

Recycling is Not New to the Big O!™

Early History (1970 - 1990)

Recycling began in Omaha long before it was the fashionable thing to do. During the winter of 1970-71 Mrs. Les Anderson, then chairman of the Governor's Council to Keep Nebraska Beautiful, began to make plans for the collection of old glass containers and paper for recycling. Although no U.S. city had tried glassphalt for paving, Mrs. Anderson knew several industries had tried it. She spoke with Omaha Public Works officials and received agreement to cooperate in the testing of glassphalt on 15th Street, between Capitol and Dodge Streets. With the help of many local companies and individuals, glass was collected, crushed and used in the test project in August 1972.

The Omaha World-Herald and Keep Omaha Beautiful teamed up in 1973 to start the first curbside newspaper collection program. The program eventually averaged 250 tons of newspapers per month.



The City of Omaha became more directly involved in the recycling program in 1976, when the garbage collection contractor began collecting newspapers separately. Residents were asked to place newspapers in brown paper grocery bags or tie them in bundles with string.

The collection personnel would then deposit them into a separate bin on the rear loader garbage trucks. The newspaper that was collected was used to manufacture cellulose insulation. In 1977 the City let a contract for separate collection of newspaper. Approximately 2,000 ton per year were collected each year from 1977 to 1987. The newspaper that was collected belonged to the contractor.

In late 1987 the program evolved somewhat when the City entered into a contract with the Eastern Nebraska Community Office on Retardation (ENCOR) to sort the newspapers collected separately at the curb. ENCOR used the sorting process to train persons, with a mental disability, in the skills that are required to obtain and hold a job.

The newspapers were collected monthly at the curb from 20 sectors, developed originally by Keep Omaha Beautiful, within the city limits of Omaha by Community Refuse Disposal, Inc. under a contract with the City. The newspaper was then delivered to a facility owned by the City that was provided to ENCOR for the sorting process. In addition to the facility the City paid all utilities at the

facility. All revenue from the sale of the sorted newspaper accrued to ENCOR to help offset the cost of conducting their program. In 1988, 1,800 tons of newspapers were recycled by ENCOR.

In 1989 approximately 3,200 tons of newspaper were collected and recycled. With the market for newspaper being severely depressed, ENCOR asked to be released from their contract and were allowed to discontinue sorting and marketing newspaper.

In February 1990 the City began marketing the newspaper collected without a final sort being performed at a cost of \$10 per ton to the City. Bids, for collecting and marketing newspaper, opened in May, 1990 indicated that it was going to cost the City a minimum of \$70 per ton to continue the newspaper program after December 31, 1990. The decision was made to discontinue the separate collection and marketing of newspaper, after December, as the facility for sorting recyclables would be in place and working before then. Approximately 5,700 tons of newspapers were collected separately during 1990.

Mixed Waste Recyclables Recovery (1990)

The City was approached by a group of investors in 1988 with a proposal to allow the City to recycle a significant portion of the solid waste collected. Specifications were prepared that required that a minimum reduction of 20% be attained the first year with the minimum increasing by 2% each year until a 40% reduction was required. The successful bidder, RRRS, was awarded the contract provided that within 6 months they would identify the site where the facility was to be located and demonstrate that they possessed the financial ability to proceed.



RRRS was unable to find a location that was acceptable. In October 1989 RRRS approached the City concerning their use of a City facility that had been used as a garbage baling facility between 1976 and 1986. Agreement on lease terms was reached and in January

1990 the City Council gave final approval to RRRS to proceed with the contract. Public Works staff was directed by the City Council to develop some means to let the citizens be more involved in the recycling program. Thus was born the bag concept for Omaha.

The original bag program included the residents sorting their household garbage into 3 plastic bags, 2

blue and 1 green. All paper materials were to be placed into 1 blue bag and the bag tied. All containers, tin cans, aluminum cans, plastic bottles and jugs and 3 colors of glass, were to be placed into a separate blue bag and the bag tied. The non-recyclable or confidential material was placed into the green bag. The green bags were not opened at the MRF; they were loaded directly into the semi-trailers going to the landfill.

