

Opportunities for Recycling Education and Program Expansion

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SCS ENGINEERS

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1 BACKGROUND

Thompson Township (Township) is a small community in Southcentral Pennsylvania located in Fulton County. The 2020 Decennial Census counted 1,029 people living in the Township in 486 housing units. The Township's size and rural location does not make it a Pennsylvania Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act mandatory recycling community.

The Township operates a subscription-based single-stream recycling drop-off program. The Township has one roll-off container located at the Township equipment yard where residents subscribing to the recycling program may drop-off recyclable materials. The recycling drop-off site is open every Saturday morning for a couple hours. The site is staffed during operating hours to screen materials for drop-off and confirm only residents subscribing to the program participate. Residents pay an annual fee to participate in the recycling program.

Township staff regularly monitor the fullness of the recycling container. When the container reaches capacity, a contractor is dispatched to collect the roll-off container and transport the materials to Apple Valley Waste in Hagerstown, Maryland, approximately 40 miles southeast of the Township.

The Township requests recycling technical assistance to bring attention to the program in order to encourage more resident participation. Additionally, the Township has received feedback from residents expressing an interest in a glass recycling service. The Township requests recycling technical assistance to identify and explore glass recycling options.

2 SUMMARY OF WORK

Task 1 – Kick-Off Meeting and Site Visit

SCS staff traveled to Thompson Township to meet with Township staff to discuss the project. SCS requested information and data on the Township's existing solid waste and recycling collection programs for residents, including material quantities collected, number of pulls annually, equipment used, and program costs. The kick-off meeting was used to fill-in data gaps, discuss the content of the public opinion survey (Task 2), and possibly meet with the Township's contracted hauler to discuss operations. The site visit included a tour of the Township's existing drop-off site and a detailed discussion of the operations.

Task 2 – Recycling Education and Public Opinion Survey

For this task, SCS worked closely with Thompson Township staff to draft an article highlighting the benefits of recycling and a description of the Township's existing recycling program, including how residents can sign-up. The article is expected to be published in the local newspaper, *Fulton County News*, which is made available to all households in the Township. As part of this task, SCS worked with Township staff to prepare a short recycling public opinion survey to gauge residents' familiarity with the Township's recycling program and understand what barriers might exist to participating. The survey was designed to be implemented electronically. In addition, SCS created a postcard to educate residents of the program, accepted materials, and general recycling guidelines.

Task 3 – Glass Collection Options

The Township is interested in exploring the feasibility of adding glass container collection services to their existing recycling program. For this task, SCS identified and described glass collection program options the Township may consider implementing. When appropriate, SCS contacted

companies/organizations (i.e. Pennsylvania Resources Council, etc.) that provide glass recycling to understand what types of programs and services they offer. Descriptions of each identified program option will be included along with key operational aspects such as collection frequency, transportation options, containers, and trucks/equipment. When possible, we will provide planning level cost information for program operation/services.

Task 4 – Final Report

The results of the analysis and activities completed in Tasks 1-3 are detailed in this final report to the Township and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The initial report was prepared as draft for the Township and DEP’s comments and edits. Upon receipt of feedback, the report was revised and made final. The final report was transmitted to DEP and the Township.

3 RESULTS

KICK-OFF MEETING AND SITE VISIT

The Township drop-off recycling program is located at the Thompson Township equipment yard. SCS staff met with the Township Recycling Coordinator at the drop-off facility for the kick-off meeting and site visit.

During the site visit, SCS inquired about the details of the current subscription program run by the Township. Out of the nearly 500 households within Thompson Township only about 40 households subscribe to the program to use the drop off container, some from outside township limits. The subscription fee to the program is less than \$10 per month. Thompson Township does not have haulers providing curbside recycling, so residents who do not participate in the program likely dispose materials.



Sign detailing accepted materials at the drop-off site. Note glass is not accepted.



Recyclable materials in the drop-off program roll-off container.

The cost to subscribe to the program covers the use of the container and the transportation of the container, by Parks Refuse, to Apple Valley Waste in Hagerstown, Maryland. With current participation levels, the container is emptied around five times per year. The drop-off facility is open for subscribers to deliver recyclable materials every Saturday with a Township representative present and available to answer questions and assist in a convenient drop-off.

During the site visit it was noted that the sign (to the left) and program informational materials (Fulton County Website) were not clear about the acceptance of glass in the drop-off program. The Recycling Coordinator stated that the main barriers

reducing resident participation were the limited hours the facility accepts materials and the annual subscription fee.

RECYCLING EDUCATION AND SURVEY



Roll-off container for subscribers to deposit recyclable materials.

The Thompson Township drop-off recycling program is limited in their ability to market the program to residents. The Township does not have a webpage to inform residents of the services provided. To inform residents of the program, SCS wrote a newspaper article to be published in the local Fulton County Newspaper to reach residents and promote the recycling program. The article highlights materials accepted at the drop-off location and general recycling guidance. **Appendix A** includes the recycling article to be published in the Fulton County Newspaper.

