

**WE ARE  
ZERO WASTE BOULDER**



**Universal Zero Waste Ordinance  
Compliance Guidebook**



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## Chapter 1: What's the UZWO?

*Meet the Universal Zero Waste Ordinance: what it is, why it exists and what it means for you.*

On June 16, 2015, Boulder City Council adopted the Universal Zero Waste Ordinance (Boulder Revised Code [Title 6, Chapter 3](#) and [Title 6, Chapter 12](#)) that seeks to expand the availability of recycling and composting options for all Boulder residents, employees and visitors.

The City of Boulder's goal is to reach 85% diversion by 2025, meaning 85% of the waste will be recycled, composted or reused rather than going to the landfill. This guidebook aims to help property owners and businesses understand the Universal Zero Waste Ordinance and help them comply with ordinance requirements.



## Chapter 2: Property Owners

*Understand how to meet Universal Zero Waste Ordinance requirements and responsibilities for property owners. After completing the actions listed in this chapter, property owners will have satisfied the ordinance requirements.*

### Subscribe to Collection Services

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Contact a local waste hauler to sign up for recycling, trash and/or compost collection service. A hauler can also recommend appropriate service levels, such as size of bins and dumpsters and frequency of pick-up.

Here is a [list of haulers](#) with contact information and the services they can provide. You can contract with multiple haulers to provide pickup of different materials.

The city does not determine or control rates, nor does the city dictate appropriate levels of service for customers. The city encourages customers to ask for quotes from multiple haulers.

### Place Carts and Dumpsters for Collection

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If the recycling, trash and compost do not fit into one enclosure and the outlying bin is more than 15 feet away from the enclosure directional signs addressing the outlying bin must be placed on the enclosure.



## Signs and Education

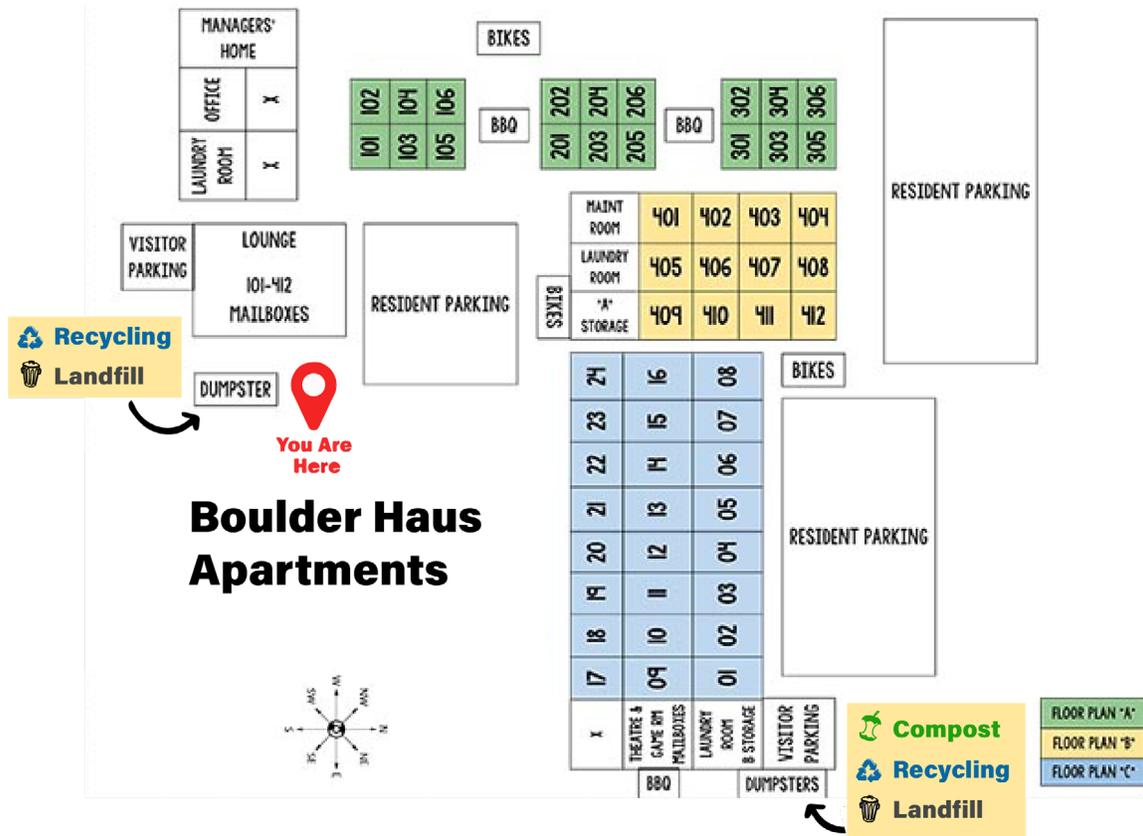
To ensure everyone knows how to correctly use recycling and composting services, it's essential that:

- Tenants know that the service exists
- Tenants know the location of dumpsters and carts
- Correct signs are placed on dumpsters and carts
- Tenants are educated regularly

A sign must accompany each container. Haulers must affix stickers to all hauler-owned containers. If your bin is missing signs, it is your responsibility to contact your hauler.

