



City of Seattle

Final Use Definitions

Updated December 2025

Final Use	Definition
Recycling	"Recycling" or "recycle" means transforming or remanufacturing waste materials into usable or marketable materials for use other than incineration (including incineration for energy recovery) or other methods of disposal (SMC¹ 21.36.016 - Definitions R-Z #2).
Composting	"Composting" means the biological degradation and transformation of organic solid waste under controlled conditions designed to promote aerobic decomposition. Natural decay of organic solid waste under uncontrolled conditions is not composting (SMC 21.36.012 - Definitions C-E #12).
Incineration for Energy Recovery	"Incineration" means a process of reducing the volume of solid waste operating under federal and state environmental laws and regulations by use of an enclosed device using controlled flame combustion (SMC 21.36.014 - Definitions F-P #8). Process must capture and reuse energy that would otherwise be wasted to be considered 'Incineration with Energy Recovery'. Anaerobic digestion is not included.
Beneficial Use (other than Energy Recovery)	"Beneficial Use" means the use of solid waste as an ingredient in a manufacturing process, or as an effective substitute for natural or commercial products in a manner that does not pose a threat to human health or the environment. Avoidance of processing or disposal cost alone does not constitute beneficial use (SMC 21.36.010 - Definitions A-B #9). Must be pre-approved by the City.
Reuse	Extending the life of a product, packaging, or resources by either using it more than once for the same or a new function with little to no processing, repairing it so it can be used longer, sharing or renting it, or selling or donating it to another party (Federal Zero Waste Development and Expansion Act of 2017).
Retail Sale	Form of reuse. Extending the life of a product, package, or resource by selling to a new party.
Disposal	Waste material sent to an area or facility where final treatment, utilization, processing, or deposition of solid waste occurs (SMC 21.36.012 - Definitions C-E #21).

Recyclable and Reusable Material Type Definitions

Updated December 2025

Material	Definition
Aluminum cans	Aluminum beverage cans.
Antifreeze	Antifreeze, coolant
Appliances (white goods)	Appliances, hot water heaters, microwave ovens, etc.
Asphalt (from paving)	Asphalt paving material.
Asphalt roofing shingles	Asphalt roofing shingles.
Bicycles	Bikes, Bicycles, tricycles
Brick	Fired clay bricks.
Carpet and carpet padding	General category of flooring applications and non-rag stock textiles consisting of various natural or synthetic fibers bonded to some type of backing material. Includes carpet and carpet padding.

¹ Seattle Municipal Code https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=13857

Material	Definition
Chemicals, solvents, paints	Oil-based paint and sealers including house paint and primers, stains, deck and concrete sealers, and clear finishes (e.g., shellac and varnish). Solvent-based adhesives and glues including epoxy, rubber cement, two-part glues and sealers, and auto body fillers. Water-based glues including caulking compounds, grouts, and spackle. Caustic cleaners including cleaners to clean surfaces, unclog drains, or perform other actions. Other chemicals including pesticides, herbicides, gasoline, kerosene, motor oil, diesel oil, asbestos, and explosives. Absorbents and spent paints including spill cleanup of flammable liquids, spent sorbents, spent paint, covid cleaning supplies, cleaning solution, nicotine that is expired/unsellable that is going for recycling. Photo processing waste including photo sludge, photographic silver sludge, photo processing solution. Medical Wastes including pills, liquid medications, creams, and ointments used in residential settings.
Clean NOT painted or treated dimensional wood waste (includes pallets and crates)	Clean pallets, scrap lumber, wood toys, fencing, crates. Specify final use when known: Reuse lumber or pallets, recycling, composting, paper pulp, burned for energy recovery, etc. Note that painted and treated wood is listed separately.
Concrete	Concrete, Portland cement mixtures, set or unset.
Container glass	Food, beverage, and other glass containers; excluding refillable bottles.
Corrugated cardboard (OCC)	Uncontaminated (no plastic liners or wax coating) brown, uncoated cardboard boxes with a wavy core, brown paper bags, kraft paper.
Electronics or computers	Small electronic items and related parts including computers, printers, refurbished electronics for resale or reuse, media (CDs, VHS), monitors, cell phones, servers, and tablets.
Fats, oils, and grease	Fatty byproducts of food preparation, including cooking oil, butter, lard, and gravy. Can be in liquid or solid form.
Ferrous metals	Magnetic metal items, such as steel clothes hangers, sheet metal products, pipes, some automobile repair parts, and other miscellaneous, magnetic metal scraps.
Fiberglass insulation	Fiberglass building and mechanical insulation - typically batts.
Fluorescent and mixed bulbs	Fluorescent light tubes, compact fluorescent lights, fluorescent bulbs similar in appearance to incandescent bulbs. These bulbs typically have a spiral or tubular design. Any light-emitting diode (LED) light bulb or lighting fixture. They usually are not coiled in appearance and have an integrated ballast in the base.
Food and/or food scraps	Food waste, food scraps, spoiled food, donated food. Can include compostable paper and compostable plastic.
Gypsum wall board	Calcium sulfate dehydrate sandwiched between heavy layers of Kraft-type paper.
HDPE plastics (#2)	High-density polyethylene coded (#2) including clear and colored containers made from HDPE
High grade paper	Computer paper, white bond, Xerox, or notebook paper. Some colored paper.
Household batteries	Ni-cad, disposable batteries, rechargeable batteries (lithium ion), button batteries and laptop batteries.
Household items	Mixed-material furniture such as upholstered chairs, mixed-material sofas. Kitchenware such as dishes, silverware, and kitchen utensils. Small electric appliances such as toasters, and microwave ovens. Personal items including eyeglasses, jewelry, and curling irons. Also includes pet supplies and small power tools. Sporting equipment and toys such as balls and soft sporting equipment. NOTE: Furniture that is made purely of one material, such as plastic or metal, would be categorized according to that material (e.g., plastic products or other ferrous metal). Plastic toys should be included in the "Other recyclable plastics/rigid plastics category".
LDPE plastics (#4)	Low-density polyethylene (LDPE) coded (#4). Includes some squeezable containers. Excludes plastic bags and wrap.
Mattresses	Box springs, wood or steel frame material and fabric from mattresses.

