



# **Recycle it *Forward***

## **Open Saint Paul Public Comment Summary**

### **City of Saint Paul**

### **August 2013**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's new recycling goals call for reducing the amount of trash headed to landfills by 75% by 2030. However, in recent years, the level of recycling and participation in the citywide recycling program has declined or remained flat. The City of Saint Paul is committed to keeping recyclable and compostable materials out of our landfills by making our recycling services user friendly and cost-effective.

For over 24 years, the City of Saint Paul and its partners have provided a high quality, innovative and cost-effective curbside recycling program for Saint Paul residents. The program has evolved over time and added services to multi-family residents, expanded the list of acceptable items, opened a permanent recycling drop off center, and provided exceptional education materials. However, the recycling industry's technology is changing rapidly and can now process a wider range of materials. Saint Paul's municipal recycling and waste management programs must adjust and take advantage of new technologies and innovation while striving to meet new waste management goals.

To ensure a well-informed, financially and environmentally responsible decision, the City of Saint Paul embarked on a community wide assessment project *Recycle it Forward*. As part of this project, the City gathered input from the community and key stakeholders regarding waste management programs and services (recycling, composting, bulky wastes, litter and garbage issues) using a variety of assessment tools including surveys, focus groups, Open Saint Paul (an online forum), key stakeholder interviews, and community meetings.

## OPEN SAINT PAUL COMMENTS

The public input process included the city posing two successive sets of questions with the second set of questions containing two parts to Open Saint Paul for public comments. Open Saint Paul is a new, voluntary, convenient online forum for civic engagement. The question sets were available for approximately six weeks per question and over 230 comments were received.

The question sets are:

**Question 1:** How can the City of Saint Paul increase the level of recycling, both in materials and number of people recycling?

**Question 2 – Part A:** For your household, how would you prioritize the opportunities for increasing the amount of materials kept out of landfills? Please choose your number one priority from the poll below?

- Change of collection system for recyclable materials
- Collection opportunity for most organic materials
- Improved disposal system for bulky items
- Increased waste reduction efforts
- More materials accepted in recycling program

**Question Set 2 – Part B:** How would you rank the opportunities for increasing the amount of materials kept out of landfills for your household? Please rank the options. Options included:

- Change of collection system for recyclable materials
- Collection opportunity for most organic materials
- Improved disposal system for bulky items.
- Increased waste reduction efforts
- More materials accepted in recycling program

This document provides a summary of the Open Saint Paul Public comments provided, and is one of many methods the public could provide input. Other methods include the city's partnership with Wilder Research to conduct a citywide survey, six focus groups, and 13 key stakeholder interviews, in addition to input received through phone calls, written communication, and a community cleanup survey. For additional Recycle it *Forward* project information and reports, visit: [www.stpaul.gov/recycleitforward](http://www.stpaul.gov/recycleitforward).

**SUMMARY FOR QUESTION 1:** How can the City of Saint Paul increase the level of recycling, both in materials and number of people recycling?

97 people wrote or supported comments to this question, equivalent to 4.9 comment hours. Of these, 75 participants posted comments. In no particular order, below are the summarized comments by topic:

### **Bulky Waste**

- Improve recycling or disposal systems for bulky items (appliances, furniture, etc...)
- Recycling/disposal fees on bulky appliance and electronic items are disincentives

### **Compost**

- Provide more compost drop-off sites
- Provide curbside or alley composting options
- Don't charge people who do their own backyard composting for a service they don't need
- Switch to weekly compost and recycling collection and bi-weekly trash collection
- Set up fee structures that differentiate between backyard composters and those who would use the compost service
- Provide compost bins for residents free of cost or at greatly reduced rates
- Educate on the topic of composting and provide containers for residents to start their own backyard compost pile
- Currently no or limited space for composting
- Have a composting system that permits piles of leaves and grass clippings
- Require compost/organics recycling for any business that is issued a food service license

### **Recycling**

- Accept more materials in the recycling program
- Change the collection system for recyclable materials
- Switch to single-sort recycling
- Make recycling easier to do and to understand
- Switch to alley pickup for recycling rather than curbside
- Provide residents clearer explanation of fees
- Ban plastic bags or institute a bag tax
- Provide more educational materials aimed at students, renters, non-English speaking residents and non-recyclers
- Provide more recycling bins in public spaces such as parks, busy intersections and gas stations
- Consider having a single pickup for everything (garbage, recycling, yard waste)
- Encourage multi-use buildings to have curbside recycling

- Have signs at apartment trash chutes that discourage throwing away recyclables
- Place recycling on one side of the street to reduce the amount of truck emission
- Provide educational materials that show which items are recyclable- perhaps educational placards that can be attached to the bin to illustrate what can be placed in the containers
- Provide larger bins and/or offer a variety of bin sizes
- Including plastic bags in recycling
- Do a coordinated advertising campaign to educate and encourage the public to recycle more
- Partner with school district and add recycling info to all buildings, including senior high rises
- Require producers to take back resin
- The city should endorse a bottle deposit bill
- Require business recycling for high rise office building
- Promote reuse instead of recycling more things
- Expand recycling to include electronics, batteries, compost or even hazardous materials
- Phase out plastics as much as possible