SCS also drafted a public opinion survey for the Township to include with the newspaper article. The survey was created with the intention to gauge residents' willingness to participate in the Township sponsored drop off recycling program and identify barriers restricting residents' access to the recycling program. The results of the survey could potentially be used to show Township officials the value in providing a recycling program to residents. Upon reviewing the draft survey with the Township Recycling Coordinator, it was decided that the survey would not be used to gauge resident support for the drop-off recycling program at this time. However, should the Township wish to engage residents and collect feedback about recycling in the community, the survey developed is included in this report. **Appendix B** includes the public opinion survey drafted for this report.

Instead of distributing the survey to residents, SCS developed a mailer for the Township to further promote the current recycling program. The mailer included information about program accepted materials, program details, and general guidance on recycling best practices. The mailer was designed to allow residents to keep it with the list of accepted materials near the recycling bin to help avoid the practice of wishcycling. **Appendix C** includes the postcard developed to promote the program to Township residents.

GLASS COLLECTION OPTIONS

Option 1: Glass Bunker

Adams County in Pennsylvania hosts monthly glass recycling drop-off located behind The Adams County Emergency Services building. On the first Saturday of every month the site is open for residents to drop off glass bottles and jars for recycling. Hours of operation depend on the availability of trained volunteers to assist residents in the drop-off process. Once sufficient glass materials are collected, haulers will transport the glass to a glass recycling facility at no charge to the county.



Glass collection bunker used in Adams County, PA

To follow the example of Adams County, Thompson Township would have to devote additional space at the equipment yard, or another Township owned location to build a glass collection bunker. The bunker should be capable of storing at least 20 tons of glass, the quantity required for some vendors to build and service the site at either low or zero cost to the Township. The glass bunker should be built on Township owned property that includes equipment to load glass materials into a container delivered to CAP Glass. The recommendation is a bunker 20' wide x 24' deep x 8' tall using roughly 40 concrete blocks. Below are some glass bunker set ups that other recyclers have built in the past.



Example Bunker Number One

5 block deep x 3 block wide x 3 block high - 39 blocks needed (30' x 18' x 6')



Example Bunker Number Two
5 block deep x 10 block wide x 3 block high – 90 blocks needed (30' x 60' x 6')



Example Bunker Number Three
5 block deep x 5 block wide x 3 block high – 45 blocks needed (30' x 30' x 6')

Option 2: Roll-off Collection

The Township could opt for a permanent glass recycling roll off container for residents to drop off glass bottles and jars during the current drop-off hours. This option would function very similarly to the current drop-off recycling subscription program offered by the Township. The extra recycling roll-off containers (pictured below), if owned by the Township, could be repurposed for the collection of glass materials. Otherwise, the container would cost the Township more upfront and require the Township to coordinate the hauling of the container to a glass recycler in the area.



Extra roll-off containers located at the Thompson Township Equipment Yard

Option 3: Traveling Glass Bin



Image of the CAP traveling glass recycling bin

If the Township does not have the space to construct a bunker large enough to contain at least 20 tons of glass, the Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) provides the option of a traveling glass bin to municipalities. Municipalities pay a fee to host the glass recycling bin for one week before moving to its next destination. During that week, residents would be encouraged to drop-off glass bottles and jars into the container. The bin is accessible from Saturday through Thursday during daylight hours.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Thompson Township is limited in ways to market their recycling program to the residents causing difficulty to increase participation levels. The main goal is to increase recycling access for all in the community.

The signage at the drop-off facility did not clearly convey that glass containers are not currently accepted at the facility and Fulton County recycling educational materials, that include Thompson Township, suggest glass is accepted throughout the county. SCS recommends the Township to update signage at the facility and educational materials for residents to clearly understand acceptable materials. It is also recommended to consider the addition of a small garbage can on-site for folks to dispose plastic garbage bags used to transport materials to the site.



Image of materials collected from Thompson Township residents.

Expanding access and membership to the current program and the potential addition of a glass recycling program will allow the Township to receive increased funding through the Act 101, Section 904 Recycling Performance Grant. This grant provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection provides funding for communities with recycling programs. The amount awarded is based on the total tons recycled and the recycling rate of the municipality. Funds received through the 904 grant would help offset program costs and may allow for a smaller subscription fee for residents to participate.

Appendix A

Thompson Township Recycling Newspaper Article

Fulton County News
Thompson Township Recycling Article
January 10th, 2025

Why Recycle?

Recycling is an action that YOU can take to contribute to a more environmentally friendly and sustainable community. Recycling benefits Thompson Township in many ways. It decreases landfilled waste, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, creates jobs, and saves natural resources. Reducing materials disposed prevents emissions that result from decomposing waste in landfills. It also keeps these materials in circulation and conserves these resources for further use. Materials that are diverted and recycled can be used to produce new products facilitating a circular economy. Products made from recycled material often require less energy to produce and result in reduced emissions and harm to the environment caused by extracting virgin material. Additionally, research by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance estimates that on a per-ton basis, recovery and processing of recyclable materials sustains 10 times more jobs than landfilling or incineration¹. These added jobs increase opportunities and resources that expand the local economy and build community in Thompson Township.

