private retirement living located in Silver Spring, Maryland. Starting as a single building and clubhouse in 2000, Riderwood Village is now the largest continuing care retirement community in America.



With four clubhouses, more than 1,840 independent living apartment homes, and a continuing care health services neighborhood, Riderwood Village is part of Erickson Living (a national network of continuing retirement communities).

The campus includes six restaurants, a café, and a pub for residents. In 2008, as a recommendation by their executive chef, Riderwood Village initiated a food scrap recycling pilot program in two of their six kitchens. Contracting food scrap recycling collection service with Bates Trucking & Trash Removal, Riderwood Village has now successfully rolled out the program throughout its entire campus.



Food Scrap Recycling Program Participation: Riderwood Village Housekeeping Manager and Sustainability Committee Member - Noel Vasquez (left), Assistant Dining Director - Scott Monfils (right), and Recycling Coordinator and Marketing Director at Bates Trucking & Trash Removal - Tara Lewis-Reid (center)

## Process

Riderwood Village's food scrap recycling program is a pre-consumer operation that collects food preparation scraps (i.e. cuttings, peelings, leftovers) from its kitchens. Food scrap recycling collection containers are placed in each of their kitchens and during meal preparation, staff discard the food scraps in these designated containers.

Food scrap collection containers are placed throughout all Riderwood Village kitchens for staff use



Members of the Sustainability Committee, comprised of 10-12 Riderwood Village employees dedicated to educating staff on the food scrap recycling program, monitor the food scrap recycling containers to ensure materials are acceptable by Bates Trucking.

After meals, maintenance staff brings full 32-gallon food scrap recycling collection containers to the loading dock for pick up. Once or twice a week, Bates Trucking collects and transports the food scraps from the loading dock to their designated food scraps recycling processing facility.



Poster in loading dock indicates which materials can be recycled

At the processing facility, it takes less than 90 days to process food scraps, grass clippings, and leaves into a beneficial soil amendment. Riderwood Village receives a truck load of the finished product each year on Earth Day for use in their community gardens.

## Education

With more than 1,500 employees, educating Riderwood Village staff on food scrap collection is essential to the success of the program. As part of their contract with Riderwood Village, Bates Trucking conducted an extensive training for all Riderwood Village staff. This training included flashcards, memory games, and reference materials on food scrap recycling and why it is important. Riderwood Village also conducts in-service sessions for staff several times a month which, among other topics, covers the food scrap recycling program.

## Results

Riderwood Village has recycled more than 3 million pounds of food scraps since 2014 with 1,126,899 pounds of those food scraps recycled in 2017 alone. They also donate excess food to Elizabeth House, a residential shelter program committed to the health and welfare of pregnant women and their children. Riderwood Village has donated 31,880 pounds of excess consumable food to Elizabeth House since 2014.

## Benefits

One clear benefit of recycling food scraps for Riderwood Village is a change in the overall recycling rate. Tara Lewis-Reid from Bates Trucking states that at least 70 percent of kitchen waste at Riderwood Village is recycled and composted. This has allowed Riderwood Village to reduce the number of waste containers in the loading docks and has substantially reduced total waste and associated waste disposal costs.

## Opportunities & Lessons Learned

Staff education is a critical element in the success of the food scrap recycling program at Riderwood Village. With a large number of dedicated employees, educating new and existing staff is an ongoing effort. Frequent modifications to the list of materials that Bates Trucking accepts and does not accept (due to changes in the processor's list of acceptable materials) adds to the educational challenge.

Acceptable and unacceptable materials



To mitigate this, Riderwood Village organized the Sustainability Committee, which routinely distributes updated information to other staff members and the Recycling Committee. This approach has proven very successful, as Bates Trucking has not recorded any issues of contamination from Riderwood Village since their contract began in January 2011.

Space limitations are another concern for Riderwood Village. Putting additional containers for recycling food scraps in kitchens crowded with cooks and waitstaff was a major issue. Riderwood Village designated certain areas in the kitchen, out of the way of staff traffic, for the food scrap recycling collection containers.

Riderwood Village also had to make room for the food scrap recycling collection containers in the loading dock area. This was done by replacing several smaller capacity recycling and waste containers with larger 450 lb capacity trash carts. The Riderwood trash rooms have trash carts for commingled materials, mixed paper, scrap metals, and refuse. The rest of the space consists of up to twelve 32-gallon food scrap recycling collection containers at any given time.

Food scrap recycling collection containers are placed in the loading dock for pickup by Bates Trucking



One of many kitchens on the Riderwood Village campus recycling food scraps

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## Next Steps

As the largest continuing care retirement community in America, Riderwood Village will continue its repositioning of existing buildings to meet the high demands for retirement living in the Baltimore/Washington metro area. The property already expanded its facilities to include a 'Town Center' which includes a new lobby area, office spaces for the Sales team, and The Bistro – a restaurant with a display kitchen concept providing residents and guests with the opportunity to engage with the culinary team preparing their meals.

With their food scrap recycling program fully integrated throughout the property, the Bistro has sufficient food scrap recycling collection containers in place for kitchen staff. The next step for Riderwood Village, after each expansion, is to increase both food scrap recycling collection container capacity and the number of scheduled pick ups to accommodate property and program growth.

## Recommendations

For multi-family properties considering a food scrap recycling program, Riderwood Village recommends doing your research. Whether you are in a maintenance, kitchen staff, or management role, it is important to clearly understand what food scrap recycling entails before you start.



Trash room/loading dock area where recycling and refuse are picked up by the collector

This includes asking your current recycling and refuse collector if they provide food scrap recycling collection services, costs associated with these services, and what materials can and cannot be recycled. It is also beneficial to understand the process involved in food scrap recycling. Lastly, it is imperative you identify who from your property will be involved in the process, and how to best educate residents, staff, and management.

**For more information visit  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling) or call 3-1-1 or 240-777-0311**



**Montgomery County, Maryland • Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Solid Waste Services • Waste Reduction and Recycling Section**

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