

**FOREST HILLS
BOROUGH
COMMERICAL
RECYCLING PROGRAM
REVIEW**

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*Available upon request.

1.0 Background

The Borough of Forest Hills (Borough) is located in Allegheny County on the eastern border of Pittsburgh. The Borough is a mandated community under Act 101 having a population in excess of 7,000 people. The Borough's current commercial recycling is not being supported by a number of its businesses. The overall participation rate is low.

2.0 Introduction

The Borough is a suburb of Pittsburgh and its commercial sector consists of a wide array of, primarily, small businesses, e.g.: offices, clothing stores, grocery stores, a variety of shops, restaurants, repair shops, etc. The Borough's commercial recycling program was initiated in 1991. Given the nature and variety of business in the Borough, many changes have occurred in the commercial sector over the past decade, e.g.: businesses closing or changing ownership and new business starting out. The Borough desires to improve/update their recycling ordinance to insure compliance with Act 101 and improve participation in their commercial recycling program.

An initial meeting was held with the Borough Manager to gather historical and current information regarding the Borough's commercial recycling program. A copy of the Borough's Recycling Ordinance, establishing and regulating the recycling program was also provided by the Borough for review and comment.

3.0 Program Evaluation

Following a review of the program information and data, a second meeting was held with Borough representatives. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss apparent weaknesses in the existing program and to suggest improvements that could increase participation. Examples of educational materials were provided (brochures, information sources, program establishment documents and media announcements, etc.) for consideration. A preliminary draft of education information program guideline was also provided.

It should be recognized that it is, at best, challenging from both the functional and political standpoint to administrate a commercial recycling program for a few hundred small businesses.

One of the challenges is that many small commercial enterprises may think they need not participate in a recycling program due to the fact that they:

- Don't generate a large volume of recyclable material;
- Think it will be too costly to recycle;
- Assume the notifications and annual report request sent by the Borough was a computer glitch;
- Know several other commercial operations who are not participating;

- Think the program only applies to industries, large office complexes, supermarkets, the big businesses, etc.
- The owner/operators of the business just haven't gotten the message.

4.0 The Message

Getting the message to the intended participants is critical. As with any mandated community operating and/or administrating recycling programs, whether they are residential or commercial, a comprehensive and sustained educational effort is paramount to program success. The key words are comprehensive and sustained.

- **Comprehensive** – Each particular recycling program must get the message to its intended participants. To get the message to the targeted participants, one must first identify them. The listing of commercial establishments developed by the Borough (approximately 200) is a good start. It is suggested that the list be crossed referenced with information provided by collectors (listing of customers), the current tax roles and even business-to-business or yellow page directories.

Next the message is developed. The message must be concise, direct and easily understood addressing all aspects of the program. Explaining why the program is being initiated is important. “Why” is important, as an education program must detail the requirements and benefits for participation. The message must be crafted in a manner that generates interest and develops enthusiasm among the

targeted participants. Not everyone will be enthused by the many benefits derived from recycling. This is one reason “why” each commercial enterprise should also understand it is the law and that the Borough now intends to enforce it, when necessary. Once “why” is established, the who, what, where, when and how to, of the program must also be clearly and succinctly conveyed.

- **Sustained** – When the commercial recycling program was initiated in 1991, an effort was made by the Borough to inform and educate its commercial sector regarding mandatory recycling. (A number of businesses acting as good corporate citizens participated). Over time, the message has faded, noted changes have occurred within the commercial community (opening and closing of businesses, changes in location, etc.) and enforcement of the recycling ordinance hasn’t occurred, the result, low participation levels. The recycling message must be reinforced on a regular basis: at a minimum every 6 months (as required by Act 101), to maintain interest and enthusiasm. Additionally, the facts that participation is required, there are penalties for not participating, and that the Borough will take appropriate action will get the attention of even the most reluctant. This message may also need to be repeated on a regular basis.

5.0 Revive The Program

The Borough can use the planned adoption of a revised and updated recycling ordinance to rekindle the flame. Be enthusiastic in preparation of public announcements, extolling

the many benefits of commercial recycling and identify the benefits to the commercial sector and the community as a whole.

Start out with educational material that creates a positive “get involved” attitude by portraying individual participation as the key to a successful recycling program. The message should briefly and concisely provide the program’s goals, objectives and requirements.

It is recommended that a letter of notification be sent, or better yet, hand delivered to each business (participating and non-participating). A copy of appropriate sections of the Borough’s revised ordinance should also be included. The Borough may want to include a “We Recycle” sticker for businesses who are currently participating and a firm warning notice to non-participants.

A brochure should accompany the letter relaying the general message as well as answers to commonly asked questions.

The following is a list of items suggested to be included in the brochure:

- An introduction explaining the requirements of the program;
- The goals of the program;
- Recycling is positive for business, the economy, the environment and its law;
- Why each individual business regardless of size is important to the success of the program;

- List of designated materials to be recycled;
- Recommendations for establishing a recycling program (How To Tips);
- A listing of available information to assist in developing a program;
- Questions commonly asked and answers;
- The name and telephone number of “who to contact” if questions or problems arise.

To insure that each business is notified, the Borough could send the notice certified mail. Certified delivery is extremely costly, however, volunteers are a more economical and effective way but not the Boy Scouts this time (they do a great job for residential programs). Suggested groups the Borough should solicit to help are local business associations, Chamber of Commerce, the Jaycees (an energetic group) the Rotary or Kiwanis Club. These groups know your business and are oriented to public service. This is a good project for the organization(s) and the hand delivery of the information will certainly have a positive impact on the recipients. This type of distribution shows community support for the program along with municipal commitment (suggest that Borough Council assist and also the Mayor).

