

Recycling and Waste Management

As our economy continues to grow and produce waste, a critical challenge is to manage and reduce the waste being generated. According to the National Park Service, the United States generates the most garbage per capita than anywhere else in the world. This is post-production, pre-consumer, as well as post-consumer waste.

The goal of the Recycling and Waste Management working group has been to focus on recycling and waste reduction in both residential and non-residential properties. This includes enhancing and expanding recycling efforts of local businesses, residences, and government agencies, as well as encouraging the re-use of materials. A major component of this is in education – whether it is the public sector, businesses, or the community-at-large. The city of Elgin needs to be a catalyst in the promotion of responsible and sustainable waste management practices throughout the community.

Recycling and Waste Management Goal I

Increase recycling and waste reduction in the business sector of the community.

Encouraging businesses to actively recycle, reduce waste and reuse materials whenever possible will help reduce the volume of waste sent to landfills, preserve natural resources, reduce costs and ultimately reduce our carbon footprint.

Objective 1

Within the next two years, develop and implement a comprehensive recycling and waste reduction education program for local businesses.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Compile information to be included in a comprehensive recycling booklet as it specifically applies to outlets and services available in Elgin.
2. Mail recycling booklet to each business. Provide follow-up with one-on-one contact with each business to provide support where needed within two years after booklets are mailed.

Objective 2

Within the next four years, develop and implement a solid waste franchise to include, at minimum, the Downtown Business District.

This goal's second objective would take this one step further by consolidating trash and recycling services in the downtown business district under one waste hauler via a franchise agreement. This would ensure that more uniform services are being provided, reduce the number of containers required in alleys, reduce truck traffic, allow services to be provided more efficiently.

Objective 2 continued

Tasks/Metrics

1. Conduct outreach and ensure downtown businesses support such a program.
2. Develop a well-written bid document and franchise agreement.
3. Award a waste & recycling franchise
4. Determine an administrator within the City to follow-up on implementation of the program, as well as complaints and violations. Some businesses with unique waste streams may require an individualized assessment to develop a successful recycling program.

Foreseeable Challenges

If the proposed program would have downtown business owners incur the cost of the franchise agreement, there may be some resistance depending on the monthly charge. It will be of the utmost importance to reach out to the business community to ensure full understanding and support of this program.

Some business owners may object to losing their ability to choose their own waste provider and/or being told that they must recycle. Also Waste haulers may politicize this process, since many stand to lose business if they are not the successful franchise vendor.

Objective 3

Within five years, pass an ordinance requiring local businesses to recycle a minimum of 30% of their waste stream.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Conduct outreach and ensure Elgin's business community supports such a program.
2. Develop, adopt and actively enforce a recycling ordinance for local businesses, giving ample time (or a grace period) to comply before penalties are assigned for non-compliance.
3. Develop a reliable mechanism for collecting and analyzing data on waste and recycling volumes.
4. Review waste stream data to determine if goals are being met.

Foreseeable Challenges

Each business has its own waste stream and unique challenges. While the ordinance may not be able to cover all circumstances; it must be flexible enough to work with as many business properties as possible, while providing exemptions for others that clearly have special needs that are best suited for other types of programs.

The penalties for non-compliance must be high enough to provide an economic incentive for businesses to comply. The public and the affected businesses may have a negative perception of the ordinance and resist government acting as "Big Brother" imposing more requirements on the private sector. Also, ensuring that the ordinance is actively enforced will be key in ensuring compliance.

Recycling and Waste Management Goal II

Encourage increased recycling, composting, source reduction and waste reduction in residential properties.

Encourage residents to actively recycle, compost, reduce waste, and reuse materials whenever possible. It is also important to encourage residents to engage in source reduction, which reduces the amount of waste that is initially generated. This goal is imperative to reduce the volume of waste sent to landfills, preserve natural resources, reduce costs, reduce pollution and ultimately reduce our carbon footprint.

Objective 1

Within three - five years implement a year-long curbside pilot program for composting/organics in Elgin.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Analyze and compare volume data in pilot program areas versus non-pilot program areas to determine diversion potential and success.
2. Work with the City's waste hauler to select a valid cross-section of households to participate in the pilot program, select curbside carts, develop program parameters and implementation guidelines. Identify funding source, if not included in the City's solid waste contract, and develop public education program.

Foreseeable Challenges

Obtaining community buy-in may pose more of a challenge than political buy-in. Ensuring that a good cross-section of different housing unit types and other demographic factors are included in the pilot will be key in measuring the program's success when implemented city-wide. Providing public education in both English & Spanish may be important in ensuring that residents understand the program and comply.

Objective 2

Implement a city-wide curbside organics collection program within one year after the conclusion of the pilot program.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Review and utilize data from the pilot program to implement a city-wide, curbside organics/composting program.
2. Collection costs and program parameters need to be negotiated with the City's solid waste vendor. The final agreement needs to be approved by the City Council prior to implementation.

Foreseeable Challenges

Identifying a funding mechanism for the additional service during strained economic conditions can pose a challenge. Residents may perceive the program negatively if program costs are passed on directly to them thru a user fee.

Objective 3

Within 5-7 years, divert 30% of organics from the waste stream.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Monitor solid waste collection statistics prior to, and after, the implementation of the new program to determine if diversion goals are being met.
2. Developing a comprehensive public education program will be key in achieving this goal. In addition to monitoring collection data to determine success, efforts should also be made to communicate this information back to residents to keep them engaged in the process.

Foreseeable Challenges

Non-compliance and non-participation from residents could pose a challenge.

