

Friday Opinuendo

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Going greener

"How can the city of St. Paul increase the level of recycling, both in materials and number of people participating?"

It's the latest question posted on Open St. Paul -- the digital discussion forum designed to engage citizens in a conversation about important city issues. Check it out at stpaul.gov/recycleitforward.

Recycle It Forward is the city's new initiative to gather input on waste-management programs and such services as recycling, composting, bulky waste, litter and garbage. Information collected through the process, which also is to include a mail survey, focus groups, interviews and community meetings, will "help determine the direction of the program and services into the next decade and beyond," according to a statement from the city.

The rationale: The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's new recycling goals call for reducing the amount of trash headed to landfills by 75 percent by 2030. In recent years, however, the level of recycling and participation in the citywide recycling program has declined or remained flat, the city says.

Open St. Paul, launched last summer, allows citizens to post their own statements and read what others are saying. So far, comments reflect interest in curbside composting, confusion about what can be recycled ("It's way too complicated, and that discourages higher participation") and a preference by some for the city to contract with one hauler to pick up all materials, thereby reducing noise and pollution from multiple trucks.

There also are champions of a wider array of accepted materials, of adding yard-waste pickup and of "single-stream" or "no-sort" recycling, which allows residents to put all recyclables into a single bin, as is done in several east metro suburbs.

One commenter notes that there's "little to no penalty for not recycling/composting," and suggests that paying by weight to haul garbage would encourage more participation.

Another mentions neighbors who never have recycled: "No one has ever been able to convince them that recycling makes a difference."