




MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Bob Gedert, Director, Austin Resource Recovery 

CC: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Robert D. Goode, Assistant City Manager
Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Date: Nov. 8, 2016

Subject: New Curbside Service – Clothing and Housewares Recycling

The purpose of this memo is to provide information about a new Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) service that will provide curbside collection of clothing and housewares starting Dec. 5, 2016.

Background

A 2014 waste characterization study found that ARR curbside customers send approximately 3,322 tons of textiles to Austin landfills each year, making this program an important step toward achieving the City's Zero Waste goal. The study estimates that textile diversion could result in up to a 1.5% increase in the ARR diversion rate.

Austin Resource Recovery has partnered with an independent company – Simple Recycling – to provide curbside pickup of clothing and housewares. Examples of the types of items that can be collected are clothing, accessories, fabrics scraps, shoes, stuffed toys, linens, tools, toys, hats, purses, kitchenware and books. **It can also include many other things, including automobiles, canned goods, furniture, scrap metal, electronics, etc.**

Beginning Dec. 5, 2016, all ARR residential customers will begin receiving this service on the same day and week as their recycling collection. Collecting clothing and housewares on the same day as single-stream recycling makes participation easier and more convenient for customers.

Cost

This service is being provided free of charge to ARR customers. Simple Recycling will pay ARR \$20 per ton of material collected. Simple Recycling will keep the remaining profits from the sale





of collected items. This allows them to pay their expenses and make a profit while providing the service to the City and its residents free of charge.

How It Works

Beginning Dec. 5, customers will use green bags provided by Simple Recycling to collect their items and leave them on the curb for pickup on their recycling collection day. When Simple Recycling collects a bag, they will leave a new bag in its place for the resident. The plastic bags will be recycled after the items are collected. Residents also can drop off clothing and housewares at the City's Recycle & Reuse Drop-Off Center.

The materials that Simple Recycling collects will be disposed of in this order:

1. **Sell for reuse** (items that are in good enough condition and for which there is a market)
2. **Recycle** (items that are made of recyclable material but cannot be sold for reuse)
3. **Landfill** (only items that that are not recyclable or reusable and cannot be sold)

Outreach and Education

ARR and Simple Recycling will announce this service to our customers on Thursday, Nov. 10.

Simple Recycling will mail postcards to all residential customers the week of Nov. 14 to alert them about the new service. The week of Nov. 28, they will mail customers additional information about the service and their first green bag. A sample brochure from Simple Recycling is attached for your convenience.

Potential Impact on Local Charitable Organizations

The City released a competitive Request for Proposals for a service provider, which was open to businesses and nonprofit organizations, and Simple Recycling was the sole bidder. ARR is aware of the potential for this service to impact the number of donations to local organizations that accept donated clothing and housewares items; however, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that only 15 percent of textiles are donated to charity; this program aims to capture the 85 percent that currently goes to landfills. Many people who donate clothing or housewares to charities do so because they believe in the mission of the organization or for the tax benefits and we believe those Austinites will continue to support local organizations. Simple Recycling's marketing materials highlight the vast quantities of textile waste in landfills, which may even encourage some individuals to increase their donations to charitable organizations by bringing their attention to the problem. Simple Recycling makes no claim in its marketing materials about being a nonprofit organization, and ARR is marketing the collection as a new City service, so there will be no confusion. On our

This is not true. City Recycling, Inc. dba Green City Recycler (of Houston) also submitted an RFP response.

Simple Recycling promotes the use of a dubious non-profit; Purple Heart.

This wasn't first explained to or approved by ZWAC or Council, before issuing the RFP.

Not true. The City staff and Simple Recycling and Purple Heart are promoting a program which would probably have never been accepted and approved unless crammed through without the knowledge and consent of ZWAC and Council.





communication and marketing materials, ARR will encourage residents to donate first and use the curbside service second.

The City's Council-approved Zero Waste Master Plan recommended a pilot program for curbside textile collection, and a 2014 independent study also recommended the service, showing that this is an essential step toward meeting the City's Zero Waste goal. We look forward to providing this new service to our customers.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 512-974-1926.

A 6 year citywide contract to service every single-family household in Austin and adversely affecting so many organizations and individuals is not an appropriate pilot program; particularly one not reviewed or approved by Council or ZWAC before the RFP was issued, before the contract was signed, and before the service was actually started on December 5, 2016. Only the staff was involved in initiating this 6 year program and contract; and the staff alone will decide whether the City can opt to accept the three, one-year contract extensions after the completion of the first three years of the contract. Six years could go by before staff is even subjected to questions by ZWAC or Council about revising or ending the program. And, considering the history of this type of program and the reputation of Purple Heart, the non-profit organization Great Lakes Recycling dba Simple Recycling is recommending, and considering that staff did all of this without informing stakeholders, Council members, ZWAC or the Austin ratepayers, this is just another example of policy being set by RFP and staff's bad judgment.





ITEMS THAT ARE ACCEPTABLE FOR SIMPLE RECYCLING COLLECTION...

- Men's Clothing
- Children's Clothing
- Women's Clothing
- Boots & Shoes
- Bedding
 - Kitchenware
 - (sheets, pillow cases,
 - blankets, comforters)
 - Pillows
- Belts & Ties
- Sandals & Slippers
- Books
- Socks
- Bras
- Stuffed Animals
- Coats & Jackets
- Table Linens
- Fabric & Fabric Scraps
- Tools
- Fashion Accessories
- Towels
- Handbags & Purses
- Toys
- Hats & Gloves
- Undergarments

Items we CANNOT collect include: appliances, furniture, tires, paint, carpeting, mattresses, traditional recyclables (metal, glass, paper), hazardous waste.

DID YOU KNOW:

Most clothing & shoes are recyclable, yet most still ends up in landfills?

You can help change that by recycling your unwanted clothing and housewares through this free curbside pick-up service on your regular recycling collection day!



Place green bags near your recycling cart for collection.

Questions?
Call Simple Recycling:

866.835.5068

info@simplerecycling.com

Recycle clothing and housewares on your normal recycling day!



BEGINS
Dec. 5, 2016*

*Collection Begins on your regular recycling day

Residents can recycle unwanted clothing and more with free, curbside pick-up.

Brought to you by:



In cooperation with:

simple recycling

This is not what the contract or their website states. Note that later Simple Recycling provided each residence with stick-on tags for items too large to go inside a bag.

AUSTIN RESOURCE RECOVERY AND SIMPLE RECYCLING ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE A **SIMPLE, EASY AND FREE** NEW WAY TO RECYCLE YOUR CLOTHING, SHOES, ACCESSORIES AND OTHER HOUSEWARES SUCH AS KITCHENWARE, TOOLS, TOYS, AND BOOKS.

In cooperation with the City of Austin, Simple Recycling provides a simple and convenient way to keep this recyclable and reusable material out of landfills to give these items a second life.



Step 1

Place clothing, shoes and housewares in the bag provided or cardboard box with the Simple Recycling tag provided.



Enclosed are two Simple Recycling collection bags to get you started. Whenever you use the Simple Recycling collection bags or tags, the collecting driver will leave another bag for you to use the next time you have materials for collection.

If you need more Simple Recycling collection bags, please call us at **866-835-5068** or email **info@SimpleRecycling.com**.

Step 2

Leave the filled bag(s) near your recycling cart on your regular recycling pickup day.



- This program is in addition to your current recycling program.
- Your recycling collection day will remain the same.

Please refer to the list on the other side of this brochure for items that are acceptable for collection.

Step 3

Simple Recycling will collect the bags and recycle their contents!

