



**Road to Zero Waste**  
Comments at Community Conversation #2: Recycle

June 12, 2013

**Community Member Comments:**

- Our business (Colorado Iron and Metal) has recently moved to Buckingham Street and is neighbors with New Belgium Brewery. Your estimate of 6,000 tons of scrap metal going into the land fill seems too high. That would be 2 semi-truck loads to landfill. I don't think that exists.
  - Exporting to other countries is actually great for the economy – they ship back empty if they aren't carrying scrap materials for U.S.
  - Until we address tip fees at landfill, nothing will change. They are way too cheap.
- Look at changing the way things are packaged. We switched from buying wine in bottles to wine in boxes – they are easier to carry out to curb.
- As resident, over last five years I've seen an uptick of interest in food waste composting.
  - Would like to see the opportunities to significantly improve for restaurants and businesses year round
  - Trash, recycle, compost
  - Pay as You Throw is great
  - Moved from large to small trash can
- We need a centralized location where all materials come. Could be either government or private or both.
- I'm concerned about the analysis of the current recycling stream and what amount is contaminated and whether we're doing a good job sorting.
- Waste Management/Recycle America – Franklin Street MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) in Denver is where recyclables from Fort Collins are taken to be processed (Steve Derrus, Manager).
  - "Residuals" or contaminants in single stream recycling is big problem for us.
  - Education is key
  - Some things can shut down the MRF's operations, such as strings of Christmas lights and plastic bags.
  - Glass is not designed to be recovered well in single stream and we don't get a saleable product.
  - Another recycling facility in Denver takes dry materials from commercial mostly
  - Typical contaminants are: plastic bags, wire cords, Styrofoam, rope, videocassettes, textiles, carpets, plastic film, full/partly full aerosol cans, food waste, yard waste, construction debris, medical wastes ("sharps")
  - The general level of contamination at the Franklin Street MRF, which must be reported to Larimer County monthly, is 6.7%
  - The Franklin Street MRF employs over 100 people
- Get more information on what our recycling "composition" consists of
  - Need more leadership on developing consistent message
  - All of us have different understanding of what's ok to put in recycling.

- The school where I teach (Rocky Mountain High School) is trying hard to expand recycling.
  - Many of us want to compost, too
  - All schools and restaurants and bigger institutions should be required to have recycling and composting.
  - It's a problem to see how people unload all sorts of trash out of their cars at gas stations because there is no recycling there. Same with movie theaters – why no recycling
  - Raise rates at landfill to get something done.
  - Would personally want a composting bin at home
- ClimateWise is a voluntary program for businesses. We need to have a composting program all year, not just from May to October.
  - As a City resource, leadership is needed
  - The business community needs to help lead. Zero waste businesses need to let others know about their successes, including large businesses and “mom and pop” businesses.
  - Businesses are struggling in Old Town to find a place for recycling containers.
  - Need others at the table - some are missing here today
- Small business owner and resident
  - Need to move more to reduce and reuse
  - PAYT giving people the opportunity to have 96-gallon recycling carts was a great move.
  - Increase tip fees a concern.
  - Has a 32 gallon trash bin that only needs to be put out every 3 weeks
  - Those generating less should pay less
- Citizen and NRAB board member
  - Recycling program has dramatically improved
  - As a resident my household only puts a small can out every other week and my recycling can is often over-flowing
  - Give the option for every other week trash collection to residents
  - Know what should go in bin – people are confused about plastics – Haulers say put #1 - #7 in recycling. Some #7 are polylactic acid (PLA) that shouldn't go into recycling bin, although it is compostable.
  - So for instance, can I recycle little plastic hangers that say #4 that my socks were on when I bought them
  - Need education
  - We need to understand about public recycling bins (in Public spaces – government, school district)
  - If I put recyclables in but others have placed trash in the bin, will it all go to the landfill, given what's in there?
  - Need strong education in public spaces
- Hangers are not accepted in curbside/household recycling systems
  - We (Waste Management/Recycle America plant manager) recycle #1 - #7 containers
  - Again, we can't handle plastic bags
- Waste-Not Recycling is a company that works on a lot of projects, including how to recycle harder-to-recycle plastics.
  - Need to create markets for products made from recycled materials
  - Need market development
  - Business will react to consumers – if you buy recycled, business will provide those products
  - Subsidies that compete against recycling
    - 100 years ago, incentives were adopted to industrialize America
    - Need to eliminate those subsidies

