

Plastic Bags in Flagstaff Response to City Council Questions

FEBRUARY 17, 2014

Presentation Outline

- Highlights of responses
- Update on plastic bag focus group
- Discussion

26 Questions Asked by City Council

What is the environmental impact of making plastic bags and reusable bags?

What is the environment impact that goes into making cloth bags?

What is the environmental impact or the process that creates plastic bags? Including energy use and toxic byproducts?

How much water and energy go into washing reusable bags?

Many reusable bags seem to be polypropylene and not made in the USA. What are the reusable bags that are being most often used?

What is the cost on the business side for those reusable bags?

What is the cost for cotton bags, especially water costs. Pluses and minuses of using both bags.

Are most point of sale bags made in the US?

Can we put a bunch of bags in a bag and have them brought to the MRF in single stream recycling?

Where can we bring those bags, TREX was mentioned, feasible?

What would a partnership with the TREX plant look like?

Is there a return on that that brings money back in?

The Norton facility is locked for general items during the evening.

How do we resolve that issue?

How do we offer more recycling options in our city facilities? Can we partner up with the grocery stores and bring them plastic bags collected at City facilities?

What information do you have on plastic bag residential recycling programs?

What is the Sustainability Program's budget and how are you funded?

How much do you spend on recycling?

How much would it cost to educate the community?

Could we look into cities that have a successful education programs and see what their budgets look like and where their funding stream comes from?

How many stores provide cash incentives for people who bring their own bag?

Is there a way to measure bag central station store participation rates?

Are there any stores outside of bag central station that provide credits for people who bring their own bags?

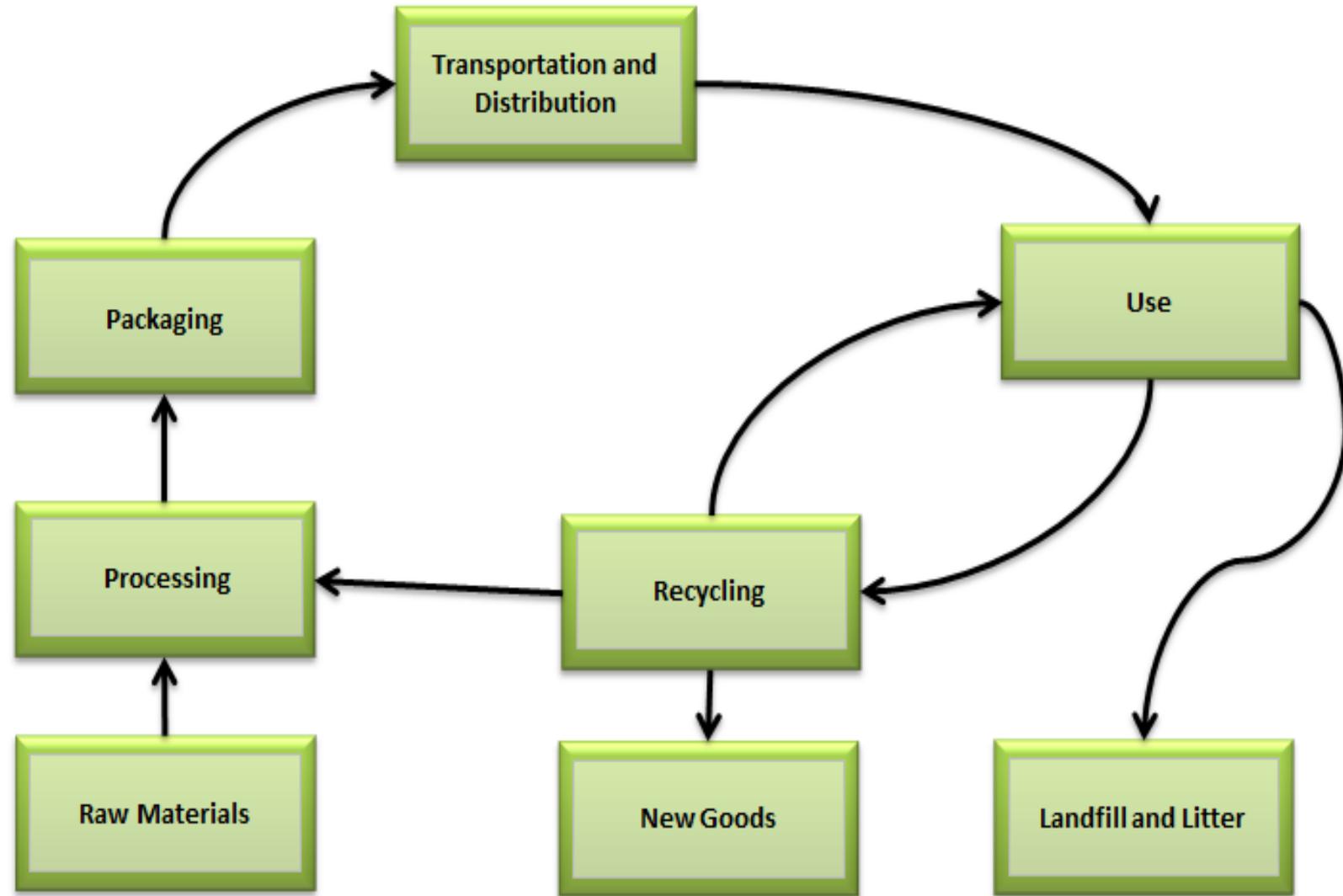
What is the cost to the store of a paper bags vs a plastic bag?

