



# WASTELINE



Recycling, Garbage and Yardwaste Information for the Citizens of Omaha, Nebraska  
Public Works Department Norm Jackman, Acting Director Environmental Quality Division

## Priorities and Alternatives

**T**HERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, people take their garbage seriously and have opinions about how it should be handled. The last issue of **WASTELINE** included a non-scientific survey to collect the public's opinions and desires related to the next solid waste collection contract that will start in 2006. Nearly 500 responses were received from the on-line survey and over 2,300 paper surveys were completed and mailed in. Thank you for the input.

Most residents expressed satisfaction with collection services, but litter and placement of cans after collection were identified as areas for improvement. Next comes the difficult task of converting these needs and desires into contract terms that the City can afford and successfully administer.

Litter in our neighborhoods and along our streets comes from a number of sources. Our investigations of litter reports most frequently indicate that thoughtless motorists and pedestrians, "litter bugs," are the single biggest source. However, the way we prepare and collect garbage and recyclables in Omaha also contributes to the litter problem. Loose garbage in trashcans can blow out. Stray pets, wild animals and wind can knock over trashcans and spread loose garbage. The same applies to material in recycling bins. Sorting of recyclables at the curb by collection crews can also result in litter, and occasionally recyclables escape the compartments of recycling trucks while they are traveling.

The City is considering requiring

residents to place all their garbage in bags, to reduce litter. We are also seeking alternatives to better contain recyclables set out for collection. Many communities are changing the way they collect and process recyclables and are reducing or eliminating sorting of recyclables at the curb. Instead, recyclables are collected in a separate truck from the garbage truck but taken to a central processing facility where they are sorted.

### Aren't the Answers Obvious?

The City balances service and price to fulfill the needs of the 122,000 households.

From the survey and the calls to our

hotline, it is very apparent that there is a desire for improvement regarding the way residents find their containers located after collection.

Among the suggestions are:

- ▶ Set cans upright with lids on
- ▶ Lay cans on their side
- ▶ Stack cans together with lids stacked to the side
- ▶ Set empty cans upside down
- ▶ Set cans upright and stick lids inside

*Continued inside*

## Contract Timeline

You may be asking why, is the City working on a contract that won't take affect until January 2006? This is a contract the City will be bound to for seven to 10 years, so it deserves careful thought. Also, we must allow the contractors a year to assemble the equipment and facilities to operate, so all of 2005 is provided for start-up in January 2006.

The schedule for writing and bidding of the collection and recycling processing follows:

- May 25** Public Meeting (see advertisement on back)
- June Advertise the contract bid documents in trade journals
- July Bid documents written and available to bidders (6 weeks are required between advertising the bid and opening the bids)
- August Meeting with potential bidders to answer any questions on bid specifications
- September Bid opening
- October Bid committee review and recommendation to Mayor
- November Public hearings and contract awarded by Council

**For collection information: [www.wasteline.org](http://www.wasteline.org)**



# Recycling

**Replacement Bin  
Call 444-5238**

## Paper sack #1—Newspaper (Do not use plastic bags)

- 👍 Includes: Coupons, advertisements, Parade section and all paper that came with the newspaper.
- 👍 Lay sack on top of bin with opening away from wind.
- 👎 **NO!** Do not include: phonebooks (see sack #2) or other paper, rubber bands, plastic bags.

**Yes**



## Paper sack #2—Mixed Paper (Do not use plastic bags)

- 👍 Includes: Magazines, catalogues, phonebooks, cereal boxes, junkmail (including mailing labels and plastic windows), detergent boxes, greeting cards, wrapping paper, paperback books, office and school paper.
- 👍 Lay sack on top of bin with opening away from wind.
- 👎 **NO!** Do not include: pizza boxes, juice boxes, milk cartons, hardbound books, tissue paper, paper plates, or frozen food boxes.

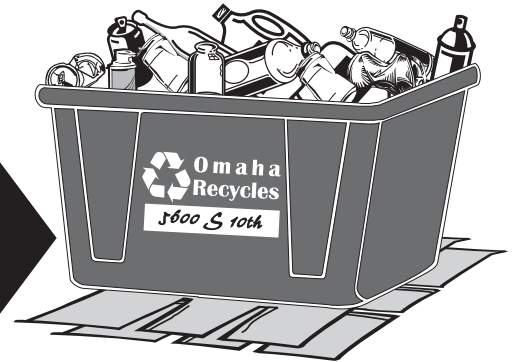
**Yes**



## Loose in the bin—Containers (Not in plastic bags)

- 👎 **NO!** Lids of any kind. Remove and throw in garbage.
- 👍 Plastic bottles marked PETE ♻️, including: Bottles that held pop, cooking oil, mouthwash, shampoo or cleaners.
- 👎 **NO!** PETE ♻️ *not included:* deli/produce containers, frozen food trays, plastic cups, toys or cookie trays.
- 👍 Plastic bottles and tubs marked HDPE ♻️, including—bottles and tubs that held milk, juice, cleaners, margarine, whipped topping, or yogurt.
- 👎 **NO!** HDPE ♻️ *not included:* motor oil or auto product bottles, lawn chemical bottles, toys or cookie trays. No 5 gallon buckets.
- 👍 Glass bottles & jars.
- 👍 Aluminum cans & Steel (tin) cans, including—empty aerosol cans, empty and dry paint cans. *Tip: Place end of food cans inside can and crimp closed.*
- 👍 Corrugated cardboard. Flatten. Cut to 2 feet by 2 feet. Place in bin or on ground under bin.

