

Seattle Idea: Fewer Trash Pickups, More Recycling

By **Phuong Le**
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Striving to reduce the trash it sends to landfills, Seattle has banned foam take-out containers and plastic bags, told residents they must recycle cardboard and compost food scraps, and set up a registry for people to opt-out of getting phonebooks.

Some city officials think the city can do even more: they're now weighing whether to stop picking up garbage from homes every week.

Switching to every-other-week garbage collection would save the city about \$6 million a year, officials say, while reducing neighborhood truck traffic and potentially keeping an additional 1,400 tons of waste a year out of the landfill.

The city council is deciding whether to test the concept in about 800 single-family homes this summer. If the pilot project is successful, the idea may be rolled out citywide, making Seattle one of the largest U.S. cities to embrace the reduced pickups. A council committee vote is scheduled in May.

Seattleite Lori Friedman has mixed feelings about the idea, but feels the city

to pay for larger bins to accommodate all their trash. The comedy show "Portlandia" even spoofed the city's many garbage and recycling bins.

"Some people aren't exactly doing cart-wheels on every-other-week service, but we're seeing many, many people adapt, and the program appears to be working very well," said Bruce Walker, Portland's solid waste & recycling program manager.

"It was a big change, but people are clearly adapting. We've seen a big drop-off in garbage, as well as an increase in yard and compost," he added. The amount of garbage picked up during Portland's pilot project dropped by about 30 percent, and that seems to be the case now, Walker said.

When the city of Renton, south of Seattle, conducted a pilot project several years ago, public health investigators walked the neighborhoods to monitor for odor, rats and other issues and observed few problems, said Bill Lasby, solid waste and rodents supervisor for the public health agency for Seattle and King County.

The agency hasn't gotten many complaints about Renton's program. Seattle is in good position to do a pilot project, because residents already separate so much food scraps from their garbage and set it aside for weekly curbside pickup, which would continue, Lasby said.

"We see this is as part of a positive movement in Seattle toward zero waste," said Heather Trim, a leader Zero Waste

Seattle, a coalition of environmental groups and citizens supporting the proposal. "If you're only taking out your trash every other week, you're going to want to make sure that you're not putting your food waste in with the garbage."

The city would give the 800 single-family homes participating in the trash test a one-time \$100 stipend for their troubles; the neighborhoods haven't been selected yet. Ratepayers would save less than 10 percent, but can expect a 20 percent reduction in truck traffic through neighborhoods, officials said.

Robin Freedman with Waste Management, one of the nation's largest private garbage contractors, which handles garbage collection for Renton and parts of Seattle, said the company supports the effort. "In the end, it really supports waste reduction and increases recycling over time, and we support that," she said.

Seattle resident Bruce Danielson thinks he could squeeze two weeks of trash into his 20-gallon garbage can, but he wonders about problems with odor and animals breaking into garbage cans.

"If they can find a way to address the odor problem, with people leaving garbage out for an extra week, it would be a good way to save money," he said. "I'm sure willing to give it a shot."

Elta Ratliff and her family of five have embraced Seattle's recycling and composting ethos since they moved here from Atlanta two years ago. She loves the idea but would like to pay less if she receives less-frequent service.

The family uses the smallest trash bin offered by the city. It has bins for everything, making it easy to separate banana peels and cereal boxes from the plastics-like sandwich bags - that can't be recycled.

"The way Seattle does things is so fresh and progressive," she said.

Still, thousands of tons of material that could be recycled or composted are sent on mile-long trains to a landfill about 200 miles away

should do a trial.

"The good part is that people will do a lot more recycling and be more thoughtful about it," she said. "The bad part, especially in the summer, is having stinky garbage (around)."

Most major U.S. cities including New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Houston and Phoenix collect trash every week. Portland, Ore., began less-frequent garbage collection last fall. Smaller cities in Washington state, such as Renton and Olympia, made the switch years ago. The city of Tacoma, south of Seattle, recently completed a pilot project and is weighing whether to move to every-other-week pickups.

In Seattle, the move would only nudge the city's annual recycling rate up by less than one percent. But the city has already tackled some of the biggest recycling issues, so this would help the city toward its goal of a 60 percent recycling rate, city solid waste director Tim Croll told councilmembers last week.

Seattle recycles about 53 percent of its trash, and diverts about 125,000 tons of food scraps and yard waste out of landfills each year. Residents currently put food scraps and yard waste in one bin, trash in another, and cardboard and other recyclable materials in a third bin.

Still, thousands of tons of material that could be recycled or composted are sent on mile-long trains to a landfill about 200 miles away, said Seattle City Councilman Richard Conlin, who backs the bi-monthly trash pickup proposal. "There's lots of opportunity to increase efficiency."

Surveys show Seattle customers are divided, said Croll.

