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Recycling plan could come at no cost or effort to residents

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INDIANAPOLIS (WISH) – Mayor Greg Ballard announced a plan Wednesday that he says will have 100 percent of people in Indianapolis recycling at no cost or effort to them.

The city has entered a 10-year contract extension with the company that currently handles residential trash, Covanta.

With that extension, comes a new state of the art facility that will sort and recycle your trash for you.

The new plant will be built right next door to Covanta's existing facility on Harding St. on the city's Southwest side. It's scheduled to be open sometime in 2016. Inside there will be advanced technology that will separate recyclables from garbage.

Neighbors don't have to do a thing different. But, some say this is moving too fast.

"There has been zero feedback from the people of the city and I find that to be very concerning," said city councilman John Barth.

Barth says the program is fundamentally flawed. And he along with the recycling council head says it's incomplete and should also include plans to boost curb side pickup.

"This is an impactful change from how the city does business and potentially has a negative jobs impact for the city because the more you recycle, the better you recycle, that creates jobs," said Barth.

Mayor Ballard says there has been an open dialogue on recycling.

"We've been talking about recycling for years," said Ballard.

He also says over those years not one person has come forward with a plan that didn't include higher fees and mandates. But, this plan, he says is good for the environment, at no cost to the city and is creating 60 permanent jobs.

"Technology always changes economic models and that upsets some people. It's disruptive. But, it's still the common sense thing to do," said Ballard

Covanta is investing \$45 million to build the state of the art New Material Recovery facility, or NMR.

The technology will separate paper, metal and plastic from garbage to then be sold to processors.

"So, we're very confident we will get clean recyclables and there are several processors that want to buy the material that's coming out of this plant because they know that already," said Eric Van Dijk, Pres. Van Dyk Baler Corp.

This will save the city about \$500,000 in fees per year and once Covanta recovers its investment the city will profit share. They will receive \$3 per every ton plus 5 percent of total profit.

Neighbors will throw their trash out the same way they always have. Covanta estimates this will increase the amount of recycled material by 500 percent.

This will not have any impact on the city's existing curbside service.

Still, Carey Hamilton of the Recycling Coalition told 24 Hour News 8 over the phone Wednesday, "Ultimately, if we're going to really serve, going to take advantage of the opportunity to grow the economy and our environment through recycling and create many new green jobs, we need curbside throughout the community."

Ballard says that's just not realistic.

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