Objective 4

Host a yearly community recycling day that provides a central drop off center for various recyclable items that cannot cost effectively be collected curbside.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Schedule, promote and implement a yearly annual recycling event. Monitor yearly participation and volume data from the event to help track diversion goals, and provide valuable information for the establishment of a permanent center.
2. This service has already been included in the City's newly negotiated solid waste contract. Waste Management will be responsible for implementing this objective annually through the duration of the contract agreement.

Foreseeable Challenges

Identifying a suitable, centrally located site may pose a challenge. This service has been included in the City's contract with Waste Management; therefore, Waste Management would be responsible for this task.

Objective 5

Within 5 years create a permanent central drop off center for all recyclables that cannot be collected curbside. Example: medicine, chemicals, oil, etc.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Review and utilize data from the yearly annual recycling event to establish a permanent collection center
2. Identify and purchase (if necessary) land for a collection site and award a contract to build or renovate an existing building that would be suitable for use.
3. Obtain the necessary permits and licenses to operate the facility.
4. Award a contract to a vendor(s) to staff the facility and process materials collected, or investigate the possibility of staffing the facility utilizing in-house personnel.

Foreseeable Challenges

Identifying a suitable, centrally located site may pose a challenge. Due to the items that may be collected at the center, a comprehensive public education program will be important to overcome public perceptions of safety. Identifying a funding mechanism to build, renovate and staff the facility may be a challenge. Although funding from the State of Illinois has been available in the past to help offset some of these costs, the State's fiscal crisis makes this funding unreliable.

Objective 6

Create a recycling booklet in addition to Kane County's that instructs residents on what and where certain materials can be recycled in Elgin.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Develop, print and distribute guide to residents via mail, electronically and at local public facilities.
2. The City's contract with Waste Management includes the development and distribution of an annual bi-lingual solid waste & recycling guide to residents.
3. Work with Waste Management to create a recycling booklet in addition to Kane County's that instructs residents on what and where certain materials can be recycled in Elgin.

Foreseeable Challenges

Staff will need to ensure that the guide is updated and re-distributed annually in a timely manner.

Objective 7

Within two years, pass an ordinance that requires owners of residential properties with 6 or more units to provide on-site recycling service to their residents.

Tasks/Metrics

An inventory of residential properties that fall within this range (6 or more units) must be completed. Inspections will need to be made after the adoption of the ordinance to ensure compliance. An ordinance must be written, passed by the City Council and actively enforced.

Foreseeable Challenges

Landlords that are not currently providing this service will likely resent the mandate and the additional costs that they will incur. (Note: Kane County currently has an ordinance that requires this, however, it is not actively enforced.)

Objective 8

Within two years, implement a recycling education program in local schools to educate students on the importance of recycling, composting and waste reduction.

Tasks/Metrics

1. The City's contract with Waste Management includes the provision of a school education event for students once per year.

Recycling and Waste Management Goal III

Encourage the city of Elgin and its residents to purchase and use products made from recycled or reclaimed materials, most importantly, or environmentally friendly materials.

Purchasing products made from recycled materials “closes the loop” by creating a market demand for recyclables that are collected in recycling programs. Utilizing recycled versus raw materials to manufacture new products preserves resources, saves energy and reduces our carbon footprint.

Objective 1

Lead by example by purchasing products manufactured from recycled goods, such as, paper, rubber, plastic products, etc.. In the short term, increase the amount purchased and utilized by 10% every year for 5 years.

Task/Metrics

1. Report annually on quantity of recycled products it purchased.
2. Seek additional producers of recycled products.

Objective 2

Educate businesses and community residents about the value of using products made from recycled goods.

Tasks/Metrics

1. Report on the quality of recycled products purchased.
2. Gain information from businesses and residents about the quality of recycled products available for purchase.
3. Create educational materials about “closing the loop” in recycling and post on City’s website and written materials.

Objective 3

Encourage local businesses to stock quality products made from recycled goods

Tasks/Metrics

1. Report on prices of recycled products versus products made from virgin materials as this could be a factor in purchasing recycled products versus products from virgin resources.
2. Communicate desire with suppliers to purchase quality recycled products.

Additional Resources/Best Practices

Alameda County, CA

City of Chicago:

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dae/supp_info/household_chemicalscomputerrecyclingfacilityoverview.html

City/County of Honolulu, Hawaii

http://www.opala.org/solid_waste/business_recycling.htm

City of Naperville:

<http://www.naperville.il.us/hhw.aspx>

City of San Jose, CA

Denver, CO

<https://www.denvergov.org/recapp/OrganicsPrograms/CompostingCollectionPilotProgram/tabid/431111/Default.aspx>

“Fantastic Three” City of San Francisco, CA

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/LGCentral/Library/innovations/curbside/CaseStudy.htm>

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

<http://www.commerce.state.il.us/dceo/>

Illinois Recycling Association

<http://www.epa.gov/>

Kane County Department of Environmental Management:

<http://www.co.kane.il.us/Environment/recycle/electronic.htm>

Kane County Recycling Guide

<http://esh-docdb.fnal.gov/cgi-bin/RetrieveFile?docid=260&version=1&filename=Kane%20Co%20Recycle%20Guide.pdf>

Kane County Mandatory Recycling Ordinance- requires that establishments must recycle the two largest recyclable materials in their waste stream.

Mandatory organics source-separated program---City of San Francisco, CA

<http://indianapublicmedia.org/eartheats/san-francisco-composting-program/>

McHenry County Business Recycling Guide

<http://www.crystallake.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=567>

Solid Waste Agency of Lake County

<http://www.lakecountyil.gov/swalco/default.htm>

U.S. Composting Council

www.compostingcouncil.org/

U.S. EPA

<http://www.epa.gov/>