When Portland rolled out every-other-week trash service last fall, some were unhappy about the prospect of leaving dirty diapers and bags of pet poop in the garbage for more than a week. Others worried about reduced service, potential odor or vermin problems, or being forced

Urban League Chooses City Leader Pamela Banks as CEO

SEATTLE, WA — After a year of reorganizing and rebuilding, the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle (ULMS) has named a new CEO with deep community roots, a penchant for getting programs funded, and a reputation for engaging large, diverse audiences.

Pamela Banks has over 20 years of managerial and administration experience working in city departments, including her current job as the program manager for the City of Seattle's Dept. of Neighborhoods. Prior to this role, Banks served as the community outreach director for Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels' Office, public relations manager for Housing & Human Services, and the strategic advisor for the Dept. of Transportation.

Walle Ralkowski, board chair of ULMS said of her appointment: "Pamela has managed large teams with budgets ranging from \$500,000 to \$5 million dollars. She was instrumental in seeking funds and establishing the Seattle Youth Violence Protection Project Initiative which brought the Urban League a grant focused on street outreach to reduce gang and youth violence. In addition, she helped start youth programs so disadvantaged kids could participate in sports programs and was founding board member to the Garfield High Foundation."

In accepting the position, Banks said she was ready to take on a new role in the community after 30 years in public service employment. "My passion and experience are precisely what the Urban League has championed for years: education, housing, and getting people jobs. I have been a long-time advocate and friend of the Urban



Pamela Banks

Banks will assume the post in June

League and now see me focusing on rebuilding this amazing organization."

One reference of hers summarized his support of Banks by saying that the nature of the Urban League has changed: "The African American community has dispersed from a Seattle core population to three of the surrounding counties. She is a familiar face in front of the area's growing ethnic communities — and her roots are firmly planted in understanding the needs of the African American community."

The announcement today culminates a nationwide search with judging from a local selection committee that spent over a month selecting the right person to restore ULMS's rightful place in the area's very

diverse population. It included Seattle City Council member Bruce Harrell, NW Asian Weekly Publisher Assunta Ng, Attorney and Diversity Director for law firm Davis, Wright Tremaine Karen Russell, KCTS's Enrique Cerna, former NAACP President Lacy Steele, Seattle Urban League's Young Professional President Carl Bailey, ULMS Treasurer Steve Okamura, ULMS Board member Herman McKinney, Franklin High School Assistant Principal Amber Jenkins Fields and UW Sociology Professor Alex Harris, in addition to Ralkowski.

Finalists were sent down to Denver (CO) to be interviewed by a panel of National Urban League affiliate leaders as well as executive leaders from headquarters. These interviews concluded late last week and the final decision was reached just days ago.

Banks will assume the post in June.

The Seattle Public Library Offers Computer Classes For Beginners

The Seattle Public Library offers free beginning computer classes for people who have little or no experience with computers.

The classes are free and open to the public. Registration is not required, except where noted. Seating may be limited based on room capacity. Parking is available in the Central Library garage at the regular rates. Free parking is available at the branches. Class descriptions, times and locations are listed below. Locations vary each month. For more information call 206-386-4636 or Ask a Librarian.

Computer Basics 1 — Learn how to use a computer keyboard and mouse.

- 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday, April 16 at the Beacon Hill Branch, 2821 Beacon Ave. S., 206-684-4711

- 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, May 1 at the Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave., Level 4, Boeing Technology Training Center Room 4, 206-386-4636

Computer Basics 2 — Learn how to use basic features of the Windows software operating system. The session will cover using the toolbars, scroll bar and text boxes.

- 10:30 a.m. to noon Friday, April 13 at the Southwest Branch, 9010 35th Ave. S.W., 206-684-7455 (Registration is required; call the branch or visit in person to register.)

- 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday, April 30 at the Beacon Hill Branch, 2821 Beacon Ave. S., 206-684-4711

- 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, May 3 at

the Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave., Level 4, Boeing Technology Training Center Room 4, 206-386-4636

Computer Basics — This class incorporates the content of Computer Basics 1 and Computer Basics 2.

- 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 17 at the Northeast Branch, 6801 35th Ave. N.E., 206-684-7539

Email Basics — Get a free email account and learn how to use it, including how to send email, send attachments and use the address book.

- 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, April 12 at the Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave., Level 4, Boeing Technology Training Center Room 4, 206-386-4636

- 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Thursday, April 26 at the Lake City Branch, 12501 28th Ave. N.E., 206-684-7518

- 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday, May 10 at the Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave., Level 4, Boeing Technology Training Center Room 4, 206-386-4636

- 10:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 19 at the Southwest Branch, 9010 35th Ave. S.W., 206-684-7455 (Registration is required; call the branch or visit in person to register.)

- 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 30 at the Greenwood Branch, 8016 Greenwood Ave. N., 206-684-4086 (Registration is required; call the branch or visit to register.)

Read the rest of this story online at www.theskanner.com