RRRS began operation of the facility on July 9, 1990 taking a small portion of the waste stream and identifying and correcting problems. On November 30, 1990 the bag portion of the program was announced as "The Omaha Effort." Initial participation was estimated to be approximately 40%. In early December RRRS notified the City that they needed a significant increase in the tip fee to be financially capable of continuing the program. Because of laws detailing how the City may award contracts the City was unable to accommodate RRRS. The facility ceased operation as of December 26, 1990.

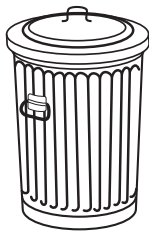
The City prepared specifications that would keep the blue bag portion of the program and drop the other parts. Bids were received and a contract to operate the Omaha Solid Waste Recycling Facility (ORF) was awarded to Waste Management of Nebraska, Inc.

Solid Waste Management

Collection Limits and Requirements

Limitations and requirements for garbage and yardwaste collection have been implemented over the years. In general garbage and yardwaste are collected curbside (and some alleys) one time per week from single-family residential units and multi-family buildings that have less than five units. Back door collection is provided for those residents that are unable to set their garbage at the curb or alley due to age or infirmity.

Prior to 1996, multi-family buildings with more than five units or other commercial establishments were collected if they meet the volume restrictions in the contract. Beginning in January 1996, commercial establishments were eliminated from the City's collection contract. Five unit and larger multi-family buildings were also planned to be eliminated, however by Council decision, the City began work on providing contracted service to multi-family buildings with five through 20 units.



The City enacted a group of solid waste ordinances in January of 1994, in order to comply with Nebraska's Integrated Solid Waste Management Act of 1992 that prohibits the landfilling of yardwaste after September 1994. The new ordinances required the contractor to collect all yardwaste separately. The Ordinances required citizens to place yardwaste in trashcans marked with a YW or in special large paper bags. In addition, it required that garbage must be placed in clear plastic bags or loose in trashcans. A combined limit of five clear bags or trash cans of garbage was enacted. The number of properly prepared yardwaste containers

was not limited.

The Blue Bag Years (1991 - 1995)

I. Garbage Collection Contract

Contractor - Watts Trucking of Nebraska (1991 - 1995)

Contractor - Deffenbaugh Industries (1995)



From the contract signed with Watts Trucking in December 1989, they were paid on a per ton basis for the collection of garbage and co-collected recyclables. In addition, Watts was paid an additional per ton fee for each mile in excess of 6 when delivering to the ORF. This fee was only incurred in the Friday area. The per ton and per mile costs for this contract were, \$31.22 per ton and 90¢ per ton-mile for the Friday sector.

Because the contract with Watts Trucking was based on the weight of material collected, the City was limited on the recycling options it could provide to the citizens. The blue bag system that resulted complied with the contract. Co-mingled recyclables that were placed into blue bags were collected at the same time and in the same truck as the garbage.

In August, 1995 Watts Trucking asked to be released from their garbage collection contract before the scheduled December 31, 1995 closing date. The City negotiated an early start-up contract with Deffenbaugh Industries, the company contracted to begin collections in 1996. The fee for early start up was \$2.81 per household, with no per mile charge. Deffenbaugh Industries began collecting garbage and co-collected recyclables in September 1995.

II. Yardwaste Collection Contract

Contractor - Watts Trucking of Nebraska (1991 - 1994)

Contractor - Deffenbaugh Industries (1994 - 1995)

Looking ahead to the eventual banning of yardwaste from landfills, and to reduce dirt and contamination problems that were arising at the ORF, the City developed a contract for the separate collection of yardwaste. This contract was awarded in July 1990 with 1991 being the first year of operation. Yardwaste was collected the same day and from the same location as the household garbage. At the time this collection service was started, citizens were not required to prepare yardwaste in any special manner, including plastic bags that were accepted up to 1994. Citizens were asked to set bags of yardwaste a short distance from the garbage to aid the contractor in identifying it. In 1994, Nebraska state laws caused the City to require that citizens separate all yardwaste. This separate collection was performed from the first week in April through the last week in November.

