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New Recycling Carts Now Being Delivered

Deliveries of the first of some 12,000 larger, recycling containers began this week, as the Village launches a new program to encourage residents to recycle more by tying residential refuse hauling rates to the amount of garbage set out for pickup.

The new 64-gallon recycling containers, which hold about three times as much as the blue bins they are replacing, are part of a broader program that also will allow residents who opt for a smaller garbage cart to pay \$2.50 less per month for waste hauling services than those who keep the current 96-gallon container.

Every household will get the larger recycling container, but only those property owners who request a smaller garbage cart will get one. So far, about 2,000 residents have requested the smaller garbage cart since the program was announced in December.

Effective March 1, residents served by the Village's refuse hauling program who don't downsize their garbage carts will pay \$15.80 per month for disposal services, while those who choose a smaller container will pay \$13.30 per month. The new garbage carts hold 64 gallons and are identical to the new recycling carts, except in color and markings.

The pay-for-use program was created as part of a new contract with the Village's private contractor that required the first residential refuse hauling rate hike here in three years. While the new contract would have required an across-the-board increase of \$4 per month for residential properties, under this new Village recycling initiative, property owners who opt for the smaller garbage cans will see their rates increase only by \$1.50 per month.

Residents who toss less and recycle more will pay lower fees because they will be helping to reduce costs associated with landfills, which are among the most unpredictable factors in municipal refuse hauling programs, explained Oak Park's Solid Waste Coordinator Karen Rozmus.

"Available landfill space is continuing to shrink, which means hauling costs will increase because companies will have to pay more and travel further to disposal sites," she said. "By encouraging residents to reduce their garbage through more aggressive recycling, the Village hopes to better manage costs associated with refuse hauling services."

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The Village's move to larger recycling bins coincides with modest, but steady, increases in the amount of recyclables collected in Oak Park over the past five years, according to Rozmus. The range of containers that can be recycled has grown, too, and now includes containers such as those from household cleaners, beauty products and grocery items.

"The growing amount and expanding range of recyclables, coupled with greater consumer awareness, has led to an increasing number of requests from residents for more than one blue bin," she said. "These requests will no longer be necessary once the new, larger containers are distributed."

The larger recycling carts should make it easier for residents to take full advantage of the latest "single-stream" collection approach that eliminates the need to separate recyclables. In addition to providing more space for recyclables, the new carts have wheels, which will make it easier for residents to move the recyclables to the collection point, and lids that should help reduce litter by keeping out animals and eliminating wind-blown paper. The new carts also will allow haulers to use automatic lifts for quicker and more efficient collections.

To request a new, smaller garbage cart, call 358.5700 or visit www.oak-park.us – click on news, then the recycling program icon along the right margin. Requests also can be made by email to publicworks@oak-park.us. Email requests should include the property owners name, property address, water billing account number, number of units in the building and the regular refuse pick-up day. The Village provides collection services only to single-family homes and multifamily buildings of five or fewer units.

Residents who requested the smaller garbage cart by January 27, should receive it by the end of February along with the new recycling cart. Subsequent requests for the smaller garbage cart will receive delivery on a first-come basis, after all of the recycling carts have been distributed. Residents may also continue using their small blue bins for recycling or other purposes.

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