

MEMORANDUM

TO: Alder Rhodes-Conway
Michael P. May, City Attorney

FROM: Heather Allen, Common Council Legislative Analyst

RE: **PUBLIC SPACE AND LARGE EVENT RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING**

This memorandum provides information on recycling and composting efforts in public spaces and large events in Madison, Wisconsin. The focus is on recycling efforts initiated through a pilot program in Madison parks, and the policies for recycling at major outdoor events, such as the Taste of Madison or Concerts on the Square. The memo also considers best practices from other communities and institutions, and offers recommendations to improve the effectiveness of these programs.

I would like to extend a special acknowledgement to Parks Division officials, including Kevin Briski (Parks Superintendent), Kelli Lamberty (Community Events Coordinator) and Laura Bauer (Parks Operations Leadworker), who provided vital information for this report. And thanks to George Dreckmann, Recycling Coordinator, who explained the overarching policies and helped me connect with the right people.

I. OVERVIEW

The City of Madison has a very successful recycling program. The City recycled or composted over 57% of its waste stream last year, yet still sent over 49,000 tons of material to the Dane County Landfill. That is 1,471 pounds of trash for each of Madison's 67,000 households. This large pile of trash costs Madison taxpayers \$1,380,000 in landfill fees and another \$544,000 to haul to the landfill.¹ Large public events contribute to this waste stream, whether the events are receptions in City parks, an art fair or a marathon. Improving recycling rates in public places and at large events would help Madison make more progress toward achieving the City's goal of 65% landfill diversion, with continued progress towards the goal of Zero Waste. The 65% objective was set in 2010, a goal which has not yet been met. A focus on recycling and composting at major events could help the City reach the overdue target.

Madison's Sustainability Plan lays out several actions under *Goal 6: Preventing Solid Waste from Entering Landfills*, which includes opportunities to improve recycling in public places:

- Require all events that occur in public buildings or parks, or that require a street permit, to provide recycling and composting facilities.
- Form a partnership with UW, Dane County, the State, other large employers and surrounding municipalities to create and use a coherent visual system for identifying waste containers.
- Develop and implement a Zero Waste plan for the City.

¹ Information from City of Madison Streets Division.
Retrieved from <http://www.cityofmadison.com/streets/programs/wasteWatchers.cfm>.

II. IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY

The actions called for in the Sustainability Plan are at various stages of implementation.

Composting

Composting is not yet available for most public events, though a recently initiated residential pilot program is now underway in the City of Madison. The Recycling Coordinator stated in an email communication that composting at events in the next couple of years is very premature.

While I am seeking a grant that might allow us to work with Taste of Madison next year, any move to begin composting at special events is premature. We do not have the ability to get the material composted at this time. Event organizers can look into working with a private operation, such as Purple Cow, but given the logistics, high demand for education of event attendees and the need to separate material to a very high standard, it is not practical to look at any requirements prior to having a digester in operation.

Permitted Events and Public Areas

All public events requiring permits must submit a recycling and trash plan as part of their permit application (see Attachment 1 – The 2011 Recycling Plan submitted by Concerts on the Square). Permitted events may take place in public parks, on public streets or in publicly-owned buildings. In general, the process to obtain a permit for any of these events follows the same requirements. Madison regulations (see Attachment 3) require a recycling and trash plan for street use events, and the Parks Division bases its requirements for permitted events on that model. If event organizers fail to submit an adequate plan, City staff will work to improve the plan with the organizer. If the final plan is insufficient or if no plan is submitted, the event will not receive a permit. Permits are reviewed both by the Parks Division and a representative of the Streets Division.

Public buildings owned by the City of Madison generate significant trash and recyclables. Many buildings offer recycling facilities though trash and recyclables from public buildings are not treated differently than nearby buildings. Trash and recyclables are hauled using normal Streets Division services, or through private waste haulers. At this time, data is available from only a limited number of these buildings. The Monona Terrace has undertaken their own efforts to improve sustainability through waste reduction and recycling efforts, achieving a recycling rate of 49% of materials in their facilities. This rate was achieved through a waste assessment and planning process with Green Valley Disposal. Most City facilities have not undergone a detailed waste assessment and planning process, and should be able to increase recycling rates by undertaking the process.

Appearance of Recycling Bins

The action item directing the City to form a partnership to develop similar recycling bins and signage is an action that has the potential to improve recycling program effectiveness. Currently bins come in a variety of shapes, colors and sizes. Signage is inconsistent across institutions providing recycling receptacles in the downtown area, public parks and at major events.