During 1991 the collection cost was \$30.34 per ton, with bonus of \$5.00 per ton paid for each ton in excess of 5,000 tons. The tonnage that must be collected to receive the bonus escalated 5,000 tons each year during the contract.

In June of 1994, Watts was unable to continue

collection of yardwaste. Bid specifications were developed, and a contract was awarded to Deffenbaugh Industries in July 1994, to collect yardwaste for the remainder of 1994 and the 1995 yardwaste season. The cost of this service was a flat \$250,000 per month.

III. Yardwaste Processing Contract

Contractor - Watts Trucking of Nebraska (1991 - 1995)

A contract for composting the separately collected yardwaste was awarded at the same time as the contract for collection. The material collected was delivered to the compost site owned by Watts Trucking and located just east of the Mormon Bridge in Iowa. The yardwaste was composted using the windrow method. All yardwaste became the property of the contractor once it is delivered to and accepted by them. The contractor retained any revenue from the sale or distribution of finished compost. In 1991, the tipping fee for yardwaste was \$15.50 per ton for loose yardwaste or yardwaste in paper bags. Yardwaste in plastic bags cost \$16.50 per ton.

IV. Omaha Solid Waste

Recycling Facility Operation

Contractor - Waste Management of Nebraska (1991 - 1992)

Contractor - Waste Management of Nebraska (1992 - 1995)

In March 1991, following the closing of the RRRS operation, an interim, one year contract was awarded to Waste Management of Nebraska, for the operation of the ORF. The contract required the contractor to receive the garbage and co-mingled/co-collected recyclables from Watts Trucking; separate the blue bags of recyclables from the garbage; transport the garbage to the landfill (contractor was responsible for the tip fee at the landfill); sort the contents of the blue bags into specific categories; process the recyclables for shipment to market; and market the recyclables. The City received a 50% share of the revenue from the sale of recyclables.

The fee structure for this service was as follows:

\$18.95 per ton tipping fee plus \$469.00 per day. This fee includes all recyclables processing costs and paying the Douglas County Landfill tip fee of \$11.25 per ton.

In April 1991 the City and Waste Management also began operating unattended drop-off sites for residents of apartments and others that could not or chose not to use the blue bag curbside program. The drop-off sites used roll-off containers for collecting materials. The City paid \$80 per pull in excess of four pulls per week from the four drop-offs in operation at that time.



A three-year contract with Waste Management of Nebraska was signed in December 1991, and became effective in April 1992. The new contract is similar to the original; however, a different fee structure existed as follows:

A) Receipt of co-collected solid waste and blue bagged recyclables (per ton)

\$5.64

B) Transportation to the Douglas County Landfill with the City paying the tipping fee (per ton) \$2.90

C) Processing recyclables in blue bags and from drop-off sites (per ton) \$95.56

D) Transport drop-off site containers to the recycling center (per pull, with 9 pulls per week free of charge) \$80.00

During each year, the revenue from the sale of recyclables was shared 60% to the City and 40% to Waste Management. The contract included a guaranteed minimum revenue price per material. The guarantees were:



- 1) Newspaper = \$35/ton
- 2) HDPE plastic = \$100/ton
- 3) PETE Plastic = \$100/ton
- 4) Aluminum cans = \$600/ton
- 5) Steel Cans (Tin Cans) = \$40/ton
- 6) Glass (all 3 colors) = \$65/ton
- 7) Blue Plastic Bags = \$60/ton
- 8) Old Corrugated Cardboard = \$20/ton
- 9) Kraft Paper = \$30/ton

Curbside Sorted (1996 - 2005)

I. Garbage, Yardwaste & Recyclables Collection Contract

During 1994 public and potential bidder comments were received on the type of, and expense of, garbage, yardwaste and recyclable material



collection. The public's comments emphasized a desire to have a recycling program that used a collection bin instead of the blue bag. After analyzing the comments from the potential bidders and the public, the City wrote bid specifications that requested prices for a number of recycling collection options including blue bag co-collection, blue bag separate collection, co-mingled bin collection and truck side sorted bin collection. Yardwaste options included using semi-automated collection.