Material	Definition
Mixed paper	All other potentially recyclable paper not included in other paper categories, such as envelopes, telephone books, book stock, paperback books, cereal boxes, laundry soap boxes, plastic-lined and/or wax-coated cardboard boxes, and all magazines.
Mixed glass	Mirrors, glassware, glass windowpanes, doors and tabletops, safety glass, architectural glass, windshield and side window auto glass. Broken glass of any color that can be readily distinguished and separated from other materials.
Newspaper	Black and white newspaper, shredded newsprint, and other paper normally distributed inside newspapers such as colored advertisements, comics, flyers, tabloids.
Non-ferrous metals	Copper tubing, brass fixtures, insulated wire, small auto repair parts such as generators, water pumps, empty propane tanks/cylinders, oil filters, aluminum other than beverage cans, and empty aerosol cans.
Office mix	Mid-grade mixed office paper including paper utilized for file folders, tab cards, writing, typing, and printing.
Other aggregates such as rock and gravel	Other aggregates such as rocks and gravel.
Other construction and demolition debris	Use ONLY for materials that are not specifically listed in other categories that are a result of construction or demolition activities. MUST write-in estimates of each material listed. "Other construction and demolition debris" may include toilets, sinks, ceiling tiles, non-asphalt roofing waste and combination materials.
Other recyclable plastics/rigid plastics	Recyclable plastics or plastics products for reuse not included in other plastic categories e.g., plastic toys, PVC pipes, reusable plastic containers, etc. This excludes PET, HDPE, LDPE plastics listed in other categories. Estimate the amount of each material listed.
Other recycled materials	Use ONLY for materials that are not specifically listed in other categories. MUST write in estimates of each material in your list. Materials may include, but are not limited to rubber materials, milk cartons/drink boxes, "Tetra" or aseptic packaging, photographic films.
Painted and/or treated wood waste	Dimensional wood waste that is painted, treated or unusable.
PET plastics (#1)	Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) coded (#1) including clear and colored beverage containers.
Plastic film	Plastic film, including plastics bags, pallet wrap, building and boat wrap.
Rigid (foam) insulation	Rigid foam insulation.
Soil and dirt	Includes topsoil and dirt, land-clearing debris, and bark. No contaminated soil or dirt.
Stumps, brush, limbs (non-residential)	Stumps, brush, and limbs composted, or recycled (chipped for mulch, burned for energy recovery, etc.)
Textiles (clothes and shoes)	Clothing and apparel, shop rags, blankets, table linens and bedding for reuse or recycling. Shoes, belts, purses, soft stuffed toys, scarves, hats, ties, backpacks, bedding, coats, luggage, towels.
Tin cans	Coated steel cans, usually food containers.
Tires	Automobile, truck, and bicycle tires. Specify final use on "Material Destination".
Toner or printer cartridges	Toner or printer cartridges for recycling.
Used petroleum oil	Motor oil. Specify final use in "Material Destination."
Vehicle batteries	Lead-acid batteries and commercial batteries from automobiles (cars), trucks, marine (boats), and motorcycles. Excludes industrial batteries.
Yard debris (grass, leaves, weeds)	Grass clippings, leaves, tree branches and pruning, and weeds destined for centralized composting.