Program Specifics

The Township operates a single-stream recycling drop-off program for residents who register to participate for a nominal fee. Subscribers are allowed to bring an unlimited amount of clean recyclable materials to the Township equipment yard located at [insert address] every Saturday. The site is open from [redacted] to [redacted]. Township staff are available to assist with recycling and answer your questions. Recyclable materials accepted include the following:

- Clean/dry Cardboard boxes
- Clean/dry paper; paperboard packaging such as cereal boxes and beer/soda cases; newspapers; junk mail; office paper; magazines and catalogs; paper bags
- Plastic bottles with necks smaller than their bases
- Metal cans and containers, including empty aerosol cans



Figure 1 Sign detailing acceptable recycling materials. Note glass is not accepted.

¹ Recycling Means Business, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Feb. 1, 2002.

Fulton County News
Thompson Township Recycling Article
January 10th, 2025

Materials collected at the drop-off site are transported to a recycling center to be sorted and recycled. More information on how to sign up and materials accepted through the program can be found by contacting Greg Reineke at the Thompson Township office.

Recycling Guidelines

It is important that only acceptable recyclable materials are brought to the drop-off container in Thompson Township. Improper recycling contaminates acceptable recyclable materials and prevents those materials from being properly recycled. Below are general tips for participating in the Thompson Township recycling program:


- Flatten all clean and dry paper/cardboard boxes. No pizza boxes or other boxes with oil or food residue.
- Clean bottles and cans before placing them in the recycling bin. A quick rinse with warm water immediately upon emptying will typically remove most food debris.
- Do not bag recyclable materials in plastic bags; if transporting recyclable materials to the drop-off site in plastic bags, dump the materials out of the bag and into the container.
- Recyclable items must be clean and dry; empty liquids and food items from containers before placing them in the recycling container.
- Keep a list of program specific accepted materials near your in-home recycling bin to avoid confusion about what is recyclable.
- Only place program specific acceptable materials in the recycling container; avoid the practice of wishcycling. Wishcycling is placing materials in the recycle bin that do not belong in hopes that the materials will be recycled. This increases contamination and the likelihood that all materials will be disposed.

Sign-up and Recycle!

To sign up to participate in the Township recycling program, please call [phone number]. Note that there is a nominal fee to participate in the program.



Figure 2 Roll-off container for Township drop-off recyclables.



Appendix B

Public Opinion Survey for Thompson Township

Recycling in Thompson Township

* Required

1. Are you a resident of Thompson Township? *

Yes

No

2. Where do you live? *

3. How important is it to have recycling service available to you? *

Extremely important

Somewhat important

Neutral

Somewhat not important

Extremely not important

4. How important is it to have recycling service available to you? *

Extremely important

Somewhat important

Neutral

Somewhat not important

Extremely not important

5. Do you recycle at your home? *

Yes

No

6. What do you do with your recyclable materials? *

Collected by private hauler curbside

Transport to Township drop-off center located at (ADDRESS)

Transport to other recycling center

Other

7. Are you aware the Township provides a drop-off recycling program at the equipment yard located at (ADDRESS)? *

Yes

No

8. What barriers prevent you from participating in the drop-off recycling program? *

None, I participate

Nominal fee

Limited hours

Lack of space for storage of recyclables

Don't recycle

Not aware of the program

Other

9. Are you willing to pay a nominal fee to recycle? *

Yes

No

Maybe

10. How much are you willing to pay per month for the convenience of drop-off recycling? *

- \$35+
- \$20
- \$10
- \$5
- Other

11. Would you be willing to transport glass bottles and jars to a special bin at the equipment yard (ADDRESS)? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

12. How can the Township better support recycling? *

13. Do you have any additional comments on recycling in Thompson Township?

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.

Appendix C

Thompson Township Drop-off Recycling Program Postcard

Thompson Township Drop-off Recycling Program

Subscribe* to our drop-off recycling program!



Location: Thompson Township Equipment Yard, [insert address]

Open: Every Saturday [insert hours]

Contact: Greg Reineke at the Thompson Township Office

Phone: (717) 294-6423 Email: gregjoat@gmail.com

*Note nominal fee required for participation

Accepted Recyclable Materials:

- Clean/dry cardboard boxes
- Clean/dry paper
- Plastic bottles with necks smaller than their bases
- Metal cans and containers, including empty aerosol cans

Recycling Guidelines:

- Flatten all clean and dry paper/cardboard boxes. No boxes with oil or food residue.
- Clean bottles and cans before placing them in the recycling bin.
- Do not bag recyclable materials in plastic bags
- Recyclable items must be clean and dry; empty liquids and food items from containers.
- Keep the list above of accepted materials near your in-home recycling bin to avoid confusion about what is recyclable.
- Only place materials, listed above, in the recycling container