

ITEM #: 31
DATE: 01-27-26
DEPT: PW

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: MODIFICATIONS TO GARBAGE AND REFUSE CHAPTER OF AMES MUNICIPAL CODE

BACKGROUND:

Chapter 10 of Ames *Municipal Code* contains a variety of regulations related to the collection and disposal of solid waste in the community. Some of these regulations are antiquated and need to be revised to reflect modern solid waste collection practices. In addition, with the City seeking to conclude its waste-to-energy process and implement curbside recycling, language authorizing curbside recycling must be added to this chapter.

Staff has prepared an ordinance to implement these changes. Key aspects of the proposed changes are described below:

1. New language defining "recycling." Recycling (or recyclable materials) are items designated by the City that can be collected, processed, and turned into new raw materials.

2. Standards for recycling containers. The existing chapter establishes standards for when garbage receptacles may be set out, how they must be covered, etc. The revisions apply similar standards to recycling containers.

3. Container weight and frequency of collection. Since 1990, *Municipal Code* has limited the weight of garbage receptacles to 65 pounds. In addition, since 1970, *Municipal Code* has required that residential customers receive garbage collection twice per week by default, unless the customer opts for once per week collection. This frequency of collection was the subject of some complaints during City Council discussion of garbage collection in 2023 and 2024.

Most garbage haulers today use 95- or 96-gallon carts, emptied using hydraulically operated equipment. Since these containers have far greater capacity than those used in decades ago, they require emptying less frequently. Therefore, the proposed ordinance eliminates the weight limit for containers and establishes once per week collection as the default for residential curbside collection. When necessary to address an unusual quantity of garbage (e.g., following a disaster, calamity, construction project or other incident), a customer may make arrangements to have garbage collected more frequently.

4. Manner of Disposal. With the creation of a category of "recyclable materials," the ordinance directs that these materials must be disposed of through the City's residential curbside recycling collection program, by delivery to a recycling facility, or by contracting with a hauler to deliver the materials to a recycling facility.

5. Creation of Residential Curbside Recycling Collection Program. This section creates the authority for the City to collect recyclables from single-family residences and multi-family residences of up to four units.

The cost for the residential curbside collection service will be billed to eligible residences on their monthly utility bills. Although the eligible residences may elect not to receive a container and participate in the program, they will not be relieved of the obligation to keep recyclable materials out of the garbage. In addition, they would continue to be charged the monthly fee for the service.

The purpose for continuing to charge for this service is two-fold: 1) It is anticipated that the contracted hauler will charge the City on the basis of the number of *eligible* households, not just the number of *participating* households. This is the common arrangement in other communities with city-wide contracted curbside collection; and 2) it would be extremely challenging for the City and its contracted hauler to forecast and budget for an estimated percentage of participating households. This uncertainty would result in financial risk for the hauler that would be reflected in higher fees for the participating households.

City staff is in the process of evaluating responses to the Request for Proposal (RFP) for curbside recycling collection services. Staff is proposing that the City Council consider first reading of the ordinance making revisions to Chapter 10 and establishing the recycling program, and align the third reading and adoption of the ordinance with the approval of the recycling collection contract. This will allow for simultaneous adoption of:

- 1) These Chapter 10 revisions,**
- 2) The recycling collection contract, and**
- 3) The Municipal Code appendix containing the proposed monthly customer fee. This fee will be based on the selected contractor's per-customer monthly charge, anticipated disposal costs, and internal costs such as customer service staff time, marketing, etc.).**

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

City staff conducted a public survey in September of 2025 requesting feedback from the community on certain elements of the proposed residential curbside recycling program. Over 1,500 responses were received and information gathered from the survey used to help further refine details of the program.

City staff has utilized a periodic e-newsletter called the R3Cycled Report to communicate updates regarding the R3C project and the recycling and diversion programs to local haulers and other key stakeholders. Both editions of this newsletter in January provided updates regarding the potential changes and the timing of the discussion. In addition, staff has contacted the list of registered rental property owners/landlords to inform them of the anticipated curbside recycling program implementation, so they may consider the impacts of this program on their lease agreements.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve first reading of the attached ordinance modifying Chapter 10 of Ames Municipal Code and establishing a curbside residential recycling collection program.
2. Direct staff to make modifications to the attached ordinance.

3. Do not approve first reading of the ordinance.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Chapter 10 of Municipal Code (Garbage and Refuse) contains several provisions that are antiquated and do not reflect modern solid waste collection practices. The attached ordinance addresses those issues. In addition, the conclusion of the City's waste-to-energy process requires a greater reliance on landfill diversion, which is best accomplished through curbside recycling.

The draft ordinance contains the language necessary to implement curbside collection of recyclables for residential properties. Once the contracted hauler and its rates are identified, the contract and the proposed rates will be returned to City Council for approval at the time of third reading and adoption of the Chapter 10 modifications. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Ordinance Chap 10 \(Garbage-Refuse-Recycling\).PDF](#)