Training is the responsibility of property owners, both commercial and residential. At least annually, and when new tenants move in, they must be educated about proper waste sorting, where bins are located and when they are emptied. Property maps depicting the locations of required services must be provided. You may also choose to have trainings conducted by your contracted recycling or compost hauler or another third party.

Example of a residential property map depicting waste disposal locations (this can also be done for commercial properties):



Additionally, training is required for employees, custodial contractors, landscapers or any other service providers responsible for collection of recyclables, compostables and trash at the property. To learn more about training and available resources see [Chapter 6](#).

## Best Practices:

- Wherever your trash dumpsters or carts are located, your hauler should also provide carts and/or dumpsters for recyclables and compostables.
- When the recycling, compost and landfill containers do not fit into one enclosure or waste disposal area, property maps depicting the locations of required services can be posted as signs to meet the directional sign requirement as well as the requirement to provide maps to new tenants upon move-in.
- For restaurants and other food service businesses, if – prior to sorting your waste – your property generates more than approximately eight yards of waste per week, you should be able to reduce the size of your trash dumpster or the frequency of collection at the same time you increase collection for compostables and recyclables.

## Chapter 3: Food-Based Businesses

Learn the requirements and best practices for food-based businesses like restaurants, grocery stores, and dining halls including how to set up waste stations for both front-of-house and back-of-house areas. Food-based businesses are required to separate recyclables and compostables from the trash, provide properly placed signs and containers, and train their employees on proper sorting in all back-of-house areas. If the business has a self-busing area, then the front-of-house must also provide a 3-bin zero waste station and proper signs or labels. Additionally, food-based businesses are required to annually report ordinance compliance.

### Front-of-house Dining Areas and Other Public Facing Areas

When setting up bins in your dining area, you will need bins for all three waste streams. Clear and visible waste stations are especially important if you have a “self-busing” restaurant where customers are clearing their own tables.



All front-of-house bins must be clearly labeled. Signs are available for free from the city. You can also request custom signs featuring the items you serve to help reduce contamination and encourage proper use. For more information on signs, see [Chapter 5](#).



Group bins together into a zero waste station. If all the containers cannot be grouped in one area and the outlying bin is more than fifteen ft. away from the zero waste station, then you must use a directional sign. This type of sign will help direct customers to all their options. A directional sign should be placed on the outlying bin with directions to the zero waste station and the zero waste station should have a sign referring to the outlying bin. If food trucks or mobile food vehicles wish to provide a trash can, they must also provide a recycling and compost bin.

## **Back-of-house Areas and Other Employee-Only Facing Areas**

All food-based businesses must have recycling, compost and trash bins in employee-only areas. Unlike front-of-house areas, these bins do not have to be placed in a station together within the employee-only areas, if it is more efficient to arrange the bins as needed. For example, a lone cardboard bin may be placed in an unboxing area and a lone compost bin may be placed in a food-preparation area. All bins must have signs. If you choose to use descriptive languages on your signs rather than just pictures, you can use English, Spanish or any other language that is commonly used by the employees. For more information on signs, see [Chapter 5](#).

## **Reporting**

In addition to meeting ordinance requirements, food-based businesses are required to annually report ordinance compliance by submitting a Proof of Compliance form. For more information on reporting, see [Chapter 7](#).

### **Best Practices:**

- Custom signs featuring the items you serve will reduce contamination when sorting and encourage proper sorting. The city can provide you with this type of sign for free.
- Restaurants should have a conveniently located compost container for wait-staff to scrape food waste, napkins and other compostable items into.
- Bathrooms should have containers for compostables such as paper towels and tissues. It is often possible to convert the current waste container to compost only and place a small trash container beside it, or in the restroom stalls.



## Chapter 4: Non-Food-Based Businesses

Find out the responsibilities of non-food-based business owners such as offices and retail stores. These businesses are required to separate recyclables and compostables from the trash, provide properly placed signs and containers, and train their employees on proper sorting. This chapter will explain how to set up your business properly.

