

Deal will increase recycling in city, mayor says

By John Tuohy 7:29 p.m. EDT June 18, 2014



(Photo: Michelle Pemberton/The Star)

Mayor Greg Ballard on Wednesday formally backed a plan for a private vendor to build a \$45 million recycling plant on the Southwestside, despite objections by some City-County Council foes who had demanded public hearings on the project.

The plant would be built by Covanta Indianapolis, would be privately financed and would put all the city's trash into a recycling sorter. Ballard first publicly discussed the project last week. He said it would, by default, increase to 100 percent the proportion of residents who recycle.

Environmentalists howling: [City's new recycling plan trashed by critics \(/story/news/politics/2014/06/10/citys-new-recycling-plan-trashed-critics/10303495/\)](/story/news/politics/2014/06/10/citys-new-recycling-plan-trashed-critics/10303495/)

"This is a common-sense solution," Ballard said at a news conference at Covanta, 2320 S. Harding St. "This state of the art facility will take Indy from a 10 percent recycling rate to 100 percent."

Indianapolis now has a curbside program in which just 10 percent of residents participate. Recycling advocates say the rate is low because of a \$6 monthly charge. They urged Ballard to strengthen curbside recycling, which they say is cleaner and more efficient, before jumping to a "one-stream" recycling center.

City-County Councilman John Barth said, at the least, a public hearing on what was best was warranted, and he had scheduled one July 9 before the Community Affairs Committee.

"It's very concerning that this deal was made behind closed doors with no input from others," Barth said. "This is something we should study and discuss."

Council President Maggie Lewis said she was worried that such decisions "had become the norm."

Ballard said he discussed the project with Democratic leaders and all the interested parties.

"We talked to them," Ballard said. "Those people involved knew we were moving in this direction a long, long time ago, months and months ago. For them to portray otherwise is wrong."

Ballard said the city has been trying to increase curbside recycling to no avail for years.

"We have tried improving curbside for decades now, and we are still at 10 percent," Ballard said. "It doesn't look like it's going to get any better. We are doing this for the 90 percent."

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