Zero Waste

The City of Madison is working towards Zero Waste through continued efforts to expand recycling and reduce the amount of waste generated. The 2012 Solid Waste Plan (July 2012) states that the City of Madison is “moving towards a goal of zero waste.”

III. PUBLIC PLACE RECYCLING IN MADISON

Madison is implementing Public Place Recycling (PPR) in parks, the Mall/Concourse area downtown and at community events. PPR is handled differently in these various venues. This section illustrates what Madison is doing now in these three areas, and the following sections will compare these approaches with that of other cities and generally agreed upon best practices.

Recycling Pilot Program in Public Parks

In 2009, the City of Madison initiated a recycling program in Madison’s parks which runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Beginning with 60 recycling carts in the parks in 2009, they have now employed 101 recycling carts throughout the parks. During those same peak periods, there are approximately 600 to 650 trash cans located throughout the parks. Data available for 2009 and 2010 indicated that approximately 20,000 lbs. of recycling was collected during both summers (see table below). Data for 2011 and 2012 are in process. The Parks Division utilizes two packer trucks loaned from the Streets Division to collect the recyclables and deliver them to the McFarland recycling facility. The staff collects recyclables from the West Parks on Friday and the East Parks on Monday.

Summary of All Parks²	2009	2010
Total lbs. Collected	20140.00	19760.00
Avg. lbs. Collected/Week	1258.75	1317.33
% Full Avg.	49.65	41.22
Avg. # of Contaminated Cont. (%)	41.35	40.11
Avg. Miles/Route	42.75	46.00
Total Miles Traveled	1368.00	1428.00

Recycling Downtown

Madison residents and visitors alike enjoy bustling activity on State Street and throughout the downtown Central Business District. Annually, nearly 500,000 people attend the Dane County Farmers’ Market on the Capitol Square, 200,000 attend the Art Fair on the Square and approximately 250,000 attend the Taste of Madison.³ Visitors to these events and the downtown area generate trash and recyclables which are generally managed by the Parks Division. Parks is responsible for regular collections on the Mall/Concourse, and issues permits for special events. Event organizers sometimes

² Note the recycling program operated for 16 weeks in 2009 and 15 weeks in 2010 which may account for the larger amounts of recycling collected in 2009.

³ Make it Downtown Madison, Madison’s Central Business Improvement District. Retrieved from http://www.visitdowntownmadison.com/uploads/media/DowntownMadison_Web.pdf.

choose to utilize the event collection containers provided by the Streets Division, or they may choose to work with private vendors.

Public space recycling containers are located on State Street Mall and they are emptied by Parks Division staff. The staff collects trash and recycling every day, and only empties recycling twice a week in the winter due to reduced volume of recyclables. There is some contamination in the State Street recycling containers. Estimates by Parks Division staff put the rates of contamination at about 5% or 1 in every 20 containers. Major events like FreakFest, result in extremely high levels of contamination.

The City of Madison shares responsibility for recycling downtown with other institutions. Both the State of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin have responsibility for these same services in certain areas. For example, the Dane County Farmers Market obtains a permit for its activities from the State, and they employ volunteers to manage recycling during the event. Increased coordination between all of the responsible parties could improve participation and reduce contamination. Efforts to harmonize outdoor recycling programs could leverage existing investments and help achieve Madison's recycling goals.



Art Fair Photo by Tammy Kempfert Portalwisconsin.org

Recycling at Community Events

As noted above, major events utilize a variety of approaches to recycle waste. Commercial vendors may provide recycling bins and trash receptacles and haul the material themselves. This process provides the City with little data regarding the amount of waste material or recyclables collected. Vendors may provide recycling bins with unique shapes and styles such as a giant Pepsi can. The commercially provided bins are distinct from the bins found on State Street which are black with blue lids. Event organizers may request the City to provide recycling containers. The City of Madison delivers and retrieves the containers, as well as collecting the recyclables. Recycling containers provided by the City of Madison may be yellow barrels (see photo) or receptacles with blue lids and clear plastic bags. Displays and signage for recycling are provided at the discretion of event organizers. City staff do verify that recycling containers are set out prior to an event, and that the event organizers have recycling dumpsters delivered as outlined in the plans.

