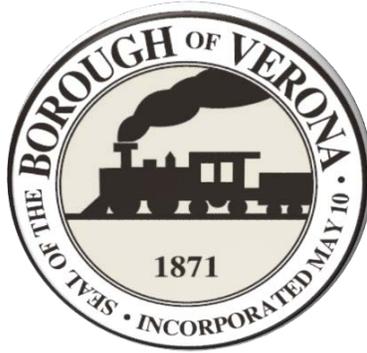


*Recycling Technical Assistance  
Project #541 June 2014*



Borough of  
Verona  
Allegheny County

GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN TO INTRODUCE RESIDENTIAL  
RECYCLING INTO THE LOCAL MUNICIPAL WASTE COLLECTION  
SERVICE CONTRACT

**Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection  
through the  
Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors.**

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## Introduction

The Recycling Technical Assistance Program is sponsored in partnership by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) through the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Governor’s Center for Local Government Services. Qualifying municipalities wishing to enhance their recycling, composting, and waste reduction programs are provided with professional support to assist them in achieving their goals and objectives. The Borough of Verona, Allegheny County requested technical assistance to determine the feasibility of revising the current waste collection contract. This is Phase II of the technical assistance project. The Phase I project introduced the Borough to a variety of options for a comprehensive collection program. It reviewed Pay-As-You-Throw components and rate structures. In Phase I recycling collection methodologies and choices for handling bulky waste and yard waste were evaluated. To learn more about that part of the project and for a detailed description of the conditions in the Borough, refer to the Recycling Technical Assistance Report # 485.

While Phase I focused on education and feasibility, Phase II takes the program to the implementation stage. Specifically, sparked by the efforts of a grassroots campaign, Verona determined that the first enhancement to its program would be to improve the recycling opportunities available to its residents.

Phase II of the project makes residential curbside recycling collection a reality and introduces a greater array of materials to recycle. It also ensures that recycling opportunities are guaranteed for commercial establishments.

Some practical legal elements are incorporated into the overall collection program. Many of these items are designed to protect the interests of the Borough and its residents, while clarifying the expectations of the municipality to the service provider.

As the consultant selected to manage the project, Nestor Resources, Inc. is pleased to submit to the Borough of Verona this summary of the process they took to advance the recycling program. In addition, Nestor Resources is happy to have been given the opportunity to support those efforts. This report includes background data, resources and references, as well as explanations and justifications for the consultant’s suggestions.



## Project Scope of Work

**Task #1.** The consultant met with Borough representatives on several occasions to coach them through the transition process. Topics included how to present their ideas to Borough Council, how to discuss the benefits of recycling with the community, interactive exercises to promote single stream automated collection, and what to expect during the bidding process.

**Task #2.** The consultant made a series of presentations to Borough Council regarding recycling communities and opportunities that already exist in the Alle-Kiski Valley region. The presentations included different methods of collection, how each impacts cost and the competitive bidding process.

Local recycling outlets and transporters were engaged to discuss the types and availability of services that could be offered, the impact on local costs and if there could be any potential revenue thru material sales. Local municipalities were surveyed to determine if there was an interest in joint contracting scenarios.

**Task #3 :** Based on meetings and discussions with Borough representatives and local service providers, and the Borough Council, the consultant developed a request for bids that outlined the service options that best meet the needs of the Borough. In addition, the consultant provided support to Borough Council during pre-bid conferences and to evaluate the proposals submitted. Nestor Resources also helped the service provider and the Borough representatives in the development of an implementation plan for cart selection, deployment and public education.

**Task #4.** Nestor Resources, Inc prepared and submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) for review and comment, a draft project report, which summarized the consultant's findings and recommendations. Based on the PADEP 's input, the consultant revised and finalized the report. Both the Borough and the PADEP were provided with the report in electronic format. In addition, a hard copy of the document was provided to the Borough.

## Verona Borough At-A-Glance

**V**erona Borough is located in Western Pennsylvania in an area referred to by locals as the Alle-Kiski Valley. It takes its name from the rivers which flow through the towns in that area, the Allegheny and the Kiskiminetas. Verona Borough is situated along the Allegheny River, which serves as the Borough's northwest boundary. The Borough of Oakmont is adjacent to Verona to the north, with Penn Hills serving as the southern and eastern borders. Verona is a small community with just slightly more than 3,000 residents.

Similar to other communities of the Allegheny-Kiskiminetas Valley, Verona was once a strong industrial manufacturing center. The population that settled in the community, to take advantage of the prosperity at the time, is now aging. In addition, with the loss of well-paying blue collar jobs, the incomes of local families have suffered. Approximately 16% of the population are categorized as senior citizens and 15% of the total population live on incomes that fall below the poverty level. Without the influx of young families and the ability to retain pending retirees in their residences, the Borough faces a serious decline in population and tax revenues.

