



ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Laurel Lunt Prussing and Members of the City Council
FROM: William R. Gray, Public Works Director
Rod Fletcher, Environmental Manager
DATE: February 5, 2010
RE: Commercial Recycling – Program Model

City Council has had great interest in establishing a commercial recycling program in recent years and is a specific Council goal. Staff has conducted several surveys, prepared reports, and held meetings with commercial haulers to encourage them to provide this service.

We know that haulers are to a large degree, providing recycling services to businesses that generate significant quantities of recyclable commodities. However, other businesses that are generating smaller quantities are likely not recycling or not being offered the opportunity to do so.

Staff has looked at several other cities and their requirements to provide commercial recycling services. The city of Portland, and others, requires all haulers that provide garbage collection services must also offer recycling collection services. This service can be provided directly by the primary hauler or as an option, services can be provided by a third party “recycler”. Staff believes that this model should be pursued. The specific requirements need to be developed, but it is envisioned that this can be accomplished through our licensing provisions, that will have to be modified to require this. At this point, staff will proceed and draft the proposed changes for presentation within the next 2 months.

Expanding the opportunity to recycle to the commercial sector as a whole, will also see important benefits. Recycling certainly has significant benefits, in terms of sustainability – it conserves natural resources, creates jobs, and significantly contributes to the overall economy. Recycling reduces the need to extract raw materials, the energy required to extract raw materials, the energy to process raw materials for manufacturing, manufacturing the product, and related transportation and distribution. All of these processes are referred to as “upstream” production/consumption system flows. Studies recently completed last year have quantified these upstream benefits. While these benefits vary by material type – i.e. paper, plastic, aluminum, etc., the aggregated benefit is a GHG emission savings of 40 to 1. So that for every 100 tons of mixed recyclables collected 6 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents are expended, but there are 232 metric tons saved when the recyclable commodities displace the need for virgin feed stocks – the upstream benefits. So recycling is a significant emissions reduction strategy.