



COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

Improving Carton
Separation in a
Shared Apartment
Building

Goal (100–150 words)

Guiding questions:

- What environmental issue were you addressing?
- Why did this issue matter in this community?
- What did you hope to change or test through this action?

Write your response here:

The goal of this community action was to improve how carton and packaging waste was sorted within my apartment building by encouraging residents to separate cartons from general waste.

From my earlier individual action, I had observed that cartons and other recyclable packaging were regularly being thrown into mixed waste bins. This led to overflowing bins, poor recycling outcomes, and higher waste collection costs for the building.

The community action aimed to test whether **simple conversations and shared awareness**, rather than enforcement, could lead to better waste separation and more responsible disposal habits among co-tenants.

What Happened (200–250 words)

Guiding questions:

- What did you do, step by step?
- Over what time period did the action take place?
- How did you approach the community or setting?
- What tools, conversations, or materials did you use?

Write your response here:

The action took place over a two-week period within my apartment building. I began by informally observing waste disposal habits in the shared waste area and identifying peak times when residents were most likely to be present.

I then spoke directly with a small number of co-tenants during casual encounters in shared spaces such as the parking area, stairwell, and near the waste bins. These conversations were short and respectful. I explained that cartons were recyclable, that mixing them with general waste made recycling difficult, and that separating them could reduce the volume of waste sent to landfill.

In addition to conversations, I created a simple handwritten sign which I placed near the waste bins. The sign politely asked residents to separate cartons and packaging from general waste and briefly explained why this mattered. No instructions were framed as rules; instead, the message emphasized shared benefit and ease.

Throughout the period, I continued observing the waste area to see whether any changes occurred in how cartons were disposed of.

Participants (80–120 words)

Guiding questions:

- Who was directly involved?
- Who was indirectly involved?
- How did people participate (formally or informally)?
- Was participation voluntary?

Write your response here:

Participation was informal and voluntary.

Direct participants included:

- Five co-tenants who I spoke with directly
- One building cleaner who shared insight into waste collection challenges

Indirect participants included:

- Other residents who saw the sign or observed changes in the waste area
- Building management, indirectly, through reduced waste overflow

No one was required to take part, and there were no incentives offered beyond shared understanding and convenience.

Observed Changes (100–150 words)

Guiding questions:

- What changed as a result of your action?
- Were the changes behavioral, practical, or social?
- What evidence did you observe (even small or informal)?
- What did *not* change?

Write your response here:

Several small but noticeable changes were observed during the action period.

First, cartons began appearing more frequently separated from general waste, either placed beside bins or flattened and grouped together. While sorting was not perfect, there was a visible reduction in cartons mixed into food and household waste.

Second, the general waste bin filled more slowly than usual. By the end of the observation period, the bin required less frequent emptying, which the cleaner confirmed was unusual compared to previous weeks.

Third, two co-tenants independently mentioned that they had started flattening cartons before disposal after our conversation. This suggested that awareness translated into habit change for at least some participants.

While the action did not lead to full building-wide behavior change, it demonstrated that **small social interventions can influence shared environmental practices.**

Challenges & Learning (120–180 words)

Guiding questions:

- What challenges did you encounter?
- What didn't work as expected?
- What did you learn about people, systems, or yourself?
- What would you do differently next time?

Write your response here:

One challenge was the lack of formal recycling infrastructure. Without a designated carton recycling bin, residents had to rely on shared understanding rather than clear systems. This limited the consistency of outcomes.

Another challenge was engagement. Some residents were rushed or uninterested, which reinforced the importance of timing, tone, and not forcing participation.

A key learning from this action was that **environmental change in shared spaces depends more on relationships than rules**. People were more receptive when the conversation focused on shared benefit, cost savings, and convenience rather than environmental guilt.

I also learned that partial success still counts as impact. Even small shifts in awareness, behavior, and conversation can create momentum for longer-term change, especially in community settings where trust matters.

Finally, this experience reinforced the value of documenting environmental work honestly. Not everything worked perfectly, but the process itself provided useful insights into how environmental solutions can be designed around people, not just systems.

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