**Yes**



**Stomp 'em flat!**

**Remove Lids!**



Discard lids in garbage.



Call 444-5238 or visit [www.wasteline.org](http://www.wasteline.org) for more information.

# A Matter of Scale

**S**O, WHAT DOES IT TAKE to collect garbage, recyclables, and yardwaste in Omaha?

When Omaha is compared to other places, the City looks at:

- ▶ Who is doing the collecting (public employees or contractor employees)?
- ▶ What services are provided (garbage, yardwaste, recyclables, bulky items)?
- ▶ What limits are there (weight, number of containers, size)?
- ▶ How many households?
- ▶ What's the population?
- ▶ What's the overall budget, per household cost, and how is it all funded?
- ▶ Is anything mandatory?

- ▶ How many square miles does their city cover?
- ▶ Do they provide special collection for the elderly and handicapped?
- ▶ What does the city provide (cart, bags, bin)?
- ▶ How is material set out for collection?

To appreciate the scale of the task of collecting garbage in Omaha, let's look at some numbers.

Each day (during yardwaste season) Deffenbaugh operates more than 70 trucks and has more than 200 employees.

In 2003, 97,873 tons of garbage were collected. That means on average each garbage truck collects over 30,000 pounds per day. Which means each worker on the back of the truck lifts 15,000 pounds every workday. Talk about your work out programs!

Recycling collects significantly less (17,378 tons in 2003), but they must handle every item that's in the bin. That's 2,700 pounds of recyclables touched each day by each collector!

## Current Services

Currently Omaha provides solid waste services to the residents of Omaha at a cost of \$8.93 per household, per month. The general fund, made up of property and sales tax, is the source of funds used to pay for these services. The solid waste services annual budget is \$14 million and includes:

- ▶ Residential garbage, recycling, and yardwaste collection
- ▶ Recycling drop-off sites
- ▶ Neighborhood spring clean-up
- ▶ Christmas tree drop-off sites
- ▶ Bulky material drop-off site

## Priorities and Alternatives

*Continued from page 1*

Each of these is a viable option, but none will satisfy every household or can be satisfactorily accomplished with Omaha's terrain and weather.

The present contract requires cans be replaced in the approximate location they were set out for collection. The City is evaluating contract terms that could address this issue. Attend the May 25th meeting and share your view.

## What Makes Omaha Unique?

We've found a number of larger cities provide collection services through a city-employed workforce and equipment fleet. While this approach provides benefits in terms of flexibility to respond to changes in conditions and directly address problems that may arise, we believe the competitive solid waste management industry provides a more cost effective and efficient service.

The vast majority of cities that contract for collection services assess a fee or allow

a contractor to bill a monthly service charge for residential collection services. State law prevents Omaha from charging a fee for solid waste collection services. Instead, solid waste collection is provided, and paid for from General Funds (property and sales taxes). This system provides a consistent service level to all residents, and the cost of collecting the 122,000 monthly fees is avoided, reducing overall cost of service.

In some cases, however, the one-size-fits-all approach to solid waste collection prevents residents from obtaining services for which they individually might be willing to pay for. Many communities nationally are moving toward automated collection of garbage, recyclables and yardwaste using large wheeled carts. Potential advantages include reduced litter, less blowing or misplacement of empty containers, fewer collection employees to pay, reduced employee injuries and convenience for many customers.

Potential disadvantages include higher costs resulting from the initial purchase and ongoing maintenance costs of the carts. With a fully automated collection system there is also less opportunity to control what materials go into which waste stream. This can result in unsafe materials entering the landfill and contamination of recyclables or yardwaste compost. Perhaps the biggest concern about moving toward a system of automated collection is that it just doesn't seem workable in all parts of Omaha. In areas served by narrow car-lined streets, cul-de-sacs, or alleys, there simply isn't room to operate an automated system and two systems of collection would significantly increase the expense of the contract. The homeowner must also contend with three very large and tall containers. While the City is interested in additional input on automating collections, we presently believe that there are too many impediments.





**WASTELINE**

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www.wasteline.org

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**Solid Waste Contract Update  
& Public Meeting**



**Keep America Going, Recycle!**

Printing provided through the financial assistance of Deffenbaugh Industries, Weyerhaeuser Recycling and Oma•Gro.  
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Our apologies: Due to limitations of available mailing lists, this mailing may be delivered outside the Omaha city limits.