In 1995 Deffenbaugh Industries was awarded the seven-year contract with a three-year extension option (which was granted in 2000) for the collection of garbage, yardwaste and recyclables. These contracts are based on a per house fee. Deffenbaugh's bid price was \$4.72 per household, per month for the collection of recyclables and garbage. Deffenbaugh bid \$2.39 per household, per month for the collection of yardwaste during the yardwaste season. Hence, the annual cost for providing garbage, yardwaste and recyclables collection to a household is \$75.76. The City is responsible for the tipping

fee at the composting facility and at the Douglas County Landfill. These contracts began on January 1, 1996. The new recycling program is promoted under the name "Omaha Recycles." Deffenbaugh's bid includes providing each household in Omaha a recycling bin, and sorting of recyclables into a seven-compartment truck.

II. Recyclables Processing &

Drop-off Site Contract

During 1994 the City also solicited bids for processing of recyclables beginning January 1, 1996. Midland Recycling was awarded the contract. During the summer of 1995, Weyerhaeuser Recycling acquired Midland Recycling.

Weyerhaeuser Recycling uses their own facility located at 7202 North 16th Street for processing recyclables. Because recyclables are delivered to Weyerhaeuser already sorted into seven categories, Weyerhaeuser processes and markets the recyclables at no cost to the City. Weyerhaeuser receives all of the revenue from the sale of the first 5,000 tons of recyclables, and the City will share (50/50) the revenue from the sale of all tons over 5,000.



Also included in Weyerhaeuser Recycling's contract is the responsibility for providing recyclables drop-off sites at ten locations throughout the city. Weyerhaeuser established nine drop-off sites and operated these sites from January through October 1996, using divided roll-off containers.

Weyerhaeuser provided this service to the City at a charge of \$59.50 for each time a

container is emptied. The City was not charged for any additional processing that was needed for materials from drop-off sites. Because of budget considerations and low market prices, the City closed all of the drop-off sites at the end of October 1996. One drop-off site was opened at Weyerhaeuser's facility, 7200 North 16th Street in December of 1996.

Two more sites were opened in the spring of 1997. These two new sites located and sponsored by HyVee are staffed by Goodwill Industries and have a security fence. One site was closed in the summer of 1998 when the hosting store began an expansion project.

During the summer of 1997 an agreement was reached with Arrow Recycling, 8518 Blondo St. to host and staff a drop-off site. In the fall of 1998 Arrow Recycling began accepting clean dimensional lumber and other building supplies for the local Habitat for Humanity. In November of 1998 Arrow recycling began a remodeling project at their facility and closed for the winter. After reopening in February of 1999, they determined they would no longer



be a recycling drop-off site for the city.

In 2003, the new owners of the 8518 Blondo St. property asked to be considered again to be a recycling drop-off site. In August 2003 the new site opened as part of Scrap Central's operation. The Habitat for Humanity operation did not return.



III. Yardwaste Processing Contract

During 1994 the City solicited bids for yardwaste processing. The original bids were thrown out after it became apparent that all bidders would have difficulty in finding a suitable location for the facility and obtaining the proper permits. The City submitted a plan for composting at the Papillion Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant to the Sarpy County Board. After gaining approval for the plan, the City sought new bids for a composting processor based on using the site provided by the City. The City submitted its own blind bid along with the other potential contractors. A citizen committee appointed by the Mayor reviewed the bids and selected the bid submitted by the City.

