



# Finding a Better Way to Recycle...

## Saint Paul's Recycling Collection Study

### The Cost of Recycling

Just like any other service, recycling costs money. Saint Paul's recycling program is funded from two different sources of revenue, an annual city recycling fee and SCORE funds, which come from a statewide tax on garbage disposal.

The city of Saint Paul contracts with Eureka Recycling, a nonprofit corporation, to manage its recycling program and to provide educational and waste reduction programs. Because the city pays a set price per ton for what residents set out at the curb, there is an incentive for Eureka Recycling to have the best recycling programs and services possible. This contract makes good business sense because the city pays for what it gets, and not any more. However, this also means that if Saint Paul residents recycle more material and/or set out new types of materials, the recycling program costs more.

Saint Paul is unique in having this agreement. In the metro area, most cities pay their recycling companies a per household payment, not a per ton payment. This means that the recycling company is paid whether or not recycling is put out by residents and whether or not it is picked up by the hauler on any given day. On average these cities pay their recycling companies around \$25 per household per year, which does not include educational and promotional materials or any other waste-reduction programs. These additional costs are paid from other city funds.

### What Saint Paul Residents Pay for Recycling.

The annual recycling fee for single-family households in Saint Paul is \$22, or \$1.84 per month. Owners of apartment buildings with more than three units pay \$14 per unit annually, or \$1.17 per unit per month. Compared to what residents of other cities pay, this recycling fee, which in Saint Paul includes educational materials, the recycling hotline and other waste reduction programs, seems like a bargain. It is far less than the average home pays for coffee! In addition, since the city contracts with Eureka Recycling, a nonprofit, any "profits" left after providing these services do not go to stockholders. Eureka Recycling invests all of the "profits" from recycling back into the community through additional programs, services and direct funding to the NEC.

### Cost Estimates for Implementing the Study.

Eureka Recycling expects to pick up more tons of recyclable materials if the program is improved or new materials are added for curbside pickup. We estimate that if the city implements the recommended changes—the two-stream method with bins and weekly pickup—residents would recycle 26 percent more, or as much as 3061 tons. If residents recycled more, the city's revenue for this material would also increase. However, since the market for these materials changes constantly, it is hard to predict how much more. We estimate residents could pay \$24 to \$26 annually, or \$2 to \$4 more per year.

### Thanks for helping fund this study

The Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance (MOEA) granted Eureka Recycling \$170,000 to do this study. The MOEA offers grants to encourage waste reduction. (The money for the grants comes from a tax collected on trash delivered to waste disposal facilities in Minnesota.) The grant we received requires a one-to-one match for a total estimated project cost of approximately \$340,000. The Saint Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium and

Eureka Recycling provided approximately \$112,500 in recycling education and collection costs. Eureka Recycling provided approximately \$35,000 in staff time and used the grant for consultants, supplies, labor, education and other project costs. The city of Saint Paul provided \$12,800 for educational materials. Waste Management, Inc. and NRG Processing Solutions, Inc. provided approximately \$13,000 in staff time and processing costs.

Learn more about Saint Paul's recycling collection study on our new website, [www.eurekarecycling.org](http://www.eurekarecycling.org)

## Curbside Collection of Plastic Bottles Likely in 2004

Eureka Recycling is reconsidering its strategy on recycling plastic bottles. In the past, Eureka Recycling and its predecessor, the NEC, opted not to collect plastic because of the increased cost to collect and process the material, the poor and volatile markets for it and the concern that collecting it legitimized the proliferation of single-use plastics. However, some of those circumstances have changed.

In the past ten years we've seen that keeping plastic bottles out of curbside recycling programs has not diminished the use of plastics, which is increasing in almost all sectors of the economy. Its most rapidly growing use is for plastic packaging. It is virtually impossible to find many grocery products in anything but plastic. Analysts predict steady increases in the sales of most packaging plastics, particularly #1 and #2 bottles.

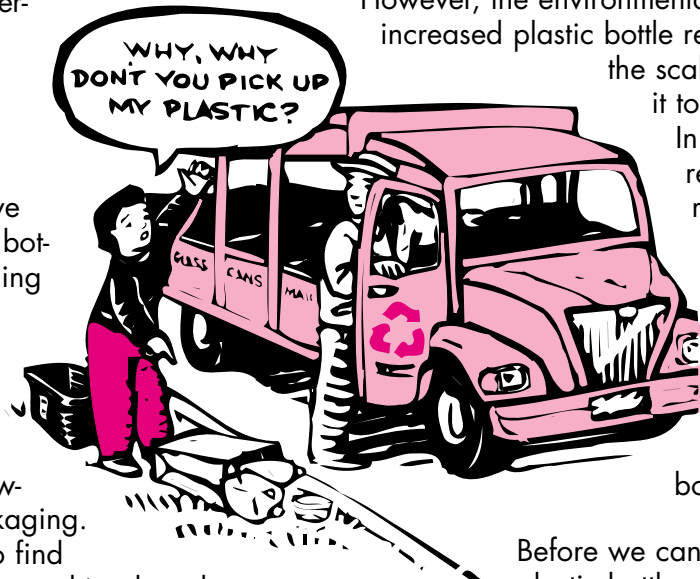
There are now better markets for plastic bottles, particularly #1 and #2 bottles, than ever before. Recyclers have worked to compete against the virgin plastic manufacturers by providing recycled materials for packaging, thus improving markets for recyclable plastic material. Unfortunately, this success has not stopped virgin plastic from being made, used and thrown away.

Last year, Ramsey County threw away more than 3,447 tons of just #1 and #2 plastic bottles. That doesn't include all of the other plastic packaging thrown away. If not recycled or reused, plastics get either burned or buried. Neither of these strategies, unlike recycling, benefits our health or the environment.

Trash, including plastic bottles, is increasing. Although the plastic industry frequently reports that plastic represents only 9.1 percent of the waste stream, it is 9.1 percent by weight. Landfills however do not get heavy—they get

FULL! It is the volume, not weight, of plastic that is rapidly filling landfills and incinerators across the country.

One factor that has not changed is the additional cost for collecting plastic bottles. However, the environmental benefits of increased plastic bottle recycling have tipped the scale in favor of adding it to curbside recycling. In fact, 74 percent of residents who recently tested new curbside recycling methods, stated that they would be willing to pay more for the convenience of recycling plastic bottles at the curb.



Before we can start picking up plastic bottles at the curb, the city must approve the program change and determine the time frame in which it will happen. Since the time frame is structured by current agreements with our sub-contractors, we won't make changes right away. However, if our recommendation is approved, you can start to look for changes to your recycling program starting January 2004.

Eureka Recycling will continue to urge Saint Paul residents to reduce the amount of plastic they use when that is possible. One option is to use refillable containers. Some plastic containers are durable enough to be refilled and reused about 25 times before becoming too damaged. Other alternatives are buying in bulk and buying things that don't need much packaging. All of these options directly reduce the demand for disposable plastic. Longer term solutions include companies providing for the collection and recycling of products they sell, or passing laws requiring refundable bottle deposits.

In the meantime, drop off your #1 and #2 plastic bottles at one of our seven, free drop-off sites. For drop-off locations call (651) 222-SORT (7678).