This effort could also provide the Borough a current listing of businesses. The volunteers could be requested to verify the status of businesses currently listed and add any new business.

Press/media releases should be distributed two (2) to three (3) weeks prior to the distribution of the information. This information should be presented in a positive and

attention getting way to gain the interest of the general public (customers) and the targeted audience (businesses). The message should be publicly announced, at meetings, and posters or banners could herald the event, use statements that catch the eye. For example: “The Lions Are Coming” or “Jaycees to Talk Trash with Local Business”. This type of eye catching statement gives deserved credit to the organization(s) and raises enthusiasm. List participating business in a program promotion, e.g.: news release from a public meeting or distribute posters listing commercial recycling program participants.

Copies of examples of education/information materials e.g.: brochures, how to manuals and media information is contained in Appendix A. The examples contained in Appendix A are from various municipalities and have worked successfully. Also included in Appendix A are Fact Sheets and Promotional material produced by the DEP. Web sites for DEP (www.dep.state.pa.us) and the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania (www.proprecycles.org) provide a wealth of information.

It is also recommended that, a notification letter be sent to each registered or licensed waste/recyclable collector servicing the commercial sector. The letter should detail their responsibilities under the ordinance, i.e.: to provide collection services for recyclables, provide the Borough with a listing of commercial sector clients and to report the types and amounts of materials recycled by each.

6.0 Recycling Ordinance Review

A review of the Borough's recycling ordinance was conducted and comments and suggested revisions were submitted to the Borough. The Borough's solicitor was also provided a copy of a draft waste management/recycling ordinance. The draft was prepared for recently mandated municipalities. The draft was modified to meet the Borough's needs and the requirements of Act 101 for mandated municipalities. Updated supporting documents for licensing of collectors of waste and recyclables and reporting form for recyclables were included with the draft ordinance for the Borough's consideration. The draft ordinance is currently under consideration and it is anticipated that it will be adopted in June of 2003.

7.0 Observations

The following are observations were made and conclusions were reached during the work effort:

- The Borough's recycling ordinance requires updating and modifications to better address the commercial sector and additional requirements addressing the role and responsibilities of collectors of recyclables.
- The Borough lacks a comprehensive education/information program that would make the commercial sector aware of their responsibilities to recycle and assist them in development of a recycling program.
- The existing recycling ordinance is not enforced and therefore it does not induce compliance in the commercial section.

8.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The Borough institute a comprehensive education/information campaign targeting the commercial sector (guidelines are included in this report, see Appendix A);
- The Borough adopt the proposed revised ordinance to strengthen and update their recycling program and to assure compliance with Act 101;
- A committee be formed whose sole purpose is to improve and monitor recycling efforts to include public education efforts. This group could be a subcommittee of the Borough's Environmental Committee. It is suggested that a staff member be assigned to assist the committee and act as recycling coordinator;
- A Section 902 Grant Application be prepared and submitted to the PADEP. The Grant can provide up to 90% of the cost required for public education and information and cost associated with the revision of the ordinance;
- Consider sponsoring a workshop or seminar for the commercial sector to include collectors. This could be one of the Borough's initial education efforts;
- The Borough's intent to enforce its recycling ordinance (particularly commercial sector participation) be well publicized. Enforcement is required under Act 101 and will increase participation and revenues received under Section 904 Grant program.

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR

EDUCATION/INFORMATION FOR

COMMERICAL SECTOR

(EXAMPLES OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS)

Guidelines For Education/Information For Commercial Sector

A comprehensive and sustained education and information campaign will help insure the program is successful initially and over the long run. The following are suggested components for developing an education and information program that will gain interest and increase enthusiasm and participation.

- Place an eye-catching ad in a paper of general circulation providing details of the program and its merits and requirements (at a minimum of twice per year).
- Prepare and distribute news releases and public service announcements to the local media. Provide program details, importance of the program e.g.: waste stream reduction, saving on disposal fees, saving/reuse of valuable resource, reduction of dependence on disposal facilities and, of course, it's the law. Deadline dates for reporting the types and amounts of recyclables should also be noted.
- Develop a slogan e.g.: "Business Recycling Today for a Better Tomorrow" or "Its Good Business To Recycle". Slogans help with program identity and purpose.
- Develop a logo representing the program that will be readily identifiable. The logo can act as a constant reminder. Provide decals of the logo to participating businesses only. Display of the logo will show their commitment to the community and add peer pressure to non-participants.
- Prepare an instructional flier or brochure, one that is eye catching and to the point: (i.e.: who, what, where, when, why and how to). The flier or brochure could be distributed by volunteers or sent with a Borough newsletter, utility or tax bills to save on mailings.
- Develop a recycling display detailing the programs benefits, charting participation and avoided cost of disposal, etc. The display could be placed in the Municipal Building and used at various civic events. This type of display should cover all sectors of the Borough recycling program.
- Incentive programs for participation, that is: rewarding businesses that participate. Conduct a (monthly or quarterly) drawing of participating businesses and profile the winning business in the Borough Newsletter or in press releases. Present a certificate or plaque to the Business at a public meeting.
- Conduct a workshop for the commercial sector and collectors of recyclables. The workshop can review program roles and requirements. Provide information to assist in development of recycling programs for various types of business (see accompanying). DEP could assist the Borough to set-up a workshop and provide

promotional and educational materials and instruction. The County or a Council of Government or a cooperative of adjacent municipalities could sponsor the event.

- Work closely with the County Recycling Coordinator to get the education message out and gain insight regarding other programs in the County.
- Negative publicity is not a desirable way to educate but it is effective. Consider publicizing the names of businesses that violate the ordinance.