

# Downtown Recycling Survey – RALEIGH, N.C.

(Information obtained during July 2008 - RB)

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- **DO YOU HAVE A UNIFORM PROGRAM FOR TRASH AND RECYCLING FOR DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES? / HOW IS TRASH HANDLED IN YOUR DOWNTOWN AREA? HOW IS RECYCLING HANDLED IN YOUR DOWNTOWN AREA? THIS IS A BROAD QUESTION THAT MIGHT ANSWER OTHER QUESTIONS.**

*No, there is not a uniform program. Trash and recycling services are left up to the individual businesses. However, the city government can provide both of these services to businesses for a good price. Most businesses that use City recycling services also use city trash services, but it is not required. Businesses may contract for just recycling. The program is available in the Central Business District. A grant helped to cover the initial cost of containers. Recycling containers are now provided for free.*

- **IS PICKUP IN THE DOWNTOWN CURBSIDE (BACK DOOR OR FRONT DOOR) OR AT CONSOLIDATED DUMPSTER SITES:**
  - **Trash:** *For those on City service, yes--curbside. Front door/street pickup.*
  - **Recycling:** *For those on City service, yes--curbside. Single stream. Front door/street pickup.*
- **DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN FLEET, OR DO YOU CONTRACT OUT FOR SERVICES?**
  - **Trash:** *City fleet*
  - **Recycling:** *City fleet- same 3 man crew for trash and recycling.*
- **IF CURBSIDE, IS PICKUP AUTOMATED OR MANUAL?**

- **Trash:** *Manual—rear loader truck equipped with cart tippers. Narrow streets and onsite parking downtown prohibit completely automatic pickup.*
- **Recycling:** *Manual—rear loader truck equipped with cart tippers. Hope to move to a split body truck to collect trash and recycling semi-automatically and at the same time with the same truck to save on fuel and labor costs-- in December.*
- **HOW IS THE FEE CHARGED? (PER TON, PAY AS YOU THROW, FREE/DISCOUNTED RECYCLING IF ON TRASH SERVICE IS BASED ON TYPE OR SIZE OF BUSINESS---RETAIL VS. RESTAURANT, FOR EXAMPLE)**
  - **Trash:** *For businesses that contract for both trash and recycling services, the cost is \$30 a month. Recycling is an embedded fee (i.e.---recycling is “free” with trash). This is a flat monthly rate. The carts themselves are \$40 each (one time fee), approximately what it costs for the City to purchase them from the manufacturer. Smaller trash generators may use 30 gallon trash bags instead of the 96 gallon carts. A roll of 10 trash bags costs \$2.00.*
  - **Recycling:** *Businesses contracting for recycling are only charged the residential recycling fee of \$2.60 per month. “I believe that I need to look at how many businesses are paying the smaller fee, and perhaps approach our City Council with a proposal for a higher fee. It doesn’t seem fair that a downtown business could recycle 4 days a week and pay the same fee as a resident who receives services only once a week.”*
- **HOW OFTEN ARE COLLECTIONS MADE?**
  - **Trash:** *6 days per week*
  - **Recycling:** *4 days per week-- Monday, Wednesday, Friday, & Saturday*
- **WHAT TIME OF DAY IS PICKUP?**

*Same 3 man crew picks up everything---same time for both trash and recycling. “Personally, I think it’s a bad time. Our crew leaves our parking lot at 5:00, which puts them on downtown streets when traffic is at its worst. There has been some talk in my department about moving collection to the wee hours of the morning, but it’s never gone before the City Council, which would have to approve such a change.”*

  - **Trash:** *after 5:30 PM, set out between 3:00 and 5:30 PM. Carts must be in by 9:30 the next day.*

- **Recycling:** *after 5:30 PM, set out between 3:00 and 5:30 PM. Carts must be in by 9:30 the next day.*
  
