

# King County Plastics Recycling Campaign

## 2017 RSA

To reduce the amount of recyclable plastic ending up in the garbage, Waste Management executed an outreach effort to raise awareness and encourage proper plastics recycling. The campaign was targeted at single-family residential customers in King County unincorporated areas (UTC) with recycling service. This project focused on the plastic containers that are most prevalent in the garbage and have strong recycling markets – bottles, jugs, tubs and cups.

### Outreach Goal

To encourage King County UTC customers to put more plastic tubs, jugs, bottles and cups into the curbside recycling cart, and to rinse or wipe their plastic containers before they're put into the curbside recycling cart.

### Engagement Strategy

Past WM recycling behavior research has shown that the barriers to proper plastic recycling include confusion over what is recyclable and uncertainty around how best to prepare and clean plastics before recycling them.

To combat these barriers, WM developed an integrated outreach campaign in order to educate and encourage King County UTC customers to recycle plastics properly.



The campaign launched with a household direct mail campaign with a simple guide to plastics recycling that explained common points of confusion. To amplify the message, WM developed a [30-second animated video](#) and used the video to run a digital video ad campaign geo-targeted to the King County UTC/WM customer audience. All digital ads linked customers to a custom [plastics recycling web page](#), with more detailed information.

Finally, WM coordinated community outreach events with educational booths in or near UTC areas. At the booths placed at a community holiday event and local hardware stores, outreach staff distributed free coffee tumblers and educated consumers about trickier, more confusing plastics recycling by using a sorting game that included plastic “trash” (like polystyrene cups, stretch wrap, plastic bags, etc.) mixed with plastic containers that are recyclable (tubs, jugs, cups and bottles). The events maximized outreach dollars by promoting the new Waste Management RightCycle mobile app and web widget at the booths.

## Outcomes

### Direct Mail

A total of 41,630 direct mailers were sent to King County UTC customer households.

### Digital Advertising

The campaign overall delivered just over one million impressions, more than 467,000 video views and 3,400 ad click-throughs.

### Website Traffic

King County's new plastics recycling focused webpage received a total of 5,569 views during the campaign period. Other King County UTC landing pages also saw a boost in views during the campaign, an increase in traffic from four to five times, depending on the page, compared to the month prior to the campaign launch.

### Community Outreach Events

At the 3 community outreach events held, a total of 396 face-to-face contacts were made at the education booths.



Through this outreach campaign, WM gathered insights that will guide future recycling campaigns:

**The shorter, the better:** Videos that are 15 seconds or less tend to get more completed views and higher engagement on social media, especially Facebook.

**Messaging is key:** For digital campaigns, evaluate ways to modify ads and/or video to help provide the audience with a call to action or a stronger motivation to share content. Regarding outreach events, more area-specific the information can be, the better.

**Location, location, location:** Due to the decentralized and residential nature of Waste Management's King UTC areas, hosting events in retail stores provided the best opportunity for location-targeted outreach.