

Strivers Gardens, NYC

Type

Residential Typology 4: Trash room with Chute and Bins

Best Practice Strategies

- 2.02 Plan a route
- 2.03 Design storage space
- 2.04 Plan for collection
- 2.05 Consider staff procedures
- 2.10 Provide clear visual cues and signage
- 2.12 Develop awareness and education programs
- 2.13 Design for occupancy
- 2.15 Provide shared equipment and services

Summary

Strivers Gardens, completed in 2005 by Davis Brody Bond LLP, is a full-service 170-unit condominium in Harlem. Comprising one 12-story building with another 7 stories above a garage, shared amenities include a laundry room, gym, lounge, party room and landscaped courtyard.

Building manager Martin Robertson uses Strivers Gardens' online communication system, Building Link, to encourage everyone in the building to play a part in proper waste disposal. Residents are asked to bring cardboard bigger than a shoebox to the basement (cardboard boxes would quickly fill up the tiny waste rooms). Because management receives all packages coming in, it can also identify improperly discarded packaging.



Clockwise from top left: Organics caddy valet service; small waste rooms with trash chute and recycling bins; 'sausage' trash bags with staff initials

Residents are notified and eventually charged a service fee if such habits continue. Bags set out for DSNY pick up must weigh less than 50 lb. Staff members are required to label each bag they handle with their name. If a bag is too heavy, Robertson asks DSNY to leave it so he can address the issue directly with the staff member. Clear printed signs and labeled shelves keep the compactor room tidy and facilitate frequent cleanings. The compactor room is kept pristine, in keeping with Robertson's philosophy that a trash room doesn't have to smell like trash.

Textile collection bins are conveniently located in the laundry room of each building alongside recycling bins for detergent containers. Two organics bins are provided in the basement-level garage, near the bike racks. To absorb humidity and reduce odor, newspaper (diverted from recycling) is available for residents to add to the bin. Separating organics has allowed a reduction in frequency of chute cleanings, saving the building money. To encourage organics participation, management offered the first ten residents to sign up a free stainless-steel kitchen caddy with a carbon filter. Residents can even opt for valet service; if they do, they can leave their full organics caddy with the concierge and collect it clean and empty later. (Staff notice that residents will often ask about participating when they see neighbors bringing caddies to the front desk.)

Residents send trash down the chute—in a small waste room on each floor—and leave recycling in bins next to the chute door. Despite servicing the waste rooms at least twice a day to remove recycling, Robertson would not choose to add organics bins in those rooms. Because they are unventilated, he anticipates that issues of odor and cleanliness would arise.

Challenges

Robertson reports that fighting complacency is a constant challenge. He is always looking to improve upon his systems, further educate staff and residents, and simplify the process for ease of use, particularly for the individual in a hurry.

Recyclables and trash are stored at cellar level. The original building design included a dedicated lift to bring material from the storage area directly to the curb. The service access was eliminated in favor of ground-floor retail, and staff must push heavy carts up the steep parking garage ramp to the street. The Board of Managers recently purchased a motorized pushcart, which has made it easier to move material to the curb.



Staff pushing trash from cellar up parking garage ramp to street