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News Release

Ark City, Winfield announce pause in recycling program to June

Corrugated cardboard accepted at Central Shop; all others at Strother Field

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (March 27, 2020) — In response to global pressure on the recycling markets, the City of Arkansas City and City of Winfield will implement new changes to the recycling programs in each community beginning June 1, 2020.

As has been publicized, Ark City and Winfield recently agreed to changes in the way the two cities provide recycling efforts. In response to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Arkansas City recently put a pause on its recycling collection efforts. Beginning April 6, Winfield also will pause its current collection system until the new program begins June 1.

For both communities, the shared Arkansas City/Winfield Recycling Center, located at 7th Avenue and D Street in Strother Field, will be open for community drive-through drop-off from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, starting June 5.

Clean, dry and sorted materials will be accepted at the recycling center in the following categories:

- **plastic bottles and containers (#1 and #2)** — including milk jugs, soda bottles and laundry detergent containers;
- **plastic bottles and containers (#3, #4, #5, #6 and #7)** — including food trays, spray bottles and butter tubs;
- **aluminum cans** — including soda and beer cans;
- **steel and tin cans** — including soup and vegetable cans;
- **mixed paper** — including newspapers, magazines, catalogs, hardcover and softcover books, phonebooks and junk mail;
- **paperboard** — including cereal boxes, soda boxes, packing paper, egg cartons, etc.;
- **corrugated cardboard** — including shipping boxes, pizza boxes (free of food and grease) and moving boxes;
- **glass bottles, jugs and jars** (any color).

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Unsorted or contaminated materials (e.g., food residues, yard waste, plastic bags, etc.) will **not** be accepted at the center at Strother Field.

In Arkansas City, the three current recycling trailers will be relocated to the City's Public Services Department central shop, located at 1407 W. Madison Ave., but will be limited **only** to clean and dry corrugated cardboard. Paperboard product such as cereal boxes will **not** be accepted in the trailers.

Drop-off at the trailers will be available during the central shop's normal business hours of 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

In Winfield, weekly curbside pickup using city-issued carts will continue, but be limited only to clean and dry corrugated cardboard. Paperboard product such as cereal boxes will **not** be accepted curbside.

For both communities, commercial pickup customers will recycle clean corrugated cardboard **only**.

Customers in both communities also are encouraged to rethink and reset their consumer behaviors.

As a step toward reducing and reusing, each City will have reusable grocery tote bags available at no additional cost for customers to pick up at its City Hall, beginning June 1.

Arkansas City customers with questions may call [\(620\) 441-4401](tel:6204414401) or [\(620\) 441-4402](tel:6204414402).

Winfield customers with questions may call the City Operations Center at [\(620\) 221-5600](tel:6202215600).

Background

These changes to the local recycling program are in response to a changing global recycling market.

In the mid-2000s and into the 2010s, many communities — including Arkansas City and Winfield — began to move toward single-stream recycling, allowing all materials to be placed together for collection.

One of the opportunities with the new method was that participation was expected to increase at a faster rate than contamination (plastic bags, food, Styrofoam, wires, etc.), thus increasing the total amount of materials removed from the landfill.

For years, with relaxed contamination rules, the method appeared to work. Prior to 2018, China imported nearly all of the recycling materials from the U.S. What materials could be recycled were and the rest were not. But in 2018, China's regulations regarding contamination of the materials were strengthened to a point that materials from the U.S. simply could not meet the standards anymore.

With no market, the costs to process, store and market materials skyrocketed across the country.

Annual shared materials costs for Arkansas City and Winfield have risen from approximately \$700 in 2017 to \$225,000 in 2019.

During that same period, to meet the strengthened standards, much of the previously “recycled” contaminated materials, after arriving at the regional material sorting facility, were now simply being steered to the landfill at a staggering estimated rate of 60 percent.

The plan that will go in effect by the two cities on June 1, 2020, is designed to focus primarily on the highest volume of material by weight (corrugated cardboard) and combine it with clean, dry, and sorted materials to work toward achieving a similar true recycling rate of approximately 40 percent, with a far reduced cost. By accepting the materials sorted, the two cities will have the flexibility to capitalize on markets as they change in the future.

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