

Greenworks Goal #7 Topical Sessions, June 1, 2015



Background:

The Streets Department's mission is to provide clean and safe streets in a cost-effective and efficient manner. The department delivers a number of City services that are critical to maintaining the public health and safety in our communities. These essential services include, but are not limited to, curbside trash and recycling collection to over 540,000 households, maintaining all traffic control devices and street lighting, the construction and maintenance of 320 bridges and 2,525 miles of streets and highways and snow and ice removal.

The Sanitation Division is responsible for conducting an integrated solid waste management system that includes refuse collection, recycling and disposal of the City's waste materials. Annually, the division collects approximately 495,000 of curbside garbage, 125,000 tons of curbside recycling, and completes over 42,000 miles of mechanical streets cleaning. The Division also collects about 50,000 tons of rubbish annually from illegal dump sites, and disposes of abandoned tires, bulk items and household hazardous waste, along with managing community outreach and educational initiatives that encourage recycling and litter reduction. Some of the programs developed through the Sanitation Division include Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee (PMBC), UnLitter Us and Recycling Rewards.

Key Solid Waste Management Progress 2008 to Present...

- **State Recycling Goals Achieved:** The estimated overall (residential, commercial, C&D) *recycling* and diversion rate has averaged between 44% and 51% during the past number of years, surpassing the state goal of 35%.
- **Greenworks Goal:** The 70% *landfill* diversion *Greenworks* goal for all Philadelphia solid waste (residential, commercial, C&D) has been exceeded during the past four years. In fact, 100% of residential and short dump solid waste collected by the Streets Department, is either recycled, used as an engineered fuel product (SPEC Fuel), or delivered to a waste-to-energy facility.
- **Curbside Recycling Increase:** Curbside recycling tonnages have increased by 125% since 2008, going from about 55,000 tons per year to more than 125,000 in 2014.
- **Residential Disposal Decrease & Waste Reduction:** Residential garbage *disposal* has dropped by 20% and overall residential solid waste *generation* has decreased by 7% since 2008. Some of the decreases in solid waste generation have been because of a soft economy (less consumer spending) and the overall light-weighting trends in products and packaging.
- **Overall Solid Waste Generation is Level:** Overall (includes residential, commercial & construction and demolition) solid waste generation in Philadelphia has leveled off at around the 2.6 million tons per-year.
- **Outreach and Communications:** The Streets Department has made great strides in our recycling, solid waste, and anti-litter outreach and communications efforts. We continue to refresh our branding, and our website and online presence is better than ever.
- **Recycling Rewards Program:** About 200,000 households have signed up for our Philadelphia Recycling Rewards program. This is the biggest program of its kind in the U.S., and it continues to evolve, with

increasing focus on program outreach, events, and outreach planning. Recyclebank dedicates staff to Philadelphia, who work alongside us in MSB and who for all practical purposes City employees.

- **Solid Waste & Recycling Advisory Committee:** We have an engaged and reinvigorated Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee that meets monthly and has established subcommittees. SWRAC has not just provided comment on the City's Solid Waste Management Plan, but has also served as a sounding board and discussion forum for other solid waste and recycling policy issues.
- **National, Regional & State-Level Recognition:** The Department has earned recognition from national and state level organizations for some of our recycling programs, including from the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Pennsylvania Resources Council, and the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania.
- **Thought Leadership:** Our peers across the U.S. want to hear Philadelphia's story, and the Streets Department team has presented on our successes and challenges at numerous waste and recycling forums around the country including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, South by Southwest ECO, WasteExpo, Resource Recycling Conference, the Northeast Recycling Council, and others.

Progress, but Still Work to Do...

- **Commercial Recycling:** We have developed new tools for businesses to utilize to better ensure compliance and we are conducting outreach through business districts, commercial corridors, etc. We have also developed tools for large condominium and apartment complexes, and have begun to direct efforts and resources towards them.
- **Recycling in City Buildings and Agencies:** Recycling has been improved or reinstated at numerous City agencies and building during the past couple of years. We have worked with our Department of Public Property to hold building stakeholder meetings and identify areas that need new recycling bins.
- **Recycling in Philadelphia Schools:** My staff has provided technical assistance, planning, and outreach support to the school district as they reinstate district-wide recycling this fall.
- **Recycling at Events:** Many special events, including the Philadelphia Marathon, the Broad Street Run, now feature recycling for participants and spectators. Recycling diversion (including organics) has averaged about 86% during the Philadelphia Marathon during the past few years. That program is supported by hundreds of WasteWatchers volunteers under the direction of the Office of Sustainability.
- **Big Belly Program:** The Big Belly public space waste and recycling container network has grown to about 970 sites, with about ½ of them including recyclers. Because of the solar compaction, and sensors which indicate when the containers are full, this program has added efficiencies and resulted in cost savings in our City-wide collection program. More recyclers can be added to this program.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** This has been a significant focus of the department during the past couple of years, and I am proud to say that we have greatly improved our relationships and outreach with stakeholders, including civic and neighborhood associations, business districts, Council offices, and environmental organizations.

- **Mechanical Leaf Collections:** These were re-introduced during 2014 fall and early winter and resulted in collections of some 1,100 tons of leaves. The program also included 23 drop-off locations. The program saved approximately \$300,000 in overtime costs, and will likely be expanded next year.

Challenges & Limitations...

- **Fiscal challenges/budget:** Both the operating and capital budgets for the Streets Department have seen considerable reductions in the last few years. Our refuse collection fleet is short about 40 vehicles, which has impacted on-time collections in the neighborhoods, increased overtime, and added additional wear and tear on our trucks.
- **Changing solid waste stream:** The composition of the solid waste stream has changed significantly in the past 10 years, especially with the continued decline in daily newspaper circulation. Products and packaging in the waste stream are becoming lighter, more flexible, less valuable, and in many cases not recyclable. While a lighter solid waste stream is certainly a positive development, it will pose challenges for setting curbside recycling program goals going forward
- **Recyclables end-market pricing:** Due to macroeconomic issues, the City has gone from receiving a net revenue payment (as high as \$55 per ton in FY 2012) for our curbside recyclables, to having to pay around \$20 per ton for materials processing. While the City still realizes net fiscal benefits by recycling because of the savings achieved by not disposing of recyclables at \$60 per ton, high processing fees will continue to add budgetary pressures.
- **Recycling Ordinance:** The City's recycling ordinance is outdated and must be amended by City Council in order for new regulations to be developed that improve compliance with universal recycling requirements.

Opportunities & Priorities Going-Forward...

- ✓ Finalize solid waste management plan and examine alternative solid waste processing technologies.
- ✓ Assess organics recycling opportunities and challenges. Examine technologies, infrastructure, market capacity, and program costs as part of organics feasibility study.
- ✓ Examine opportunities to expand use of roll-out carts for recycling to help decrease litter and increase recycling participation.
- ✓ Support legislative actions to reduce the use and proliferation of single-use plastic bags. Examine legislative actions to reduce the use of polystyrene commercial food service packaging.
- ✓ Review legislative options for establishing container deposit system (aka 'bottle bill').
- ✓ Pursue legislative actions to update City's recycling ordinance.
- ✓ Support development of City buy-recycled and environmentally preferable purchasing policy.
- ✓ In order to reduce road and street side litter, issue regulations that extend residential property maintenance responsibilities to 18" from the curb-line.

- ✓ Improve intergovernmental coordination (school district, universities, SEPTA, PHA, etc.) on recycling and litter issues.
- ✓ Establish tire dealer licensing system in conjunction with L&I in order to decrease tire dumping.