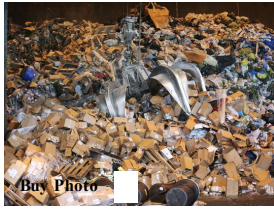


Advanced Recycling Center is good for Indianapolis

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(Photo: Matt Detrich/The Star)

It's disappointing to see a statewide organization that exists to support recycling continue to spread misinformation about the new Covanta Advanced Recycling Center project in Indianapolis. But, clearly this is the intent of the Indiana Recycling Coalition in its recent letter to The Indianapolis Star. The question is — why?

In its mission statement, the IRC states that its goal is to support policies that "conserve our natural resources, reduce energy use, encourage environmental responsibility and create green jobs through recycling." What the IRC does not want Indy residents to know is that, once completed, the Covanta Advanced Recycling Center will in fact:

1. Conserve our natural resources — by immediately increasing recycling by five times the current rate and recovering up to 80-90 percent of valuable resources such as recyclable paper, cardboard, plastics and metals.
2. Reduce energy use — when recycled into new products, the materials recovered will save the equivalent of the annual energy use of more than 20,000 homes.
3. Encourage environmental responsibility — saving greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to pulling 40,000 cars off the road every year.
4. Create green jobs through recycling — by putting 70 Hoosiers to work during construction and creating 60 local full-time, green jobs once the facility is operational.

Covanta would not invest \$45 million into building the Advanced Recycling Center if the intention was to burn the material. That simply doesn't make any business sense. The company has every incentive to ensure the recyclable materials that are recovered meet the needs of valued manufacturing customers. And those remaining materials not able to be recycled will generate renewable steam energy through the Covanta Energy-from-Waste facility.

The company continues to seek outlets for glass, the recovery of which is not possible because there is currently no economically viable outlet. However, plans for the Advanced Recycling Center allow for the addition of a glass line, and the company has pledged to work toward glass recovery in the near future.

Meanwhile, this project will immediately advance sustainable materials management in Indianapolis by leaps and bounds at no cost to the taxpayer — without relying on grants and loans that could disappear and leave taxpayers to pick up the tab.

Despite IRC's scare tactics about financial penalties, under the current contract extension, taxpayers will pay nothing for recycling no matter how much waste the city delivers to Covanta, leaving the company to shoulder 100 percent of the risk.

So why is the IRC opposing this project and spreading false information with nothing to back it up? We believe the coalition has been misled by companies that want Indy's recyclables for their own recycling operations, and as a result, are now misleading the public. We believe it boils down to business competition — not about the right or wrong way to recycle.

Some of the very same paper companies that have publically opposed Covanta's plan to increase recycling in Indiana have purchased recycled fiber from a similar facility in Montgomery, Ala., owned and operated by Infinitus Energy, and the purchasing company has never rejected the material for quality reasons or any other reason. In fact, the company has paid Infinitus Energy above-market rates for this material. Meanwhile, Covanta has lined up multinational and local recycling firms that are ready to buy the paper, metal and plastics that will be separated at its Advanced Recycling Center.

The IRC may choose to ignore these facts, but Indianapolis residents need to know the truth. The technology behind the Covanta Advanced Recycling Center is not "dirty" — it's different. And after decades of struggling to increase recycling, it's time to try something new. The Advanced Recycling Center is an important investment in Indianapolis' future and will make real progress in dramatically increasing recycling, saving energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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