

# Tampa Bay Regional Recycling Partnership:



Hillsborough  
County Florida



**st.petersburg**  
[www.stpete.org](http://www.stpete.org)

# **Tampa Bay Regional Recycling Partnership:**

[www.TampaBayRecycles.org](http://www.TampaBayRecycles.org)

First collaboration between 4  
local governments:

Hillsborough & Pinellas Counties  
Cities of Tampa & St. Petersburg

to develop a regional messaging  
campaign to reduce recycling  
contamination.

# Background:

Recycling provides numerous environmental benefits to society in the form of resource conservation and reduced pollution from manufacturing.

Recycling programs across the country are facing unprecedented challenges due to rising rates of contamination → leading to higher processing costs that are threatening the success of local government recycling programs.

The rapid rate at which new and different packaging types are entering the market is causing increased confusion about what can and can't be recycled.

Changing consumer preferences and decreasing recycled commodity markets (caused by changes in China's import policies), are requiring local governments to develop new strategies in order to ensure the long term viability of recycling programs.

# Tampa Bay Regional Recycling Partnership

In order to cut through the confusion and develop consistent messaging focused on the top issues facing recycling programs within our region, the Tampa Bay Regional Recycling Partnership was formed in the spring of 2017 through the first collaboration between four local governments (Hillsborough County, Pinellas County, City of Tampa, and the City of St. Petersburg) to develop a regional messaging campaign to reduce recycling contamination.

## The goal of the collaboration:

- *Reduce confusion about what can and cannot be recycled.*
- *Develop a clear, consistent regional messaging campaign.*
- *Make it easier for residents to understand recycling rules resulting in behavior changes that reduce contamination in the regional recycling stream.*

# Tampa Bay MRF Shed



Much like the concept of a watershed, the vast majority of recyclables collected within the region are processed at two primary material recovery facilities (MRFs) which comprise the region's MRF-shed.

Messaging focuses on common contaminants in all four municipal residential recycling programs and establishes a single landing webpage for directing the public to the appropriate recycling guidelines within Tampa Bay.

# Tampa Bay MRF Shed

Partner governments support the campaign through the use and sharing of campaign materials and, when possible, securing additional strategic media placements such as print ads, digital billboards, and municipal publications such as Pinellas County's Recycle Guide which is distributed to 150,000 residents through the Tampa Bay Times annually.





# Campaign Reach



## Sharing Costs:

The partners have each shared in the burden of the cost for the campaign deliverables, allowing their budgets to go much further.

Overall, to date, the outreach elements cost about \$200,000 and reached more than 1 million residents.





# Campaign Reach



- The campaign continues to reach a broad audience through print, radio, and billboard advertisements.
- It also connects residents back to their individual municipalities for specifics on accepted materials.
- Social media is also used to engage residents - we have had over 162,000 impressions.
- In addition, the campaign was promoted at local festivals and events.
- A concerted effort has also been made to advertise in Spanish language publications and to ensure videos and the regional landing page is also available in Spanish at [www.TampaBayRecycles.org/es](http://www.TampaBayRecycles.org/es).
- The Hispanic population varies within the seven counties in the Tampa Bay area, ranging from just over 8 percent in Pinellas to more than 25 percent in Hillsborough.

# Regional Landing Page

[www.TampaBayRecycles.org](http://www.TampaBayRecycles.org)

*Pinellas and Hillsborough County have a combined population of 2.3 million.*



Hillsborough  
County Florida



Local governments across Tampa Bay have teamed up to improve recycling efforts in the region. No matter which Tampa Bay area community you call home, all residential recycling programs throughout Hillsborough and Pinellas counties now recycle the same items but we all also face the same challenge of contamination – attempting to recycle soiled items or materials our programs don't accept.

Join the social media conversation, share recycling tips, and ask questions by using **#TampaBayRecycles**

Whether you have been recycling for decades or just started, it's worth taking a second look to make sure you are recycling correctly. Recycling technology and processes change over time, so recycling program rules change, too.

