

## **“The 90’s Called, They Want Their Bin Back!” Single Stream Recycling Comes to the City of Roanoke**

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Time to step up our game; the City of Roanoke is implementing single stream recycling! Single stream recycling is more convenient, easier, and cost effective; all the recycling goes into one cart. More often than not, recycling is expected to *at least* double the collection tonnage and that reduces tipping fees and landfill waste. Implementing this change can be complex and challenging. Fortunately, Roanoke was awarded a grant from Recycling Partnership to assist with logistics, education and outreach. Careful planning, expertise and support from our partners have paved the way for a smooth rollout of the program to date. Carts are being delivered through September and collection begins on October 5<sup>th</sup>.

Planning for this transition began several years ago and the program details began to unfold over the last two years. Research and preparation laid the foundation for viable plan that would allow the City’s Solid Waste Management (SWM) division to save money, reduce our dependence on temporary labor and improve service levels to our citizens. In early 2015, Roanoke was awarded a grant from Recycling Partnership for \$179,000, specifically targeted at local governments for the implementation of single stream recycling. The grant award is a combination of cash, in-kind services, and a \$40,000 match from the city. The Recycling Partnership leverages grants and technical assistance to transform the country’s curbside recycling system. This non-profit organization is overseen by Curbside Value Partnership, the project seeds partner dollars from companies and organizations to encourage public investments in community recycling programs. The city is proud to be selected in the first round of grant recipients.

This spring Solid Waste Management (SWM) issued a Request for Proposal for single stream provider and selected a local company Recycling Disposal Solutions (RDS). The terms of the contract included that RDS would provide the carts, Radio Frequency Identification Readers, as well as the service of handling the recycling materials. Roanoke previously purchased five used recycling trucks which satisfied the equipment needs for the program. The SWM managers worked with RDS to secure proper equipment and work through cart delivery details. A third party was hired to deliver the carts each team was accompanied by a Roanoke Solid Waste Inspector. Local staff was included to assist with questions regarding the carts or concerns from local residents.

Research shows that education is the key to a successful recycling program, with the additional support of Recycling Partnership the city was able to increase the education and outreach materials to reach a much larger audience. For the outreach campaign Recycling Partnership offered a choice between three high quality marketing campaigns to customize for the

community. In addition, the grant provided logistic support and information for program implementation, practices that have been collected from best practices or lessons learned from other single stream programs. Recycling Partnership teamed up with Roanoke's communications and sustainability teams to develop the campaign.

On July 29th, 2015 Mayor David Bowers held a press conference in the Roanoke City Market to announce the launch of single stream recycling. The message was broadcast through variety of media outlets including T.V., radio, newspaper ads, billboards, Facebook and features on our local government station RVTV. Each cart had a packet of information that described the new program and improvements to existing service. Currently, bulk and brush are collected every other week and with the implementation of single stream the schedule change allows the city to return to collecting bulk and brush **every week**.

Rollout of the carts began August 18<sup>th</sup> and was expected to take six weeks but the delivery teams doubled up and delivered all 40,000 carts by September 11<sup>th</sup>, well ahead of schedule. Despite the challenging timeframe, everything is lined up to start the recycling collection the week of October 5<sup>th</sup>.

If you are considering converting to single stream here are a few things to consider:

**Good planning** will expedite implementation, cart distribution is complicated, and sending a SWM staff member with the delivery team avoids costly mistakes.

**An opportunity to improve** your current service and finances, for the city that means;

- Elevated training for current staff, allows all of our employees to operate more equipment, therefore increasing flexibility on schedules and routes.
- Expensive temporary staff was greatly reduced, because of the versatility of the full-time staff as mentioned above.
- Bulk and brush will be picked up weekly, the existing schedule calls for pick-up every other week.

**Improving the bottom line**, provided our participation meets our expectations, the city will be operating in the black in the second year of the program.

**Seek support from other communities**, the City of Roanoke SWM team is happy to share the lessons learned and best practices from our experience. Take advantage of tools available on Recycling Partnership's website at [recyclingpartnership.org](http://recyclingpartnership.org), for questions for the City of Roanoke contact Nell Boyle at [nell.boyle@roanokeva.gov](mailto:nell.boyle@roanokeva.gov).



**In July, Roanoke's Mayor Bowers launches the Single Stream Recycling to the press with program partners Recycling Disposal Solutions and Recycling Partnership. Chapter Board Member and Roanoke DPW Director Bob Bengtson, far right.**