IV. PUBLIC PLACE RECYCLING IN OTHER PLACES

Ann Arbor, Michigan

The Zero Waste Volunteer Team complements Ann Arbor's recycling efforts achieving up to 96% recycling and composting rates at some events. With funding from a grant from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, the 5th Annual Homegrown Festival held at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market was remarkably successful in its efforts reach zero waste. The key to the success was a combination of advance planning to reduce waste streams, cooperation between City staff and a team of volunteers, support on-site to inform participants of how to recycle and compost, and finally a team of people who conducted a waste sort at the end of the festival.

A Zero Waste event relies on the advance planning to limit the amount of waste produced. Ann Arbor achieved this "by only distributing materials that are locally recyclable or compostable (no materials that have to be landfilled) and maximizing reusable products."⁴



Ann Arbor's "Recycling Fairy" switching out compost bags during event.



Final waste sort at the end of the homegrown festival in Ann Arbor.

Austin, Texas

Austin, Texas employs a system for major public events similar to Madison's. The City of Austin requires event organizers to provide recycling facilities at events. Ecology Action of Texas is a vendor that will supply the recycling containers and staff the event, and haul the materials to a recycling center. The group will also help plan for recycling services with event organizers.

During community events, the City utilizes Zero Waste Ambassadors, a group of volunteers which is key to the successful recycling programs at community events. They help monitor recycling containers, educate event goers about where to recycle at events and help the City staff information/outreach booths to share information about various City programs.⁵

⁴ Recycle Ann Arbor. *HomeGrown Festival a Zero Waste Success!* September 11, 2012. Retrieved from <http://recycleannarbor.wordpress.com/2012/09/11/homegrown-festival-a-zero-waste-success>.

⁵ AustinTexas.gov. Zero Waste Ambassadors. Retrieved from <http://austintexas.gov/department/zero-waste-ambassadors>.

The City of Austin also provides free recycling containers for events. Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB), in partnership with the City of Austin, Austin Resource Recovery (ARR), provides free recycling containers for use at fundraisers, parties, concerts, races, festivals, and other events.

The City of Austin's Event Recycling Rebate is an incentive for event organizers to increase PPR. The purpose of the Event Recycling Rebate program is to:

- Provide event organizers a financial incentive to improve waste reduction and diversion efforts at outdoor events in Austin.
- Gather data from qualifying events to use in developing best practices guidance and future city policy initiatives.
- Help promote and achieve the City of Austin's Zero Waste goal.

Portland, Oregon

Portland unveiled PPR in April of 2011 in their downtown transit mall in the first phase of a multi-year project. The City installed 175 recycling containers. Each container is installed next to each garbage can in the area. The plan is part of the 2007 *Portland Recycles!* plan which was adopted by the City Council in 2007. Portland determined that approximately 30% of the waste collected in downtown public garbage cans was waste and hopes that providing the recycling receptacles will divert approximately a third of waste from landfills. Portland hopes that this initiative will help achieve the goal of 75% waste reduction by 2015.

*"The City of Portland selected the downtown transit mall for the launch of Public Place Recycling because it is a thriving center of activity and a nationally recognized successful transit center. Partners in the project include the Portland Bureau of Transportation, TriMet and Portland Mall Management, Inc. Once installation of the recycling containers is completed this spring, data will be collected to help ensure that the project is as successful as possible when it eventually expands to other parts of the city."*⁶

Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Waukesha County provides recycling assistance for public places and events through a bin loan program available at no cost to event planners. Temporary bins and bags are provided, along with technical assistance as needed. Event planners must provide their own volunteers to manage the recycling and ensure proper disposal after the event.

⁶ Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. Public Place Recycling Starts in Downtown Portland. Sustainable City Network April 13, 2011. Retrieved from http://www.sustainablecitynetwork.com/topic_channels/solid_waste/article_06d0194a-6646-11e0-b4d5-0019bb30f31a.html.

V. BEST PRACTICES

According to the Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center,⁷ successful recycling programs require several critical steps including setting goals, designating the responsible people and assessing the waste stream. Once those actions are undertaken, a city can establish collection methods by working with waste collectors, event organizers and other stakeholders.

As the recycling program is developed, special attention must be focused on education, accessibility, consistency and responsibility. The design of the program influences public behavior and recycling rates. Together these steps (see box) help build a successful recycling program.