- **HAVE YOU HAD AN ISSUE WITH SMELL/SPACE AND PATRONS WALKING AROUND DOWNTOWN (ESPECIALLY WITH CURBSIDE PICKUP)?** *“I haven’t heard too many complaints, although it is a challenge for our crews to deal with valet parking and sidewalk diners. I’ve also noticed that some businesses continue to put out garbage or recycling in the mornings, although our ordinance states that refuse shouldn’t be set out before 3:00 pm. Our code enforcement officer has been discouraged from issuing fines in the past, and I think the lack of financial consequences makes it easier for companies to violate the ordinance. Some buildings are cleaned by private cleaning crews, and I think that property managers could do a better job of communicating with them about the rules.”*
  
- **IF CURBSIDE, WHAT SIZE CARTS/BINS? ARE THEY STORED INDOORS OR OUTSIDE?**
  - **Trash:** *96 gallons carts or 30 gallon trash bag. “Storage has been a thorny issue ever since the City ordinance was modified to dictate what kind of garbage carts can be used. The ordinance states that carts (and any uncollected waste) must be removed from the curb by 9:30 am on the day following collection. Storing carts next to a building wall is okay; leaving carts at the edge of the curb is not. I can’t think of any places that have built a corral, but I know of two restaurants that keep 2-4 carts outside their building. One or two businesses keep carts at the curb 24/7, which is not appreciated by their neighbors or by the City planners who are trying to revitalize downtown. We have been soft on enforcement, but I think that a \$500 fine, which can be levied, would go a long way in improving compliance.”*
  
  - **Recycling:** *Most use 64 gallon carts, though smaller containers (bins) may be provided to businesses that don’t have room for larger carts. Corrugated cardboard boxes should be flattened and reduced to 3 feet by 3 feet in size before being stacked at the curb on collection days.*
  
- **IF DUMPSTERS, WHAT SIZE?**
  - **Trash:** *N/A*
  
  - **Recycling:** *N/A*
  
- **HOW LONG HAVE YOU “HANDLED” REFUSE/RECYCLING IN THIS MANNER? SINCE 8/28/06**

- **HOW DID YOU HANDLE REFUSE/RECYCLING PRIOR TO THE CURRENT SYSTEM?** *“Recycling collection began on August 28, 2006. Before the ordinance was changed, businesses were allowed to use any kind of container for garbage collection. The ordinance did establish certain times for collection, but my department was lax about enforcing them, probably because we didn’t hire a code enforcement officer until December 2004. As for recycling, it’s hard to know exactly what companies were doing. I did a mail survey before starting our program...My response rate was 62.6%. A rough statistical analysis done in June 2006 showed that 42.3% were already recycling at least one type of material. Of those that recycled, 44.4% had employees who took material home. Only 19.6% of all respondents (not just recyclers) indicated that they contracted with a private company for recycling collection.”*

- **DID YOU HAVE ANY DIFFICULTIES/ISSUES WHEN YOU SWITCHED TO YOUR CURRENT PROGRAM?** *“There were a few complaints about the cost of the garbage carts and the increase in fees (from \$8 per month to \$30). Participation in the recycling program really jumped after a state law took effect on January 1, 2008 that required many restaurants and bars to recycle beverage containers. There were also personal challenges. My background is in ecology and environmental education, not business. In fact, I haven’t worked for a private company since 1995! I had to learn not to take it personally when business managers didn’t show up to my focus group, even after telling me they would. I have learned to appreciate the few people who champion recycling in their workplace, and to take a lack of complaints as a sign that the program is working.”*

- **ANY OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROGRAM? PROS/CONS?**

*“Nearly ninety companies have joined Downtown Raleigh Recycles! Active recyclers include restaurants, bars, nightclubs, law firms and coffee shops. Each business owner receives a "We Recycle" window decal to show their patrons they care about the environment. Businesses will also be recognized in a quarterly electronic newsletter.”*

*“One negative aspect of our program is that collection begins at 4:00 pm. This means that our crew is competing with rush-hour traffic as well as dinnertime valet parking, which begins at some restaurants around the same time. The collection times can only be changed by approaching our City Council, and so far no one has expressed a desire to do that. I may bring it up next month, along with some concerns about the financial health of our program. I think our fees are too low!”*