# Examples of Earned Media

## Recycling plastic grocery bags causing big problems at recycling centers

BY: Isabel Rosales  
POSTED: 6:01 PM, Apr 20, 2017  
UPDATED: 6:04 AM, Apr 21, 2017



*Click on images above for hyperlinks to videos*



# Examples of Earned Media

## WFTS Channel 28

April 20, 2017: [Recycling plastic grocery bags causing big problems at recycling centers](#)

## WTVT Channel 13

April 25, 2017: [Regional Recycling Campaign on Good Day Tampa Bay](#) (no longer available)

May 29, 2017: [Earth Watch: Trash the Bag](#)

## WFLA Channel 8

April 25, 2017: [Regional Recycling Campaign on News Channel 8 Today](#) (no longer available)

## Creative Loafing

April 25, 2017: [Plastic bags remain a scourge, and local leaders are asking you to stop pitching them into your local recycle bin](#)

## WTSP Channel 10

April 26, 2017: [Are you recycling all wrong??](#)

## Tampa Bay Newspapers

May 1, 2017: [Pinellas County joins regional recycling effort](#)

## WMNF 88.5

May 15, 2017: [Sustainable Living](#)

# Social Media Engagement

**Social Media Engagement:** Information was distributed across **Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.**

**Facebook:** Three posts reached 40,437 Facebook users and received 302 reactions including likes, comments, and shares and a total of 70,191 impressions.

**Twitter:** Twenty-five tweets generated 65,567 impressions and 4,217 engagements of retweets, replies, likes, and clicks.

**YouTube:** One promotional video generated 2,160 views.

**Regional Partner Social Media Engagement:** Our regional partners distributed campaign content through their respective Facebook and Twitter accounts for additional reach.

# Synergy – The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

This “earned media,” or free media, placed the campaign in the living rooms across the region and allowed the partners to reach more residents than all of the paid advertisements combined.

In 2018, media pieces focusing on “recycling right” were featured over a 14-week period, in 9 different publications (26 print ads total), 17 billboards, on 8 radio stations, in digital ads, and on social media and direct mailers.

The total regional reach of these efforts was approximately 2,000,000 households with a direct reach of 350,000. **It is clear that by working together synergistically through the Tampa Bay Regional Recycling Partnership, we are able to achieve a much greater impact than previously attained by each municipality’s own individual efforts.**

In 2018, two municipalities of Pinellas County, the Cities of Dunedin and Clearwater joined the regional recycling campaign as promotional partners, including sharing the campaign’s collateral branded with the cities logos.

# Increased Visibility

The partnership has resulted in increased visibility and positive impacts in the local region and the collaboration made it more appealing to news outlets.

The [Trash the Bags](#) campaign (ongoing), focused specifically on plastic bags and bagged recyclables. These get tangled in the recycling equipment causing damage and plant shutdowns.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10156452368572977>

The campaign was featured on nearly every major news outlet in Tampa Bay (interviews on Good Morning Tampa Bay-ABC Action News and [Earth Watch WTVT Fox 13](#), newspapers) as well as being picked up by the online industry publication, Waste360.com, which boasts a membership of 90,000.



# Examples of Regional Messaging



## Tampa Bay Recycles

[tampabayrecycles.org](http://tampabayrecycles.org)  
#TampaBayRecycles

Local governments in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties have teamed up to improve recycling efforts in the region. In addition to Hillsborough County, Tampa Bay Recycles partners include Pinellas County, the City of Tampa and the City of St. Petersburg.

Learn more at [tampabayrecycles.org](http://tampabayrecycles.org) and join the social media conversation, share recycling tips and ask questions by using #TampaBayRecycles on Twitter.



### Keep Recycling Tangler-Free Tampa Bay



Plastic bags, hoses, cords, ropes, clothes and other tangles shut down the recycling process.

Recycle right and toss tangles in the trash!