Are the paper bags being recycled?

How many household are there in Flagstaff and how many now are bringing their own bags? Do we know why people against plastic bags are still not bringing their own bags to stores?

Tucson addressed this a year ago and went with a volunteer education program, what has happened in Tucson since then?

Questions that pertain to environmental impacts require Life Cycle Analysis



Environmental Impact Questions

How much water and energy go into washing reusable bags?

There are too many variables to determine a simple answer. One needs to assess: type of washing machine being used, efficiency standard of machine, water temperature, wash cycle chosen and number of articles being laundered with the bag.

What is the environmental impact of the process that creates plastic bags? Including energy use and toxic byproducts?

Plastic resin pellets are an example of byproducts. Preproduction plastic is a problematic type of litter. One pound of pelletized HDPE plastic can contain approximately 22,000 pellets. Preproduction plastic slowly photodegrades over time by breaking into smaller pieces. Researchers are unclear as to how long it takes some petroleum-based plastics to degrade. Depending on the plastic, estimates range from one to 100 years.

Outreach and Education Budget Questions

What is the Sustainability Program's budget and how are you funded? How much do you spend on recycling?

The Sustainability Program is 1 of 3 programs funded by the Environmental Management Fee. The Greater Flagstaff Forest Partnership annual membership is funded by the fee.

The Program's FY 15 total budget is \$287,671 including personnel (24% of Environmental Management Fee revenue). Operational budget is \$81,160 for municipal and residential energy efficiency, residential energy rebates, municipal and residential recycling, climate adaptation, renewable energy development and community gardens.

- FY 15 \$12,370 budgeted for residential recycling education initiatives.
- FY 15 \$5,000 budgeted for municipal recycling contamination reduction initiatives.

Outreach and Education Budget Questions

How much would it cost to educate the community?

The Sustainability Program spends \$0.25 per resident on recycling education.

The Louis Berger Group and City of Santa Fe completed a study finding that \$2.00 - \$3.00 should be spent per person on recycling education and outreach.

Could we look into cities that have a successful education programs and see what their budgets look like and where their funding stream comes from?

Aspen, CO - \$2.69 per person

Austin, TX - \$2.22 per person

Portland, OR - \$0.95 per person

San Francisco, CA - \$4.24 - \$6.05 per person

Santa Fe, NM - \$1.10 per person

Seattle, WA - \$1.31 per person

Plastic Bag Recycling Feasibility Questions

Can we put a bunch of bags in a bag and have them brought to the MRF in single stream recycling?

The MRF would need machinery upgrades, a facility expansion and staffing.

What would a partnership with the TREX plant look like?

According to TREX they have tried to participate in curbside recycling programs but have never found them to be successful. They prefer to collect bags/plastics through voluntary store recycling initiatives or manned donation centers. Bags containing ANY moisture will not be accepted. A 1% to 2% contamination rate is acceptable.

Solid Waste staff calculated a curbside recycling stream would generate \$740.00 a year.

Plastic Bag Focus Group

Scope – Provide stakeholders an opportunity to dialogue with people who hold differing views about plastic bag management. Provide City Council with options for plastic bags that have support from diverse stakeholders.

Process – Convene a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss policy options. Group will meet three times for approximately 2 hours per meeting.

Group – 7 members of the community volunteered to participate in a collaborative process.

Facilitation – Kerry Blume has been contracted to facilitate meetings.

Schedule – 1st meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2015. Staff will return to Council in April with recommendations from the Sustainability Commission, Focus Group, and staff.

Questions for Council to Consider

How should the embedded costs of plastic bags be managed?

What does the City Council want to address?

- Reducing consumption
- Litter
- Environmental impacts
- Stormwater impacts
- Cost of management
- Landfill impacts
- Recycling logistical challenges
- Consumer behavior
- Lack of viable recycling markets

Discussion?