### Offices and Retail



Office spaces with multiple workstations should have one, centrally located waste area with properly labeled recycling, compost, and landfill containers. Employees can empty individual recycling, compost, or landfill containers into these larger bins. For examples of proper bins and signs see [Chapter 5](#).

In addition to requiring bins and signs for general use in a central area, employees must be trained on how to properly sort their waste. For more information on employee training see [Chapter 6](#).





## Best Practices:

- Individual desks, work stations, copy machines and printers should have containers for recyclables, but may not necessarily need a trash container at each location. A compost bin is not required at each workstation, though a small (1 qt) container for collecting food scraps, tissues, etc., is encouraged.
- For compost containers, consider using compostable bags (BPI certified compostable or paper bags) or using no liner and washing your containers regularly since plastic garbage bags CANNOT be put in your compost dumpster.
- While supplies last, the City of Boulder offers a free six months' supply of compostable bags through its Green Bag Giveaway program, paid for by the Disposable Bag Fee. To qualify, Boulder businesses of all types simply need to fill out [the application](#) which shows they are composting and recycling.
- Whether it's a lunch room, break room or a full commercial kitchen, most of the waste generated within a kitchen is food waste. Set up compost collection containers in the kitchen near high-use locations like the dishwasher, sink or food prep areas.
- It is convenient to have a place to consolidate corrugated cardboard for recycling wherever your inventory gets unpacked.

## Chapter 5: Setting up your Indoor Zero Waste Stations

*Learn how to setup your indoor zero waste stations with proper bins and signs.*

### Bins

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There are no requirements on the type of bins your business needs to use to be compliant. Choose the best size and bin style for your business to ensure the capacity is adequate for the waste streams generated.

### Signs

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All containers must have signs or labels on or above them to easily identify what materials go in which container.

Front-of-house signs must say the title of the waste stream is being collected (recycle, compost, landfill) in addition to an image (photographic or iconographic) depicting the proper waste stream intended for collection. If you choose to specifically identify individual items on your signs rather than just pictures or icons, the descriptions must be in both English and Spanish.

Back-of-house signs must contain a title – recycle, compost, landfill. You may use English or any other language that is commonly used by the employees as long as they also contain pictures of materials commonly found in the businesses' waste streams.

While businesses may use whatever types of signs they choose within the requirements, the city has free signs available and can also make custom signs tailored to your business, including logos, branding and unique materials that your business generates (e.g., specific coffee cups or packaging). These signs are especially helpful if you have a self-busing restaurant where your customers sort their own waste.

Free signs and stickers for both front-of-house and back-of-house and may be picked up at 1101 Arapahoe Ave, 1st floor, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm, or you can download signs from <http://www.ZeroWasteBoulder.com> under **Resources**. For custom signs, email [zerowaste@bouldercolorado.gov](mailto:zerowaste@bouldercolorado.gov).

## City-Provided Front-of-House Signs



## City-Provided Back-of-House Stickers



### Best Practices:

- When possible, buy green bins for compost, blue for recycling, and black or gray for trash. This makes sorting easier when employees and customers are in a hurry.
- Using liners in your bins keeps them cleaner, but plastic bags must be kept out of the compost and bags of any kind cannot be recycled in your dumpster. If you choose to use liners in recycling containers for easy collection and cleaning maintenance, make sure the contents of the bag are emptied into the recycling bin loose and the liner is placed in the trash bin or reused until no longer effective.
- For cleaner compostables collection, consider using compostable bags (BPI certified compostable or paper bags) or using no liner and washing your containers regularly since plastic garbage bags cannot be put in your compostables container.

## Chapter 6: Employee or Tenant Training

*This is how to train and educate your employees and tenants. All employees must watch the training video and take the sorting quiz. Training helps ensure compostables are actually composted and recyclables are made into new materials.*

### Watch Training Videos

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The city has a series of videos that will teach your employees how to set up your work areas and how to properly sort your waste so everything ends up in the right bin.

Each employee must watch the sorting 101 video in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

While not required, you can set up your restaurant, café or bar for zero waste success with our “how-to” video for food related businesses in [English](#) or [Spanish](#). Set up your office or retail space for zero waste success with our “how-to” [video for office or retail businesses](#).

### Take the Sorting Quiz

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Each employee must take the sorting quiz at [boulder.recycle.game](http://boulder.recycle.game) and it is the responsibility of the owner to ensure the certificates of completion are kept on file.

### Keep Records

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It is important to keep records of employees trained and dates of the training. Conduct trainings on an annual basis, as well as when new hires come on board.