- Contamination is an important issue.
  - Majority of materials discarded in landfill are organics.
  - The way we collect food waste is already in place. We have efficient collection through sewers that carry food waste to the Waste Water Treatment Plant. That plant would love to have food waste in the sewers coming to them.
  - Look hard at Polylactic Acid products or biodegradable plastics, and whether they really make any sense.
  - Most composters take out plastics at the front (don't care if biodegradable or compostable).
  - Fort Collins Organics Composting is limited because there is no local place to do it.
  - I don't agree that locally, wood waste has any value. Let me know where we can get \$7/ton, especially when it costs \$50 - \$70/ton to get there!
  - But having a Resource Recovery Park would help.
  - If processed on-site, it's cheaper to do than transferring to be handled elsewhere.
- What is the cost to the City of the landfill...there is methane gas there, too.
- 6.7% residue at materials recovery facility should get deducted from recycling rate.
  - Contamination issue - "when in doubt, throw it out" isn't necessarily a good guideline for janitors who need to make a decision can by can and we don't necessarily want them to throw away a bin of recyclables with one contaminant, which might be low enough contamination to be within the threshold of the MRF.
  - Be clear how to best comply
  - Private haulers all go to same place, so all their educational/informational materials should be the same with regard to contaminants.
  - US Green Building Council requires waste and recycling containers to comply
  - Trash – 24% recycling in it
  - Recycling – 24% of trash in it
- If highest, best use is part of zero waste, then use of recyclables such as crushed glass as alternative daily cover at landfills should not count as recycling towards a waste diversion rate.
- I moved to Fort Collins recently from Colorado Springs
  - Sees Fort Collins as progressive
  - In Zero Waste communities, how do you educate general population?
- People think they are recycling when they give our Thrift Store couches with holes in them, and they drop off lots of broken and obsolete electronics at thrift stores. Yesterday, four TVs were dumped at my store. They may think it's the right thing to do, but it's not.
  - If tip fees go up, concern with how much more will be dumped at my location.
  - Provide stickers for recycle bins to show what can go in them
  - We do disassemble but that is not cost-effective
  - 24% of what is brought to me is thrown away
  - Would like to do training for people on reuse and how to repurpose products and think outside the box
  - We have asked people to pay a handling/dismantling fee, but 99% will not pay.
- Auto industry has core charge on batteries – do the same for TVs or other problem items like that – I like that because you get the full money back.
- I like the idea of core charges.
  - Would like to see incentives for consumers developed as mentioned are available for zero waste businesses.
- Maybe there should be a charge at point of sale. But if there was a \$10 charge on TVs in Fort Collins, people would just go to other cities to make their purchase.

- British Columbia has province-wide program-strong on extended producer responsibility. Don't know how it works, but seems to be very successful.
- Impressed with this session;
  - Most city programs flash not substance – this seems substantive
- Agree, but we're missing a lot of “nay sayers” who should be in the room – all those neighbors on my street need to talk.
- Look at concepts for “nature dumps” – buried plant life that we're digging up
- Contact Fort Collins Sustainable Group for input.
  - Need better notification on all City email lists and just got notice last night of this event.
  - The Economic Plan that was written a couple years ago by City was “invite only”
- For future meetings, avoid plans being written by government business leaders and send invitations to citizens who weren't given the opportunity to help write the plan.
- Other topics to address at future meeting:
  - Hold sector focus groups for next trip
  - Construction and demolition/Green Building; the City is updating Green Building Code; include remodeling
  - Restaurants/food services (“organics”, rather than “compost” session)
    - Jail (alternative sentencing – have community garden)
    - Hospitals
    - K-12 schools
    - Nurseries
    - EarthCycle
    - Colleges/universities
    - Hotels
    - Local food (CSAs)
    - Farmers (farm to farm for use of compost)
  - E-waste / appliances
  - Add more people to Road to Zero Waste Working Group to represent other interests

**Summary notes:**

- Citizen involvement – bring friends
- A lot about education
- Still in listening mode – won't filter suggestion and ideas
- Hear some frustrations
- Some discussion about advanced fees and new laws
- Need to review education/outreach materials send out by all haulers to their customers.
- Need to get more comprehensive and better information to the community about waste water treatment of food waste.
- Every-other week trash collection
- Trash rates – liked PAYT
- Resource recovery park