To stop the exodus, civic leaders have urged the Borough to consider a number of programs to revitalize the community. A downtown beautification project, proactive enforcement of zoning and housing codes, and enhancements to public services have been suggested.

One such campaign, which evolved directly as a result of these grassroots efforts was a push for curbside recycling collection. Nearly twenty five years after the enactment of Act 101, Verona remained without curbside recycling in spite of the availability of those services in the surrounding communities. This project is the second phase of that initiative.



The resident recycling committee deserves full credit for their diligence in investigating the feasibility of various options and bringing a well thought out plan to Council for consideration. It is likely that recycling would have remained as a drop-off program if not for their efforts. The results of this project are proof that changes in local government policies and programs can be influenced when citizens actively participate in the process.

### Development of the Program Specifications

Phase I was an effort in fact finding and exploration of options. Phase II facilitated the development of collection specifications and a contract. It included a number of informational public meetings with Council and local residents. The consultant was tasked with conducting the entire bidding process, which included pre-bid meetings and interaction with the prospective bidders, as well as the bid review and evaluation to select the lowest responsible bidder.

### Cart Selection and Deployment Process

#### Verona – It is Time to Roll-out Curbside Recycling!



The single most important part of launching an automated collection program for waste and/or recyclables is the implementation of the cart selection and delivery system. Mistakes which occur in this part of the program can have a devastating and lasting impact on public acceptance of the program. Foresight and planning are crucial to avoid problems.

How carts are introduced to the public is important. The first introductory communication must be friendly, easy to understand and uncomplicated. The selection process is better when there is a default choice that will apply. Since the ratio of responses in any survey tends to be low, the default mechanism alleviates the need for the majority of residents to respond. This simplifies deliveries and reduces the amount of calls to the municipality's or the service provider's

customer service personnel. Appendix A includes a sample of the introductory communication utilized by Verona Borough

## Summary of Project Findings and Recommendations

This project was initiated to create an integrated waste management system in Verona Borough. Specifically, the project provided the necessary support to assist the Borough in incorporating recycling services and service provider accountability into the current residential garbage collection contract. In addition, it provided the Borough with an updated ordinance that made the responsibilities of residents and business owners more clear. The Phase I report covered in depth numerous options and justifications to be considered in the development of an integrated waste management program. Therefore, this report primarily highlights the components actually incorporated into the collection bid and contract specifications for the Borough, and the legal mechanisms to enforce it.

Following is a summary of the outcome of the overall project, the important features of Verona's residential collection contract, and highlights of the solid waste and recycling ordinance:

- The Borough relies on the private sector for collection, processing, and disposal services. As required in Pennsylvania, those services are secured through a competitive bidding process.
- Based on the Borough's population, Verona is not mandated under Act 101 to provide curbside recycling to its residents. The Borough has traditionally excluded recycling from its residential collection contract and but the most current service provider offered a voluntary drop-off program at no added cost.
- The overwhelming response to the drop-off programs was an indicator that residents would recycle when provided with the opportunity. However, the volume of material was more than the storage space could handle and the frequency of collections had to be increased beyond what the service provider had offered.
- In spite of Council's fears of a price increase, recycling collection was incorporated into the waste collection contract for the period beginning June 2014 through May 2019. The price did increase \$1.85 per month, which is reasonable to expect for recycling collection, including the cost of the cart. Recyclables are collected every other week on the same scheduled day as waste collection.
- As part of the recycling program, the service provider was required to supply a wheeled and lidded recycling cart to each single family detached home and housing with 4 or less attached units.
- All residents pay the same flat fee for this service regardless of how much they dispose or recycle throughout the year. An option to rent a wheeled waste cart in lieu of unlimited waste collection was included.

- To control costs and improve the overall appearance of the community, bulky waste and white goods collection was reduced to one item per home per month. This collection occurs on the first week on each month.



- Because of the low income population, service providers indicated the higher than average number of delinquencies. This has traditionally had a negative impact on the per unit cost of service, causing honest citizens to pay more to subsidize the losses. It is important to note that surrounding communities were reluctant to partner on a joint contract for fear that their rates would be affected by this situation.
- Therefore as an incentive to pay in a timely fashion, residents are now offered a 10% discount if the annual service fee is paid in full by the end of the first month of service. In addition, service is allowed to be discontinued after a 90 day delinquency, with penalties for reestablishing service. Property liens are also allowable when other measures to collect payments fail.
- A new solid waste ordinance was drafted for the municipality that made participation in (i.e. payment for) the collection program a requirement. Because Verona has a high number of rental properties, which contribute to the payment delinquencies, the new ordinance requires landlords to pay for waste collection directly, rather than tenants.
- Two new components of the new ordinance include a requirement for all haulers to include recycling as part of the commercial waste collection services, and reporting requirements for businesses and haulers.

## Conclusions

**L**ocal government committees can serve as a catalyst for change. When citizens are engaged in the process of transitioning policies and programs, elected officials have stronger justification for their implementation.