#### Contaminated Recycling



#### Tangler-Free Recycling



[TampaBayRecycles.org](http://TampaBayRecycles.org)



# Examples of Regional Messaging



**Keep plastic bags  
out of recycling**

**TampaBayRecycles.org**



Billboards

**Keep Recycling  
Tangler-Free**

Tampa Bay

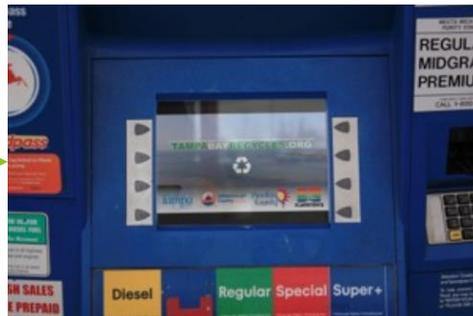


**Toss plastic bags, clothes, cords, hoses,  
ropes and other tanglers in the trash!**



**Learn more: TampaBayRecycles.org**

Gas Station Ads



# Education

Research has shown that raising awareness about how to recycle correctly is not enough to change the public's daily misguided recycling habits. More direct engagement is needed.

Regional messaging is reinforced and bolstered by each partners' efforts to educate and inform their residents through presentations to a variety of different groups and audiences including businesses, homeowners associations, community groups and schools, and at community events by having recycling education booths and educational activities.



# Regional Message Helps Us All Reach More Residents

Residents of Tampa Bay live, work, and play across the bay with people often visiting events or attractions in neighboring municipalities. By having a unified campaign and single landing page, solid waste staff can direct residents to an easy-to-remember webpage to get more information about how to recycle correctly.



# Organizational Culture of Environmental Stewardship

To our knowledge the Tampa Bay Regional Recycling Partnership is the first such collaboration between neighboring municipalities/governments in Florida to come together to tackle the problem of recycling contamination and ensure that educational messaging is clear and consistent throughout the region.

**Each partner has the same culture of environmental stewardship and the same goals to:**

- reduce the environmental impact of waste.
- divert as much material for beneficial reuse as possible.
- reduce the amount of waste being incinerated and landfilled.
- conserve natural resources.

# Tampa Bay Regional Recycling Partnership as a MODEL

The partnership has resulted in increased visibility and positive impacts in the local region and has served as a model for other programs nationally, who have customized many of the partnership-created materials and educational resources for use in their own programs. The hope is that more municipalities will see the value of collaborations like this and work towards achieving the same in their regions.

Collateral prepared by the partners has been used beyond the state of Florida, coast to coast, from North Carolina to California.

## Dakota, MN



## Reading, PA



## San Diego, CA



# Continuous Improvement & Growth

Although joint efforts may take time to develop and launch, the regional products will have a greater impact on Tampa Bay and the MRF-shed.

**The common recycling message gives the environmental steward “do-ers” (i.e., the residents) the tools to recycle right and maximizes the practitioners’ (i.e., the partners’) resources.**

The regional recycling campaign is interesting to media outlets because the message is relevant to their entire audience, the Tampa Bay Region.

The collaboration between the solid waste and communications departments for the partner municipalities has led to discussions between other departments as to how they can work more closely on other regional environmental issues such as water quality.

# Continuous Improvement & Growth

Since the campaign launched in 2017, the partners have established a sustainable relationship for future collaboration. This relationship is based on trust, flexibility, and an understanding of the protocol needed to release partner-related projects.

Each of the partner municipalities makes good faith efforts to support the creative ideas of the other partners and to quickly provide comments through the appropriate approval paths. For example, the City of Tampa created a 2018 holiday recycling campaign for social media, and solicited the partners for input and approval to add their logos to the posts. The holiday recycling campaign launched quickly after the idea was presented, and all partners benefitted from the holiday messaging and shared resources.