Under this contract, the City's composting operation will receive from the City's solid waste disposal division, \$16.81 per ton for the first 26,000 tons of yardwaste and \$9.00 per ton for all additional tons of yardwaste.

The City's compost is marketed under the name OmaGro and is sold either in bulk quantities or in 40 pound bags through a network of local retailers and directly from the composting facility.

Single Stream (1996 - 2005)

- I. Garbage, Yardwaste & Recyclables Collection Contract

During 1994 public and potential bidder c

Other Recycling Programs

Telephone Directory Recycling

Each year, during the months of May, June & July, the City cooperates with Qwest Dex and YellowBook to conduct a telephone directory recycling project. Directories are collected at drop-off locations placed at Baker's Grocery Stores in the Metropolitan Omaha area. In 2000 QwestDex and YellowBook eliminated their recycling programs other than promotion of recycling. The City amended its contract with Weyerhaeuser Recycling to include telephone directories.

Christmas Tree Recycling

During the two weeks after Christmas, the City and our neighboring communities operate Christmas tree collection sites. At each of the ten sites, five are in Omaha; Christmas trees are collected and chipped for use in area parks. Civic group volunteers help citizens unload trees each weekend. This project has been operating since 1989.

Household Hazardous Waste

In 1998 a group of public officials got together and

decided to address the disposal problem of household hazardous waste (HHW). The work of the group progressed. An HHW collection facility will open in late summer 2004 at 4001 South 120TH Street with the name UnderTheSink. The facility will be owned by the City and operated by the the Environmental Quality Division on behalf of the member organizations, Douglas County and Sarpy County.

Public Education

Omaha's recycling and solid waste programs are operated from the Environmental Quality Division (EQD) of the Public Works Department. EQD works to educate the public on many waste reduction and recycling topics. Since 1991, citizens with recycling questions have been able to call the Recycling Hotline, 444-4500, with their recycling questions.

Each year EQD staff present garbage collection and recycling talks to numerous civic groups and school classes. In addition, tours of the recycling facility are given. EQD regularly sets up booths at events both large and small, including the Spring Home Expo, Fall Home Expo, Earth Day, and Safety and Health Council Summit.

EQD produces a newsletter, **WASTELINE**, distributed to all Omaha households by mail. The cost of printing the newsletter is shared between Weyerhaeuser, Deffenbaugh and the City. Distribution cost of the newsletter is the responsibility of Deffenbaugh.

Brochures about selected topics are also available. Brochures currently available are:

- Waste Reduction
- Waste Reuse
- Curbside Recycling
- Christmas Tree Recycling
- Eliminating Unwanted Mail
- Motor Oil, Antifreeze & Auto Battery Recycling
- Household Hazardous Waste Disposal and Alternatives
- Proper Paint Disposal

EQD has information available through an automated fax back system called *FRED (FaxREplyDocuments)*. Using this system, anyone may request that brochures or other information be faxed to them. The system also provides audible information regarding solid waste. The phone number for *FRED* is 444-3610.

EQD has created several Web sites. Where complete information about the programs are available. The sites are:

<http://www.wasteline.org>

<http://www.underthesink.org>

<http://www.omagro.com>

The City's website is: <http://www.ci.omaha.ne.us>

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	Garbage		Recyclables		Yardwaste	
Total 2003	97,873	65%	17,380	12%	35,078	23%
Total 2002	96,909	66%	17,816	12%	32,462	22%
Total 2001	97,973	65%	18,851	12%	34,686	23%
Total 2000	94,717	64%	20,253	14%	32,185	22%
Total 1999	92,512	64%	19,582	14%	31,761	22%
Total 1998	87,734	62%	19,543	14%	35,247	25%
Total 1997	86,022	64%	18,958	14%	30,411	22%
Total 1996	81,718	60%	20,258	15%	35,139	26%