

## Highlights: Recycling 2020 Report

The existence of curbside recycling programs is being threatened by extremely challenging economic times. Onondaga County is not exempt from this world-wide crisis. To best position our community, OCRRA established an ad hoc committee of our board to thoroughly evaluate the options and develop a strategy. The work product of this committee is OCRRA's Recycling 2020 Report; available at: [www.tinyurl.com/Recycle2020Report](http://www.tinyurl.com/Recycle2020Report).

## Background

- OCRRA manages Onondaga County's trash and recycling. OCRRA is not an arm of county government and relies primarily on trash disposal fees for funding; **not taxes**.
- In 2018, the recycling industry changed drastically when China closed its doors to recycling; flooding markets with material. The sale of recycled items no longer covered the costs to sort and market residential recyclables. Now, the viability of curbside recycling is threatened. Without changes to the program or funding, the recycling program will likely dissolve, forsaking decades of innovation and community participation.
- Instead of raising trash disposal fees in 2020 to cover the rising cost of recycling, OCRRA is covering those costs with our cash reserves (budgeted at \$2.5 million). Since experts anticipate a slow market recovery, this is not a sustainable solution. The Recycling 2020 Report provides recommendations to address the current circumstances.

## Report Recommendations

Implementation of the following recommendations would involve public notification and consultation with the County Legislature, when applicable.

### SHORT-TERM

- If market conditions worsen, begin charging haulers to deliver residential recyclables (currently OCRRA subsidizes this, so there is no fee to haulers).
- Seek permit variance from the NYSDEC to temporarily send recyclables to the WTE Facility, for electricity generation, when costs exceed budgeted resources.
- Explore removing glass from curbside recycling to control costs and improve quality of paper and cardboard recycling, prior to a NYS Bottle Bill expansion.

### LONG-TERM

The Committee recommends OCRRA continue to vigorously support the following policy solutions:

- Ask the Governor to direct municipal financial relief to help cover residential material sorting costs, estimated at nearly \$60 million statewide (outside of NYC) in 2020.

- Expand the NYS Bottle Bill to include wine and liquor bottles, as well as non-alcoholic glass beverage containers, which comprise approximately 50% of the incoming glass stream at a Material Recovery Facility (MRF). If collected curbside, glass costs money to recycle; it contaminates other materials at the MRF and is abrasive to sorting equipment. Expanding the NYS Bottle Bill could result in recycling more than 100,000 tons of clean glass annually.
- Establish Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and paper, thereby shifting the end-of-life management of these materials to manufacturers and consumers, and relieving taxpayers and municipalities of the costs to sort, recycle and market these materials.

The Committee further recommends that OCRRA work with economic development agencies and manufacturers to increase local demand for recycled materials.

Relying upon local markets for the processing of our recyclable materials significantly reduces our exposure to global market shifts; reduces transportation costs and emissions; and sustains local jobs, which will help stabilize recycling.

## **Keep Recycling**

A high-quality recycling stream is essential to program sustainability. Onondaga County residents and businesses should continue to recycle – and recycle right. Visit [www.OCRRA.org](http://www.OCRRA.org) for the latest recycling instructions. Together, we recycle more than 37,000 tons of materials each year!