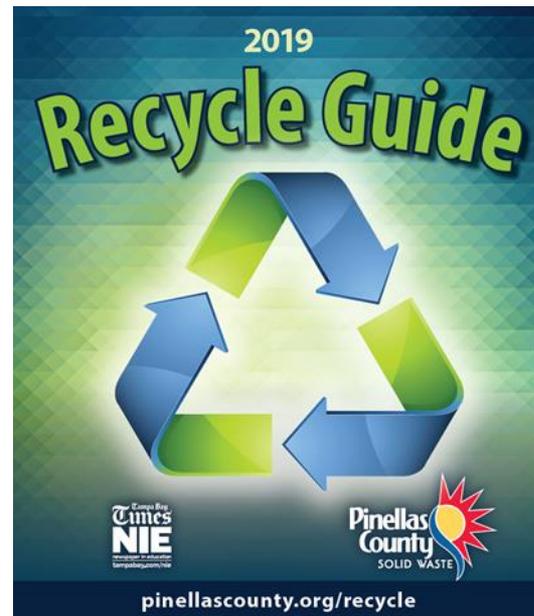
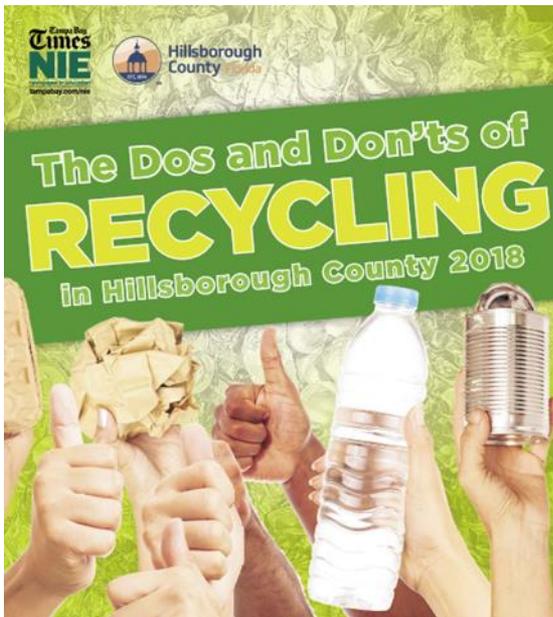


# Examples of Regional Holiday Messaging



# Newspapers in Education

The Newspaper in Education program (NIE) is a cooperative effort between schools and the Times Publishing Co. to encourage the use of newspapers in print and electronic form as educational resources—a “living textbook.” The primary purpose of informational text is to convey information about the natural or social world, in this case the waste reduction and recycling industry.



# Newspapers in Education

Newspaper in Education Recycling Guides were distributed to **middle and high schools** throughout the region, each municipality using the similar content with customizations for their particular service area.

Content focused on:

**“Do’s and Don’ts of Recycling”** and included the **“Trash the Tangles”**, **“When in Doubt, Throw it Out!”** and **“Keep Recycling Bag Free”** messaging.

The guide includes Florida Standards-linked, lesson plans for educators to use in their classroom and reinforces the widespread “recycle right” messaging, not only with educators and students but also, by extension parents.

**Hillsborough County’s Guide** was distributed as an insert into all county editions of the Tampa Bay Times on a Sunday (*approximate circulation 170,000*) and to grade 7 students in all area public and charter schools (*approximately 16,000 circulation*). *Pinellas County’s Recycle Guide*, was distributed to 150,000 residents through the Tampa Bay Times annually).

# On the Horizon....

The partners are collaborating to produce a **“Do Not Bag Recyclables”** piece.

Hillsborough County is planning to run an ad focusing on **“no bags in recycling”** over the summer, through the end of September. The ad will be used in print publications (Tampa Bay Times, smaller regional newspapers, Tampa Bay Parenting Magazine, etc.) as well as possibly in some digital ads.

The ad is currently circulating through the approval process of all partners, so that they can also utilize it in their outreach and education efforts keeping the regional message clear and consistent.



**Plastic Bags Ruin Recycling**

- Bagged items cannot be recovered at sorting facilities
- Plastic bags tangle up processing equipment



No Plastic Bags in the Recycling Cart  
No coloque bolsas de plástico en el contenedor de reciclaje

**Do Not Bag Recyclables**

Collecting recyclables in a bag?  
Empty the contents into the cart.

# The Future....

By making it easier for residents to understand recycling rules, behavior changes leading to reduced contamination in the regional recycling stream will be realized.

Leaders of the initiative attribute its success to:

- **Focusing on one recycling issue at a time.**
- **Coordinating timing across the region.**
- **Leveraging funds to increase the overall return on investment.**

# The Future....



Dawn at the Dump!

We look forward to adding more partner municipalities in Florida (and nation-wide), to expand the reach of the regional messaging campaign, and continuing our efforts to cut through the confusion about what can and cannot be recycled.

# Thank you for your consideration!

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**Hillsborough  
County** Florida