In this Technical Assistance Project, Nestor Resources, Inc. provided the support and guidance

necessary to validate to Verona Borough officials the suggestions and desires presented by representatives of the community. This is the first step in implementing the suggested improvements from Phase I of this project. To achieve the other changes, the resident recycling committee must maintain its active involvement. If that occurs, Nestor Resources is confident that Verona residents will experience a higher quality of life and a sustainable community.

## Appendix A Introductory Letter

Fellow Residents of Verona Borough:

Recently, Verona's residential waste collection contract was set to expire. We are pleased to report that after a competitive bidding process, the Verona Borough Council has approved a new five-year contract with Waste Management, our current service provider. Two other waste hauling and disposal companies expressed an interest in servicing the Borough. However, **Waste Management, offered the bid with the lowest prices.** Nevertheless, as we are all experiencing with other products and services, the price for waste collection in Verona is increasing slightly.

The approved contract features some service changes and enhancements. These are a direct result of an aggressive grassroots campaign by your fellow residents, who petitioned Borough Council to offer services that residents across Allegheny County have come to expect. A summary of the service and other important facts is enclosed here for your current and future reference. Please read the attached flyers and take a moment to familiarize yourself with the way it will work and what to expect.

There are some new service options. Because of their popularity with residents in other communities, Waste Management will have wheeled **96 Gallon GARBAGE Carts Available to Rent for an added fee, as an option and not a requirement.** The **96 Gallon GARBAGE Carts** being offered strictly as a convenience, and **only for those who may be interested.** You are free to continue using your current garbage receptacle. In addition, to keep the streets of our community neater and cleaner, bulk items, like refrigerators, furniture and mattresses, etc. will be collected only on the first full week of each month.

One of the major features of the new service is that, beginning in September, Verona will finally join the majority of local communities like Oakmont, Plum, Aspinwall, Blawnox, Lower Burrell, and Penn Hills, etc. in offering curbside recycling to its residents. The response to the Borough's pilot drop-off recycling program has been such an overwhelming success, that it has been difficult to provide enough storage space and collections for the volume of materials the community delivers to the site. Based on the participation in that program, it makes sense to include the convenience of curbside recycling along with our waste collection.

***The good news is that you won't pay extra if you and your family recycle.*** Better yet, the Borough will be rewarded from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for every ton of material recycled here. That money can help to support other community programs for Verona residents. So, the more you recycle, the more you and the community will benefit.

Recycling collection will occur every other Friday, on the same day that your waste is collected each week. To get everybody started recycling as much as possible a **Free 96 Gallon RECYCLING Cart will be delivered directly to each home** beginning in August. All of the items that can be recycled can be placed in this one container. The cart can be conveniently wheeled to the curb or alleyway, depending on where you put your trash on collection day, by anyone in the household. It has a lid to keep out animals, and insects. It is also weatherproof. The list of material that can be recycled is shown in the attached flyer.

We understand that some households may generate less waste and recyclables than others. So, if you feel that a smaller recycling cart is more appropriate for your needs, you have another choice. Information about the cart selection is provided on one of the flyers included with this letter. **To take full advantage of the recycling program NO ACTION IS REQUIRED. Waste Management will provide you with a Free 96 Gallon RECYCLING Cart.**

Otherwise, to get a 64 gallon recycling cart, please complete and return the tear-off reply form at the bottom of the attached flyer no later than July 1. You can either mail it back or drop it off at the Borough's Municipal Office. If you have questions, or want to exercise some of the other service options shown on the attached flyer, feel free to contact Waste Management. **More information will follow as we get closer to launching the program in September.**

Verona Borough Council

## CURBSIDE RECYCLING IS COMING TO VERONA IN SEPTEMBER 2014.



As part of your collection service, in August, Waste Management will distribute recycling carts to every household. The carts have wheels that make it easier for anybody to take their recyclables to the curb. Lids prevent blowing litter on collection days and protect the material from animals and rain.

The recycling carts are designed to handle the full mix of materials that can now be recycled, including bulky material like cardboard and large plastic jugs and bottles. All you have to do is put everything that can be recycled in one container and roll it out to the curb. More information about what can be recycled will be sent later.



**The carts come in two sizes - 96 gallon and 64 gallon.**

As you can see from the picture at the right, there is just a slight difference in their dimensions.

To encourage Verona residents to recycle all of the materials allowable, WM will deliver the **96 RECYCLING GALLON** cart to all households. However, as a courtesy, WM will make the 64 gallon recycling cart available, but only to those who notify the Borough of their preference, using the form below.

### To get the 96 GALLON RECYCLING CART & maximize your recycling DO NOTHING.



If you prefer the 64 gallon recycling cart you must cut and return this form no later than July 1<sup>st</sup> to the Verona Borough Municipal Building, 736 East Railroad Avenue, Verona, Pennsylvania 15147,

Please deliver a 64 gallon recycling cart to the address shown below.	
Name	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Phone	
Email	
Sign Here	