PPR requires additional considerations in the design of the program because of the unique characteristics of the waste stream for each type of event and location. High traffic areas and large public events demand efficient systems to accommodate the recyclable materials generated. You will notice that PPR planning focuses more attention on choosing the bin location, size and type and an emphasis on communicating and education. Visual cues, clear signage and accessibility are the most effective tools to promote positive recycling behavior and ensure that the PPR program is a success.

Steps to a Successful Recycling Program

- ✓ Establish goals
- ✓ Appoint a coordinator, and a planning committee
- ✓ Evaluate waste streams, determine what will be collected
- ✓ Evaluate and choose collection methods
- ✓ Develop and implement education program
- ✓ Assess processing needs and select system
- ✓ Address legal issues and economics
- ✓ Implement program
- ✓ Evaluate and adapt the program

A checklist for implementing PPR should generally include five stages.⁸ An analysis by Sustainably Victoria on the best practices for PPR provides a checklist for implementing PPR (see checklist on next page). Taken together the questions on the checklist are a useful guide to Public Place Recycling program. At all stages, it is critical to seek input from stakeholders, analyze the unique characteristics of the venue/event, and collect data and information to regularly evaluate performance. Madison can utilize the checklist to evaluate its efforts relative to best practices.

⁷ Mary Kohrell, Mary and Gruder, Sherrie. 12 Steps to Planning and Implementing a Successful Recycling Program. Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center. Waste Education Series. University of Wisconsin-Extension 515.KG.92.

⁸ Sustainably Victoria. Public Place Recycling: Best practice guidelines. April 2007. Retrieved from http://www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au/documents/PP_recycle_guidelines.pdf.

A Best Practice Checklist for Public Place Recycling

✓ **Determine location of PPR and what will be recycled**

The first stage is to consider a suitable site and what to recycle. Working with contractors and managers of recycling facilities, a community should determine what types of waste will be recycled. Partnering with event organizers is important as they will often have knowledge of the wastes generated by their events.

✓ **Choose bin location, size and type**

The second stage is addressing the bins. How many bins will be included in the location? What bin sizes will be used, and how frequently will they need to be collected? What is the bin type and how will it be configured relative to waste bins? How will the bins be approached – from the front or from all directions? Are the bins distinguishable by shape, color and signage? Are they consistent with recycling bins nearby? Do the enclosures discourage dumping?

✓ **Communicate and educate**

Communication and education are critical to facilitating good recycling behaviors. How can signage be used to produce the simplest and clearest message? What is the best way to ensure signage is durable? Is the signage and visibility of recycling receptacles uniform? How can information be communicated to participants, organizers, staff, volunteers and other attendees? What sorts of training or information is required to maximize implementation of PPR?

✓ **Promote Public Place Recycling**

Policies and procedures for a public place recycling program should be promoted with all stakeholders and user groups who visit the designated venues. Questions to consider include: what opportunities exist to educate site users? What are the best ways to reach the target audience? Is there a public figure or group who can champion the initiative? How can success and progress best be communicated?

✓ **Maintain infrastructure, security and safety**

Safety and security are of utmost importance both for staff and volunteers, as well as event participants and visitors. Planners should determine if the bins are secure and lockable. Will the bins be easy to maintain and keep clean? Is it safe to empty and replace the bins from a health and safety perspective? How will the performance of the system be monitored?

VI. IS THE CITY OF MADISON IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES?

Parks

The ratio of recycling barrels in Madison parks to trash cans is 1:6. To meet best practices, each recycling receptacle should be paired with a trash container. Additionally, there is no signage for recycling which compounds the difficulty of both containers being green (though of differing shapes). Signage and the ratio of barrels should be addressed to achieve best practices.

In their 2011 report on the program (see Attachment 2), the Parks Division requested more recycling carts (the carts were provided – increasing the total amount of barrels from 60 to 101). The memo highlighted staffing and the availability of trucks as critical to program expansion.

The Parks Division is striving to be a leader in sustainable practices. Therefore, it is recommended that the program be continued in 2011. At some point, we would like to include more park locations. However, the critical components are availability of trucks and sufficient funding for the needed staffing of both seasonal and permanent positions.

Permitted Events

Oversight and reporting is a critical element for any successful recycling program. Currently there is no data available on the amount of recyclables or waste generated by major events. Reports from staff indicate that some events do a very good job at recycling, but information is anecdotal.

