

## NEWS

# What's ahead for the landfill as Salina moves toward a 'Zero Waste' philosophy?



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Although the Salina Municipal Solid Waste Landfill is expected to last another 180 years of service to the city, steps are being taken already to reduce the amount of waste going into the designated ground southwest of the city.

When it comes to "Zero Waste," sustainability is one of the main emphases to what Salina is looking at in terms of reducing solid waste production.

"(The city) defined 'Zero Waste' as a philosophy that promoted reuse, recycling and conservation programs," said Renee Trenshaw, a consultant from SCS Engineers.

She said this philosophy looks at how the community can better use the resources it has in a sustainable way, which will reduce the amount of waste going into the landfill.

"By reducing trash, you can extend the life of that landfill," Trenshaw said.

## Steps already underway to help reduce waste

The city began a waste reduction strategies project in 2022, with the goal of looking at how to divert waste from the landfill and looking at the lifecycle of waste.

Preceding this project, a waste and recyclables characterization study was performed, Trenshaw said this study was done in three steps.

"(First) we had a physical waste sort," Trenshaw said. "(After doing) some number crunching to figure out how to collect a representative sample of trash for the Salina, we physically sorted it."

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She said this process consisted in people opening up trash bags from what was brought to the landfill and sorting the contents across tables on site.

"We picked out and categorized waste into 43 different categories," Trenshaw said.

These categories ranged everywhere from different kinds of paper, plastic, textiles, food waste and more.

The study also included a look at waste brought in from industries, such as pallets, piping and others and finally a sort of recyclables from the Salina Drive-Thru Recycling Center (SDRC), which looked at not only the types of recyclables coming to the facility, but also the contamination rate.

"The longer-term goals for that is to say, 'What are the sources of this waste?... and is there waste that is salvageable (or divertible)?" said Jim Teutsch, director of public works for the city of Salina.

## **Input from citizens the next step**

In addition to looking at and receiving data from the actual trash being collected, the city is also asking for input from its citizen their thoughts on waste reduction.

This is being done in several ways, the first of which is an online survey at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/SLNWaste](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SLNWaste), which was released by the city at the end of January and will last until March 3.

"(The survey) is going to focus on seeking information about what the community thinks about recycling, composting (and) other types of material diversion (from the landfill), how important it is to them," Trenshaw said.

On top of the survey, an open house on the topic is also planned on March 29, where the city will seek additional comments from citizens.

"Our plan is to have this survey up (while) the consultant looks at best practices and waste reduction strategies for other communities," said Jim Kowach, operations manager for Salina public works. "We'll take the survey results and this other research and present our findings at (that) public meeting."

After all the data and comments are collected for the waste reduction strategies project, a plan is set to be delivered to the city commission, which can take action on whether to

implement it or not.

## **Why is it important for the community to take part in this initiative?**

Larry Hammonds, superintendent at the landfill, said by taking these initiatives in reducing waste, will benefit the community and extend the life of the landfill.

Hammonds gave the example of one of the most common recyclables he sees come into the landfill, metals.

"People still throw away aluminum cans by the (literal) ton," Hammonds said.

In addition to aluminum and other recyclable metals, Hammonds and Kowach said they are surprised by the amount of usable material that comes into the landfill.

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"We'll see college kids leave or grandma passes away and there be pickup loads of good furniture," Kowach said.

Other instances can be people remodeling their kitchens or repairing roofs after an ice storm where perfectly usable cabinets or even brand new shingles will be thrown out. Because of the regulations and liability, these kinds of usable items can't be removed from the landfill either.

"We have a policy through (Kansas Department of Health and Environment) that's part of our operating plan that there is no salvaging," Hammonds said. " But, I don't think that there's any given day that you can't walk out (to the landfill) and go, 'really? (This was thrown away?)'"

Kowach and Hammond said small steps like this, thinking about how something can still be used before throwing it away or taking things to recycling centers like the SDRC or others in the area, are ways that the community can help reduce waste and extend the life of the Salina Municipal Solid Waste Landfill.

The SDRC is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 125 W. North St. More information about the center, including what is and isn't acceptable to be recycled at the facility can be found at [www.salina-ks.gov/SDRC](http://www.salina-ks.gov/SDRC).

The landfill operates from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays. Fees for disposal begin at \$11 per vehicle for loads up to 500 lbs. with additional fees for certain materials including tires, dirt , rock, asbestos, contaminated soil and more, most of which can be found at [www.salina-ks.gov/Landfill](http://www.salina-ks.gov/Landfill).