**Public Meeting  
Omaha Solid Waste  
Collection & Recycling  
Contracts  
Starting in 2006**

**Tuesday**

**May 25, 2004**

**7:00-8:30PM**

**Teacher Administrative Center**

**(former Tech High)**

**3215 Cuming St**

**Handicap accessible**

A request for a sign language interpreter (signer) will require a minimum of 48-hours advance notice. Alternative formats or accommodations require a minimum of 72-hours advance notice. Please contact Diane Sturm - 444-5227 if arrangements need to be made.



Everything must be out for collection by 6AM.

= Include, or Yes this is correct.

= Don't Include, or No this isn't correct.

## Garbage

**Collection Problems Call 444-5238**

- Trash cans up to 32 gallons and weighing up to 45 pounds when full.
- Clear plastic bags and weighing up to 30 pounds when full.
- Up to five containers of trash per week (example 2 trash cans and 3 bags).
- Place within 5 feet of curb, approved alley or other approved location.

- A mixture of garbage and yardwaste.
- Rocks, dirt and concrete.
- Dead animals.
- All liquids.
- Tires, engines or other large auto parts.
- Bulky items (couches, chairs, stoves, etc.).
- Dark plastic bags that you can't see through.
- Motor oil and automotive batteries.
- Cardboard boxes (empty or full) when not in a can or bag.
- Items outside a can or bag.

## Yardwaste

**Collection Problems Call 444-5238**

- Grass clippings and leaves.
- Garden waste such as fallen apples, rotted or excess vegetables and fruit.
- Trash cans up to 32 gallons and weighing up to 45 pounds, marked with a **YW** on both sides.
- Special yardwaste paper bags weighing up to 40 pounds.
- Unlimited number of properly prepared marked cans, paper bags or brush bundles.
- Bundles of branches and brush, tied with string or twine. Bundles may weigh up to 30 pounds.
- Branches may be up to 2 inches in diameter and 4 feet in length.

- Plastic bags used in yardwaste collection.
- Mixtures of yardwaste and garbage.
- No saw dust, lumber or treated lumber/wood.
- Litter, trash or garbage.
- Whole cans of dirt or sod.
- Street sweeping sand, litter or rocks.
- Cardboard boxes of yardwaste.
- Pet manure or kitty litter.
- Branches over 2 inches in diameter.
- Branches over 4 feet long.
- Plastic twine, nylon twine or wire used to bundle brush or branches.
- Rope of any kind.
- Unbundled brush.

# Scale (continued)

In 2002 the Annual Cost per Omaha Household was:

Garbage and Recyclable Collection	\$ 63.60
Yardwaste Collection	\$ 24.21
Garbage Disposal <sup>†</sup>	\$ 17.60
Yardwaste Processing <sup>†</sup>	\$ 4.63
Recycling Revenue <sup>†</sup>	(\$ 3.71)
Recycling Avoided Expense compared to Landfilling <sup>‡</sup>	(\$ 3.24)
<b>Total Annual Cost Per Omaha Household for Solid Waste Collection in 2002</b>	<b>\$103.09</b>

The contract fees are adjusted annually for inflation based on the Kansas City Consumer Price Index. The Douglas County Landfill adjusts its fee annually, and the amount is set by the Douglas County Board.

<sup>†</sup> All dollar and tonnage amounts are based on the numbers at the end of 2002. Recycling Revenue was computed using an average of revenue from 1996 through 2002. In 2002, there were 96,909 tons of garbage, 32,462 tons of yardwaste and 17,816 tons of recyclables.

<sup>‡</sup> The total cost, revenue generated or avoided cost has been averaged across all households which was 121,428 in 2002.

	Garbage		Recyclables		Yardwaste	
<b>January</b>	7,962	83%	1,577	17%	-	0.0%
<b>February</b>	6,448	85%	1,152	15%	-	0.0%
<b>March</b>	7,587	85%	1,300	15%	-	0.0%
<b>April</b>	8,287	55%	1,721	12%	4,921	33%
<b>May</b>	9,193	53%	1,524	9%	6,700	38%
<b>June</b>	8,096	60%	1,358	10%	4,026	30%
<b>July</b>	9,055	65%	1,598	11%	3,276	24%
<b>August</b>	8,060	69%	1,301	11%	2,400	20%
<b>September</b>	8,386	68%	1,325	11%	2,698	21%
<b>October</b>	8,315	57%	1,680	12%	4,468	31%
<b>November</b>	7,606	51%	1,427	10%	5,737	39%
<b>December</b>	8,878	80%	1,416	13%	852	7%
<b>Total 2003</b>	<b>97,873</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>17,380</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>35,078</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Total 2002</b>	<b>96,909</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>17,816</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>32,462</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total 2001</b>	<b>97,973</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>18,851</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>34,686</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Total 2000</b>	<b>94,717</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>20,253</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>32,185</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total 1999</b>	<b>92,512</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>19,582</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>31,761</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total 1998</b>	<b>87,734</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>19,543</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>35,247</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Total 1997</b>	<b>86,022</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>18,958</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>30,411</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total 1996</b>	<b>81,718</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>20,258</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>35,139</b>	<b>26%</b>