

## Reducing Contamination

Recycling and organics carts can become contaminated by improperly sorted materials. Common contaminants include food, liquids, and food-soiled paper in recycling carts, and glass, metal, or plastic in organics carts.

Contamination has real consequences, degrading the value of recyclable materials collected, reducing the amount of beneficial compost that can be produced from the material collected in organics carts, and increasing the costs to process these materials.

Reducing contamination is necessary for maintaining the economic viability of recycling and compost development. Residents, businesses, processors and local jurisdictions all have an important role to play.

### Methods to reduce contamination include:

- **Utilizing the proper size carts for the amount of waste generated.** Garbage carts that are too small increase the likelihood of putting overflow materials into the other carts.
- **A renewed focus on properly sorting materials into the correct carts.** Items going in the recycling cart should be empty, clean, dry, and free of food and liquids. No plastic, glass, or metal should ever go in the organics cart. The proper home for some items is the garbage cart.
- **Adding staff and/or slowing down processing at recycling materials recovery facilities.** This can help weed out contaminated materials but increases the cost of processing.
- **When necessary, using deterrents like fines and penalties for contamination of recycling and organics carts.** StopWaste is using this approach via the Waste Management Authority as part of its Mandatory Recycling Ordinance for commercial customers.

