



CITY OF URBANA, ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Bruce Walden, Chief Administrative Officer  
**FROM:** Bill Gray, Public Works Director  
Rod Fletcher, Environmental Manager  
**DATE:** October 21, 2003  
**RE:** Commercial Recycling Report #5

**Discussion**

At the August 25 Committee meeting, members again expressed their interest in developing a recycling program for commercial businesses. Staff replied that it would bring forth an ordinance for Committee review in 60 days. In reviewing prior Committee reports and related information, staff needs additional input for the following items in order to complete a draft ordinance.

**1. Definition of commercial establishments.**

A definition used in several ordinances from other locales is *“Any building or any part of a building wherein commerce or business is conducted, both profit and not-for-profit, including, but not limited to, stores, markets, offices, restaurants, shopping centers, theaters, schools, churches, government offices, and manufacturing facilities.”*

**2. Type of program, Options.**

Mandate – place responsibility for compliance upon haulers or businesses. Any mandate, whether on the business or hauler, also effectively mandates the other.

(Note: Mandating a recycling program would require additional staff time for enforcement and penalties for non-compliance. Both U-CYCLE programs are voluntary participation.)

Voluntary – Require haulers to offer service to all commercial customers, participation would then be left to the business. Haulers would be required to notify, twice a year via printed medium, their commercial customers of the availability of service, rates, and recycling benefits.

**3. Commodities to be collected, Options.**

Require the single largest commodity generated to be collected, or the two largest commodities, or any commodity for which viable markets exist. Viable markets would need to be defined.

## **6. Reporting.**

Require haulers to report to the City the type and quantity of commodities collected on a quarterly basis.

## **7. Exemptions.**

Several communities provide exemptions to recycling requirements, such as:

the size of the business in terms of employees, ie. less than 5 or less than 10 are exempt, or

there is only one commodity in significant quantity to collect, or

there is not a viable market for the commodity, or

there is not a significant quantity of any commodity to collect, ie. less than 1 cubic yard a month.

## **8. Implementation.**

Several haulers have indicated that six months, at a minimum, would be required to gear up for services to be provided.

With direction on these issues a draft ordinance could be generated for review. Staff is recommending that a focus group be established to gain input from businesses and haulers that would be affected by adoption of such an ordinance, especially if a mandatory program is preferred. Staff will recommend members of a group within two weeks, if Committee believes a mandatory program should be pursued.

Staff would also like to remind Committee of the results of the survey conducted of commercial businesses in the summer of 2002. Highlights of that survey are as follows: (the full report is attached)

[Surveys sent to 660 businesses with 122 responses, a response rate of 18.5%]

- *Of the respondents, there was nearly an even split between businesses (57) that have on-site recycling and those who don't.*
- *Corrugated cardboard comprises the bulk of material collected at the 57 businesses that have on-site recycling with a rate of 73.7%, followed by paper/fiber at 50.9% and aluminum at 36.8%.*
- *Nine haulers were identified providing recycling service, with the top three named as Central Waste Services, Community Resources, Inc. and Area Disposal Service.*
- *Overwhelmingly, the number one choice of the 122 respondents was to allow businesses to voluntarily determine whether to recycle or not. 47.5% of the businesses surveyed selected this option. Two options listed tied at 11.8%. Those options included having all businesses required to have service by a hauler of their choice, and having commercial recyclers/haulers be required to provide service to all businesses.*

Finally, staff estimates that the current diversion rate for the commercial/institutional sector is approximately 50%. This is calculated by dividing the commodities recycled (6826 tons) by the waste generated (13,867 tons). This includes 530 tons of landscape materials composted.



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Bruce Walden, Chief Administrative Officer  
**FROM:** Rod Fletcher, Environmental Manager  
Courtney Rushforth, Environmental Aide  
**DATE:** October 10, 2002  
**RE:** Commercial Recycling Survey Results - Report #4

### Discussion

Results of the commercial recycling survey sent out in July 2002 are presented below. Surveys were sent to 660 businesses that appear on a listing provided by Community Development. *Of those, 122 businesses responded. Nearly 1 in 5 businesses responded, with a response rate of 18.5%. (A list of those businesses that responded is attached.)*

### Survey Purpose

To gather information on the extent of recycling in Urbana's commercial sector and receive feedback from businesses regarding the possible development of a commercial recycling program.

### Results

#### Focus Group Interest

Twenty businesses expressed interest in serving on a focus group.

