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Village recycling program expanded to include plastic bags

In response to citizen requests, the Village's recycling program has been expanded to include plastic shopping bags, an item that many recycling vendors won't accept because the bags are difficult to process through automated sorting systems.

An article in the May issue of the Village *OP/FYI* newsletter that included plastic bags among items that should not be recycled through the municipal collection program prompted calls from residents asking why. Karen Rozmus, the Village's recycling coordinator, put the same question to vendor Waste Management.

The result? Plastic bags are now acceptable with appropriate handling. Empty bags – with no receipts or other materials – should be combined into one bag. The bag of bags then should then be tied closed and placed in the blue cart or bin.

Residents should not put other recyclable materials into plastic bags and place the bag into the recycling container, however. Instead, other recyclables such as glass, cans, paper and cardboard, should be loosely combined in the blue container.

"I want to thank all of the residents who called about plastic bag recycling," Rozmus said. "We had always just accepted the vendor's explanation that they couldn't be recycled. But with a little prompting, Waste Management was able to identify a recycler that would accept the bags."

Rozmus added that while accepting plastic bags is a convenient addition to the recycling service Oak Parkers enjoy, residents could do even more to help the environment by carrying a reusable cloth bag to reduce the number of plastic bags they collect.

For more information on the Village's recycling program, visit the Public Works Department page at www.oak-park.us, call 358.5700 or e-mail publicworks@oak-park.us.

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