## **Trash**

- Have fewer trash haulers to prevent street wear and tear and reduce air pollution from trucks
- Provide a citywide organized trash collection
- Integrate garbage hauling and recycling
- Support and have volume based garbage rates
- Would like to see garbage haulers offer deeper discounts for less frequent collection and have residents be able to sign up for it
- Would like to see garbage haulers provide more options and more competitive prices
- Have a single hauler or zones

## **Waste Reduction**

- Increase household waste reduction efforts

## **Yard Waste**

- Provide leaves and yard waste curbside pickup (could be fee based)
- Pick up leaves and yard waste perhaps twice a year
- Would like to see yard waste as part of recycling

*See Attachment A for all comments (“raw data”) for question set 1.*

**SUMMARY FOR QUESTION 2 – PART A:** For your household, how would you prioritize the opportunities for increasing the amount of materials kept out of landfills? Please choose your number one priority from the poll below? The priority options included:

- Increased waste reduction efforts
- More materials accepted in recycling program
- Change of collection system for recyclable materials
- Collection opportunity for most organic materials
- Improved disposal system for bulky items like appliances.

185 participants posted comments for both part A and part B to question 2, equivalent to 10.1 hours of public comment. For part A, 26 comments were received. Below is the list of priorities from most chosen priority to least chosen priority. The total number of responders who voted for each option is also shown.

1. More materials accepted in recycling program (*11 person choose this option*)
2. Change of collection system for recyclable materials (*7 person choose this option*)
3. Collection opportunity for most organic materials (*7 person choose this option*)
4. Increased waste reduction efforts (*1 person choose this option*)
5. Improved disposal system for bulky items like appliances (*0 person choose this option*)

*See Attachment B for all comments (“raw data”) to question 2 – part A.*

**SUMMARY FOR QUESTION 2 – PART B:** How would you rank the opportunities for increasing the amount of materials kept out of landfills for your household? Please rank the options. Priority Options included:

- Change of collection system for recyclable materials
- Collection opportunity for most organic materials
- Improved disposal system for bulky items
- Increased waste reduction efforts
- More materials accepted in recycling program

185 participants posted comments for both part A and part B to question 2, equivalent to 10.1 hours of public comment. For part B, 159 comments were received and priorities are summarized below:

- 69 people choose “more materials accepted in the recycling program”
- 43 people choose “collection opportunity for most organic materials”
- 36 people choose “increased waste reduction efforts”
- 6 people choose “change of collection system for recyclable materials”
- 5 people choose “improved disposal system for bulky items like appliances”

Participants were also able to include comments about their choices. In no particular order, below are the summarized comments received by topic:

### **Bulky Waste**

- Recycling/disposal fees on bulky appliance and electronic items are disincentives

### **Composting**

- Provide opportunities like Macalester Groveland organic drop-off site to all residents
- Provide composting options for downtown residents
- Provide more information on organic composting and compost pickup
- Provide more community compost opportunities
- Continue making available wood chips and soil/compost for residents
- Composting laws need to be revised. Current residential and other composting laws are too restrictive and outdated. Composting chicken manure should be allowed and compostable materials should be accepted at community gardens
- Continue working towards being a zero waste city

## **Recycling**

- Provide a user-friendly collection system; something easier to do like single sort
- Provide education, ease of use, and incentives for apartment building owners and tenants for recycling
- Accept more plastics, especially yogurt containers
- Switch to single-sort and simplify the process
- Provide more education and easier opportunities for lower income neighborhoods
- Establish guidelines and incentives for local manufactures and large producers of solid waste to encourage recycling behavior

## **Trash**

- There are too many garbage haulers causing unnecessary air pollution. Consider a single hauler for each neighborhood
- Have the city designated trash haulers per neighborhood area in a way that's fair to trash haulers
- Neighborhood or blocks can organize for a single hauler if they want to but do not have a citywide organized trash collection

## **Waste Reduction**

- Provide more education on how to make less waste and how to use products that produce less waste than similar products on the market
- Increase waste reduction efforts
- Policy changes that reward and mandate reduced waste at the household and business levels are key

## **Yard Waste**

- Provide curbside or alley pick up for yard waste
- Getting to/from drop-off sites for yard waste is a barrier to individuals/families without the necessary vehicle to transport

*See Attachment C for all comments (“raw data”) for question 2 – part B.*

For additional Recycle it *Forward* information and reports, visit:

[www.stpaul.gov/recycleitforward](http://www.stpaul.gov/recycleitforward).