#### Bulk of Waste Generated

The top three materials that comprise the bulk of waste generated at the businesses that responded were:

Material	Percent	Number of Respondents
Paper/Fiber	69.7%	85
Corrugated Cardboard	63.1%	77
Aluminum	24.6%	30

### On-site Recycling Service

*Of the respondents, there was nearly an even split between businesses that have on-site recycling and those without. However, those businesses without on-site recycling prevailed by 3.3%.*

- ❑ Currently have on-site recycling: 46.7% (57 respondents)
- ❑ No current on-site recycling: 50.0% (61 respondents)
- ❑ Eight of these respondents (6.6%) had on-site recycling service but stopped. The majority of respondents stated that the main reason they stopped recycling was that it became too costly. Several respondents said that the hauler stopped picking up.
- ❑ Unanswered: 2.5% (3 respondents)
- ❑ Not sure: 0.8% (1 respondent)

### Length of Time Service Provided to Businesses with On-site Recycling

*Of the 57 respondents, the majority had on-site recycling service more than one year.*

- ❑ 73.7% had service more than one year (42 respondents)
- ❑ 5.5% had service less than one year (3 respondents)
- ❑ 22.2% did not respond (12 respondents)

### Materials Collected from Businesses with On-site Recycling

<b>Material</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Corrugated Cardboard	73.7%	42
Paper/Fiber	50.9%	29
Aluminum	36.8%	21
Glass	22.2%	12
PETE Plastic	18.5%	10
Other (yard waste, batteries, concrete/asphalt, bulbs)	14.8%	8
Oils/Grease	10.5%	6
Steel/Tin	9.3%	5
Unspecified Plastic	9.3%	5
HDPE Plastic	7.4%	4
Wood Products	7.4%	4
Other Metals	3.7%	2

*Based on this data, corrugated cardboard comprises the bulk of material collected with a rate of 73.7%, followed by paper/fiber at 50.9% and aluminum at 36.8% from the 57 businesses that have on-site recycling.*

According to the first report of commercial recycling activities in Urbana, three local waste haulers --- Community Resources, Inc., Area Disposal Service and Central Waste Services reported that corrugated cardboard is the single largest item in the commercial waste stream, followed by paper/fibers. This data reflects that report.

### Haulers

Of the 57 businesses that have on-site recycling, 54 respondents listed their hauler. *Nine haulers were named with the top three named as the following:*

- Central Waste Services: 42.6% (23 respondents)
- Community Resources, Inc.: 16.7% (9 respondents)
- Area Disposal Service: 13.0% (7 respondents)

### How Materials are Collected

Of the 57 businesses that have on-site recycling...

- 15 respondents stated that materials are separated
- 1 respondent stated that materials are commingled
- 41 respondents did not answer

### First Choice of Options to Establish a Commercial Recycling Program

*Overwhelmingly, the number one choice of the 122 respondents was to allow businesses to voluntarily determine whether to recycle or not. 47.5% of the businesses surveyed (58 businesses) selected this option.*

Two options listed tied at 11.8%. Those options included having all businesses required to have service by a hauler of choice, and having commercial recyclers/haulers be required to provide service to all businesses.

The breakdown is as follows:

- Businesses voluntarily determine whether to recycle or not: 47.5% (58 respondents)
- All businesses required to have service by a hauler of choice: 11.8% (14 respondents)

- ❑ Commercial recyclers/haulers be required to provide service to all businesses: 11.8% (14 respondents)
- ❑ Single city contractor to provide service funded by businesses: 8.4% (10 respondents)
- ❑ 20 businesses did not respond (16.8%)
- ❑ Six businesses provided other comments (5.0%):
  - Drop-off site available for businesses to use: 2 respondents
  - Prefer no action taken on this proposal: 1 respondent
  - Common recycling containers in alleys usable by all businesses: 2 respondents
  - Don't know enough after the costs and details: 1 respondent

#### Several Comments/Concerns from Businesses

- ✓ “If a drop-off site was located in Urbana, we would recycle shredded office paper, cardboard, newspapers and aluminum cans, which is 90% of our wastes.”
- ✓ “We used to recycle, it became more expensive to recycle than to discard.”
- ✓ “If the City of Urbana provided free pick-up up of recyclable materials, we would be happy to participate. As a not-for-profit organization, we would not be in a position to pay for recycling services.”
- ✓ “We are 100% behind recycling for city businesses. Currently our staffers volunteer to recycle when needed; however, this is not sustainable long-term. We want to see recycling brought to downtown businesses immediately.”
- ✓ “Forming cooperatives or partnerships in higher density areas (malls, downtown) could help minimize duplication and reduce costs.”
- ✓ “I strongly feel that a serious and well done commercial recycling program can help reduce costs for Urbana’s businesses and help to promote and advance over the ‘doing the right thing’ image.”
- ✓ “Economically, my business makes so little profit that being forced to pay for recycling would be a real negative.”
- ✓ “I want it! [commercial recycling program] Environment needs it!”
- ✓ “I support this effort 100%”

Below is a summary of general comments/concerns from businesses regarding the possible establishment of a commercial recycling program:

- ❑ Cost concerns

- ❑ Don't want tax increase
- ❑ Would like a central drop-off location in Urbana
- ❑ Forming cooperatives with businesses (lower costs for businesses)
- ❑ "Should be up to individual businesses"

### **Observation Summary**

The results of the survey indicate:

- ❑ Many businesses have concerns regarding the potential cost of the program, if implemented.
- ❑ The vast majority of businesses stated as their first option, the preference of voluntarily determining whether to recycle or not.
- ❑ Some businesses wanted additional information about this potential program before making further comments.
- ❑ Several smaller downtown businesses support the implementation of a commercial recycling program.
- ❑ Nine haulers are currently providing various levels of recycling services to businesses.
- ❑ That the most common items being recycled also comprise the bulk of wastes generated.