

Curbside recycling coming to half of city

If you live south of Pershing, the city will start picking up your recyclables Nov. 2 at an extra fee of \$5 a month.

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CHEYENNE -- Save those newspapers: Curbside recycling is roughly seven weeks away for city residents who live south of Pershing Boulevard.

The city's sanitation director hopes that once the north side comes online next spring, trash going into the landfill will be reduced by 27 percent.

It is already mandatory to compost yard waste, and the city is getting ready to start recycling construction waste. Dennis Pino is hoping these cumulative efforts will knock down the waste stream by half.

On top of that, the mayor is doing a study on whether it would be feasible to turn trash into electricity.

A space crunch at the landfill is driving these recycling efforts. Trash is now being hauled to the landfill in Ault, Colo.

But fear not, county residents: The city is keeping its blue bin drop-off program. It is important to keep those materials out of the landfill, too, Pino said.

Here's the lowdown from Pino on what's coming, what to expect and why.

Question: When does curbside recycling start?

Starting Nov. 2, crews will pick up the first loads of recyclables from people's homes.

Pickup will be every other week, but it will fall on your regular trash day, Pino said. Soon, people will get a pickup schedule.

Next week, 10,000 blue containers will arrive at the city's transfer station. A month from now, a contractor will deliver the containers to people's homes.

Next year, people will be required to leave their trash and recycle containers at the curb instead of the alley, Pino said. The exception would be in neighborhoods such as the Avenues, where people tend to park in the street.

Q: What can I put in the containers?

First, you won't have to sort anything that goes into your big blue container -- unlike the blue bin drop-off system.

You can put these into the curbside container: Newspaper, office paper, mail, magazines, catalogs, aluminum, steel, and Nos. 1 and 2 plastics.

Pino reminds people to take the lids off plastic bottles -- they are made of a different type of plastic, and they trap in air, making it difficult to bundle.

Q: Why is glass excluded?

During the pilot program in the Sun Valley neighborhood, they found that glass didn't make it through the process in one piece.

Fragments contaminated the paper, which then has to be to be "landfilled," which defeats the purpose of recycling, Pino said.

Also, Alpine, the Colorado company that the city is contracting with, does not want glass because it's not valuable.

You may still take your glass to the public blue bins.

Pino said in the future, the city may buy a machine to pulverize glass into sand to be used for playgrounds, roads and to line leech wells at the landfill.

Q: I don't plan to recycle. So why do I have to pay a \$5 charge?

The market fluctuates a lot, Pino said. Sometimes, recyclables make money -- last year, the city made about \$15 a ton.

Sometimes, the city ends up paying to get rid of the recyclables -- today it pays about \$10 a ton. (However, the city's contract with Alpine has a cap of \$50,000 a year.)

The \$5 fee that will appear on residents' bills helps cover those costs, along with hauling, fuel, baling, truck maintenance and the containers, he said.

They had considered folding it into the regular sanitation fee, but Pino said he wanted people to see what they were paying for.

To Pino, recycling is more important than making money -- in the end, it's better to recycle plastic than to pump more oil out of the ground.

"We always call it the right thing to do," he said. "If we don't do something, we're just going to deplete our planet."

And, he said, recycling programs elsewhere are effective when they are mandatory.

Q: When will residents north of Pershing Boulevard get curbside recycling?

Pino hopes it will be in late spring. The city will have to buy 10,000 more containers and a third truck.

Even though it's been operating a pilot program in Sun Valley for the past two years, the city implemented the citywide program in two phases so it could adjust and work out the kinks, he said.

Q: What about apartment complexes and businesses? Will these get curbside recycling?

In November, apartment complexes will get large trash bins.

Many businesses owners have contacted Pino, wanting to recycle, he said.

The city would have to buy another truck for that, he said. Once the residential program is in place and running smoothly, "we'll start working on getting a business recycling program in place," Pino said.

Right now, the city picks up clean cardboard from 40 businesses around the city.