### Train Custodians and Janitors

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If your business manages its own custodial contract, share our video resource for custodial contractors posted at [www.ZeroWasteBoulderResources.com](http://www.ZeroWasteBoulderResources.com) and make sure that janitorial staff separates the three waste streams and places the waste in the appropriate outside containers.

### Best Practices:

- If liners are used in recycling containers for easy collection and cleaning maintenance, make sure tenants, employees and custodial contractors empty the contents of the bag into the recycling bin loose and the liner is placed in the trash bin or reused until no longer effective.

## Chapter 7: Reporting Compliance

Get clear on the annual reporting requirement for businesses, who is required to report, the deadlines and how to report.

### Who Needs to Report and Deadlines

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- **By June 30, 2019 and annually thereafter:** All restaurants and grocery stores
- **By June 30, 2020 and annually thereafter:** All food-producing businesses
- **No sooner than June 30, 2021,** the City Manager may also require other businesses and property owners to annually report.

Businesses that do not report when required are assumed to be non-compliant. These businesses will then be subject to enforcement action and may receive fines. See [Chapter 9](#) for more details on enforcement.

### How to Report Compliance

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To report compliance, businesses need to complete a compliance reporting form online. Please note you will be required to attach photos of your waste stations, containers and signs as part of the application. Applications without proper photos will be declined. For more information and to report, visit the [Reporting Ordinance Compliance page](#).

Reporting compliance also makes you eligible for our [Green Bag Giveaway](#), a free 6-month supply of compostable liners.



## Chapter 8: Exemptions

*In certain cases, a business or property owner may apply for an exemption from the requirements of the ordinance. To be granted an exemption, applicants must demonstrate that they have considered all reasonable options to bring their business or property into compliance.*

### To Apply for an Exemption

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Applying for an exemption is done through the same [Compliance Reporting Form](#) from [Chapter 6](#). The City will review your application and contact you. Depending on the exemption type, you may be required to complete a self-certification form, provide proof of service and/or the city may conduct a site visit to determine eligibility.

### Types of Exemptions

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Generally, exemptions expire one year from the date granted. Renewal requests will be accepted for review during the annual reporting period for that year, except as otherwise detailed.

These are the types of exemptions available:

- Home-Based Business
- Self-Haul
- Shared Collection
- Economic Hardship
- Compost On-Site
- Space Constraints
- Innovation
- De Minimis Volume

Exemption descriptions are listed [here](#). Review the exemption descriptions to see if you qualify before applying.

## Chapter 9: Enforcement

*Learn about enforcement and fines associated with noncompliance.*

### **Enforcement**

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Enforcement of the ordinance began June 17, 2017, one year after the ordinance went into effect. Enforcement is handled by the Climate Initiatives Department and the Code Enforcement Division of the Police Department.

When the city becomes aware of noncompliance, either through a complaint, failure to report compliance when required or inspection of the premises, a two-warning process begins prior to a fine. The first warning is a 30-day Notice of Pending Violation letter sent by Climate Initiatives staff.

If the steps to become compliant are not completed within the 30 days allowed, the case will be referred to Code Enforcement at the Police Department for further investigation.

If compliance is not achieved within 14 days of Code Enforcement opening an investigation, a fine of \$500 will be assessed, followed by second fine of \$1000, then fines of \$2000 for each occurrence, if compliance is not reached upon subsequent 14-day inspections.

## Chapter 10: Resources

*The City of Boulder wants to encourage compliance, and has created a number of resources to help you achieve success at complying with the Universal Zero Waste Ordinance.*

### **We Are Here to Help**

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The City of Boulder has created a number of resources to help you successfully comply with the Universal Zero Waste Ordinance.

#### **Introduction and Set Up Videos**

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- Learn more about the Universal Zero Waste Ordinance in our [UZWO introduction video](#).
- We have a [video for business owners](#) and a [video for property owners](#) walking you through an overview of steps to compliance with the ordinance.
- Set up your restaurant, cafe or bar for zero waste success with our “how-to” video for food related businesses in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).
- Set up your office or retail space for zero waste success with our “how-to” [video for office or retail businesses](#).
- Watch our video resource for custodial contractors in [English](#) or [Spanish](#) on how to deal with the three waste stream system of compost, recycling and trash.

Check out our [What Goes Where](#) page for information, tips and local facilities to help you reuse, recycle and compost more.

#### **Still Have Questions or Need Help? Contact Us!**

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Email [zerowaste@bouldercolorado.gov](mailto:zerowaste@bouldercolorado.gov) or call [303-441-1931](tel:303-441-1931) to request assistance, or refer to the [City Manager’s Rules](#) for additional details about how to comply with new requirements.