There are other implementation challenges. Event organizers are requested to empty City-owned trash and recycling containers during events, because staff lacks normal access to these containers. In practice, the requirement is not always met, and as a result, public trash and recycling containers may spill over with refuse during events. In addition, scheduled pick-ups of City barrels and other receptacles may sometimes be delayed due to communication challenges. The overflowing bins reduce recycling program effectiveness and may even lead to increased litter on streets. The most common delay at the Mall/Concourse is weather-related. Staff that pick up trash and recyclables are the same staff that plow the sidewalks. On the occasion of a large snow event, all staff concentrates on keeping the sidewalks safe and pickups may be delayed.

The PPR efforts could be viewed as a smaller program within the City of Madison's wide ranging recycling program. PPR has its own unique features and requires special focus on establishing standardized and user-friendly receptacles and signage throughout public spaces. In addition, data including the volume or weights of recyclable materials should be recorded from event organizers over time to assess effectiveness of various approaches. Education should also be a major consideration, so that event organizers and City staff can maximize public participation.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Increase Recycling Bins (and staff to service the bins) in Parks

Best practices call for all recycling containers to be located adjacent trash containers to reduce contamination and increase the amount of recyclables collected. This program should increase the amount of containers to approach the number of trash containers available in Madison parks which is approximately six times greater. Staffing increases may also be required to collect recycling from the bins, with additional pick-ups timed to accommodate peak periods. Kevin Briski, Parks Superintendent, noted that approximately 200 barrels would provide a significant improvement in the program, and would be a realistic goal from a staffing and servicing perspective.

B. Add Signage and Visual Cues in Parks

Investing in quality signage is important to increase the effectiveness of this program. No funds have been allocated for signage to-date. A small study at the University of Pittsburgh found that adding a yellow "landfill" sign to the garbage can located adjacent a recycling receptacle increased recycling by 29%. Signage and appearance of the barrels and recycling containers can increase participation and reduce contamination resulting in a higher volume of recyclable material and reduced sorting costs.

C. Provide Additional Resources for Recycling Receptacles and Pick-up for the Mall/Concourse

Funds have never been provided for recycling collectors nor for servicing them, but there is a need. Increased numbers of recycling collectors available in public places may reduce the amount of temporary recycling barrels and containers needed for the City and event organizers to haul in for each major event. Funds are also needed for staff to support increased recycling collection in the downtown area.

D. Establish an Intergovernmental Planning Committee for the Downtown Area

Representatives of the downtown business community, event organizers, the University, the State of Wisconsin, the City and the County and other large employers should be brought together to agree on goals and share knowledge about ongoing recycling activities. In addition, this group should work together *to create and use a coherent visual system for identifying waste containers*, as called for in the Madison Sustainability Plan.

Communication between City staff, other local governments, event organizers, recycling companies and waste management companies may be improved through committee cooperation. Coordination may also yield additional benefits such as reducing the amount of waste generated at an event through careful purchasing and event planning.

- E. Establish a Rebate Program for Event Organizers
Financial incentives can improve compliance at events. Austin, Texas offers a \$750 rebate for event organizers that plan carefully to reduce waste, and submit detailed information on success rates after an event. The process encourages knowledge building about how to create a Zero Waste event and provides the City with valuable data about implementation. The Austin program also prevents the use of some unwanted materials. Austin informs event organizers that utilizing Styrofoam will disqualify the organizers from the rebate opportunity. Alternative financial incentives could include a deposit in advance of the event that is only returned upon successful implementation of a recycling plan.
- F. Establish a Zero Waste Team
Good events have recycling bins. Great events have a recycling team, identifiable to event participants who work diligently to explain which materials should be deposited in which locations, empty and replace bins and receptacles, conduct data collection and do a final waste sort. These activities require many dedicated hands. Austin and Ann Arbor utilize these teams to achieve up to 96% waste reduction at their events. The Volunteer Team can also become resources for event organizers during the planning phase for recycling and waste reduction.
- G. Establish a Data Collection System
Data and reporting on the effectiveness of recycling especially at permitted events is needed. One option is to organize staff or volunteers to collect data at events, and provide information and support about the recycling requirements as needed. Another option is to require the recycling contractors to provide reports on the materials received. Without this information it is impossible to know if recyclable material is reaching its proper destination, and what kinds of materials are the most common. This recommendation may require increased staff time and resources.
- Data collection will assist with emerging challenges to increase recycling rates at major events, such as upstream recycling focused on specific types of waste. Each event generates unique waste, for example, the Concerts on the Square events generate many glass wine bottles, the Taste of Madison generates waste organics, and the IronMan generates wrappers from energy bars. The planning committee may consider an innovative partnership with TerraCycle (or other upstream recycler) to collect non-recyclable energy bar wrappers from the IronMan event. This is an example of how planning and coordination could minimize the amount of waste sent to a landfill. Coordination may also yield additional benefits such as reducing the amount of waste generated at an event through careful purchasing and event planning.
- H. Standardize Visual Cues at Events
Different shapes and sizes of barrels are a challenge at permitted events. Signage is also needed as there are no requirements for signage. Receptacle appearances need to be standardized and signage needs to be improved to enhance recycling rates. It may be useful to develop a unique guide for event organizers to conduct their recycling. The guide could include information on best practices related to bin placement, signage, procedures and other expectations.

