



AGENDA MEMORANDUM
City Council Meeting of August 17, 2021

DATE: August 17, 2021
TO: Peter Zaroni, City Manager
Thru: Neiman Young, Assistant City Manager
FROM: David S. Lehfeldt, Director of Solid Waste Services
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Recycle CLEAN Education and Inspection Program

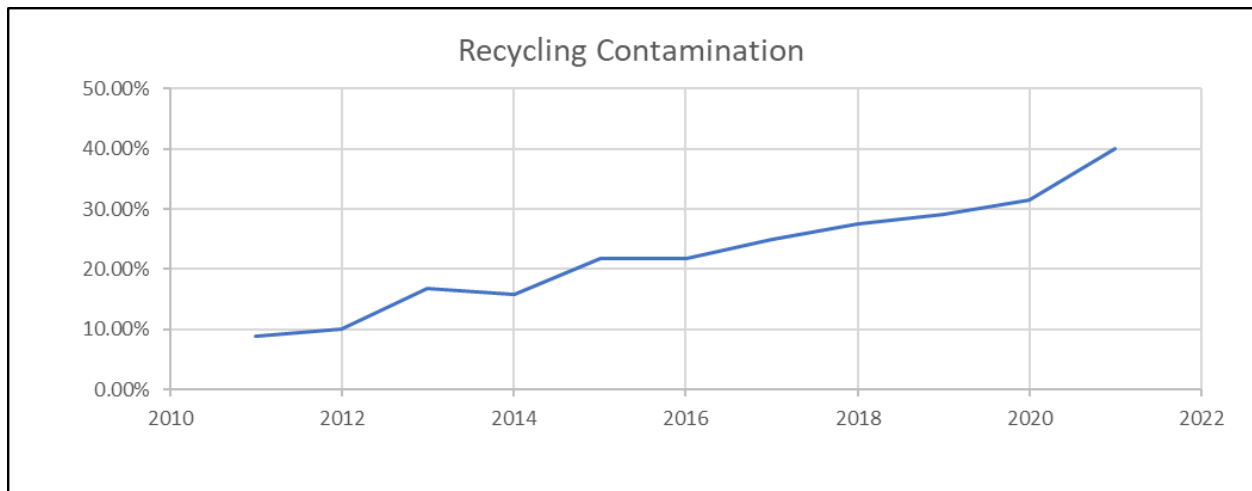
STAFF PRESENTER:

David S. Lehfeldt

Director, Solid Waste Services

ISSUE:

The contamination rate in our recycling carts has been increasing for the last several years and is now at 40%. The cost to process and remove this contamination is over \$500,000 annually. The following graph shows the contamination rate increase over the last 10 years.



It is important to understand that the 40% is an average contamination rate for the entire City. Some sections may have higher or lower rates, respectively. For every customer that has near perfect recycling set outs, another customer has a contamination rate

nearing 75 – 80%. Normal household trash in communities that do not recycle has a similar trash/recycle mixture of 70% trash and 30% recycle.

Contamination consists of materials that are not recyclable in our program. Recycling programs vary on what their Material Recycling Facility (MRF) machines are equipped to process. Not every item with the recycle triangle (♻) is recyclable in every program; however, the presence of a recycling triangle has led many customers to mistakenly assume that products with the symbol are approved for our program.

The following is a list of the materials that contaminate our recyclables.

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Plastic Bags/Toys | 5. Glass | 9. Yard Waste |
| 2. Aluminum Foil | 6. Hazardous Materials | 10. Electronics |
| 3. Clothing | 7. Soiled/Dirty Cardboard | 11. Styrofoam |
| 4. Drink Cartons | 8. Ceramics | 12. Hoses/Lawn Furniture |

BACKGROUND:

Staff has researched the recycling practices of Austin, Houston, McAllen, and San Antonio to find a solution to the problem. The following chart shows their program details.

City	% Contamination	1 st Offense	2nd Offense	3rd Offense	4th Offense
Austin "Recycle Right"	35% to 17.8%	\$20 - Education	\$20 - Education	\$20 - Education	Remove Cart If "egregious"
Houston "Feet on the Street"	41% to 39%	Notice - Education	No Collection of cart	No Collection of cart	No Collection of cart
McAllen "Recycle Right"	80% to 50%	Notice - Education	Remove Cart, add \$12.50 for 2 nd trash cart		
San Antonio	32% to 20%	\$25 / \$50 - Education	\$25 / \$50 - Education	Remove Cart	

Additional information has just been released by the Applied Research Foundation of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). This report is included in the agenda packet. Information from this report, found at the top of page 17, provides us with the two most effective strategies to improve the recycling performance of underperformers. The first is the removal of the recycling carts and the second is to impose fees or charges.

Staff recommends Council consider and approve the Recycle CLEAN program which replicates similar programs that are employed in other Texas localities.

LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

PowerPoint – (Recycle CLEAN)

Recycling Contamination Report, SWANA Applied Research Foundation