Public Place Recycling Recommendations			
Area/Venue	Objective	Action	Result
Parks	Provide recycling bins adjacent trash cans	Budget for more recycling bins and staff to service the bins (gradually increasing numbers over time).	Increased recyclable materials and reduced contamination.
Parks	Improve signage & visual cues	Budget for signs and educational information.	Increased participation resulting in increased recyclables and reduced contamination.
Mall/Concourse	Provide recycling bins adjacent trash cans	Budget for more recycling bins and staff to service the bins (gradually increasing numbers over time).	Increased recyclable materials and reduced contamination.
Mall/Concourse	Improve signage & visual cues	Establish an intergovernmental coordinating committee – or designate an existing committee the responsibility to coordinate the appearance of recycling bins. A budget for bins and signage is also required.	Increased understanding & improved recycling behavior participation resulting in increased recyclables and reduced contamination.
Events	Engage event organizers in PPR	Initiate a rebate program for success recycling at events (modeled on the Austin, TX program).	Financial incentives for event organizers can improve recycling rates, without additional City staff time or oversight.
Events	Establish a volunteer Zero Waste Team	Direct coordinating committee to facilitate a volunteer team partnership.	1. Improved recycling rates, and education rates at events; 2. New partnerships to enhance recycling throughout the City.
Events	Understand various waste streams	Gather data systematically at events.	Utilize the data to improve program, identify possible upstream recycling opportunities unique to each event.
Events	Improve visual cues	Standardize the receptacles / signage and pre-event information provided to organizers (may require budget for materials).	Increased participation resulting in increased recyclables and reduced contamination.

VIII. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

There are a suite of additional activities that the City of Madison may choose to consider as it refines Public Place Recycling. Composting, as called for in the Sustainability Plan, may be introduced as the planned biodigester comes on-line, though it would be difficult to dispose of compost waste at this point. As technology improves, and recycling practices are strengthened, the City will have the opportunity to employ inventive new solutions such as up-cycling, issuing Citizen Recycling Grants and reducing wastes through event planning.

Many of these opportunities can be facilitated through the proposed intergovernmental coordinating committee. As noted earlier, the committee can facilitate new initiatives and communication including but not limited to establishing a Zero Waste Team, building partnerships, seeking opportunities for vendors to reduce waste, producing a guide for event organizers, promoting recycling through competitions. The opportunities are manifold, but will require a group of committed individuals to advance these creative solutions.

IX. CONCLUSION

The City of Madison is committed to sustainability and has been a national leader in innovative recycling programs. In 1968, the City became the first community in the nation to begin curbside recycling with the collection of newspapers in specially designed metal racks installed on refuse packers, and the Streets Division is continually looking for ways to expand recycling. Recycling is critical at public events because Madison residents expect a robust recycling program, and event attendees recycle at home and know that bottles and cans don't belong in the trash.

While recycling in public parks and at major public events is already diverting significant amounts of waste from landfills, there is an opportunity to improve recycling rates. Consistent recycling receptacles and signage is a priority raised by the Madison Sustainability Plan and by recycling experts. Receptacles in parks, at public events and in the downtown area have a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. The City can help promote good recycling behavior by making it simple and habitual for people to put their recyclable materials in a recognizable container. In addition, funds should be provided for more recycling receptacles and staff to maintain them in parks and the downtown areas.

Recycling at major public events likely has varying levels of success depending on the event organizers and their own approaches to implementing recycling. The City should assess the type and amount of recyclable material and then tailor practices accordingly. The volume of wastes generated at major events warrants evaluation of the program effectiveness and opportunities to streamline the process both for City staff, organizers, and the recycling facilities.