

Glass Packaging Institute Q&A on Removal of Glass from Houston's Curbside Stream

March 14, 2016

Is this the largest U.S. city to eliminate glass from its curbside program?

Yes, it would be the largest city in the US to prohibit residents from recycling glass curbside. This is bad public policy. Changing accepted materials in a recycling program due to short-term market changes is a bad precedent to set. It will confuse customers, increasing contamination, which long term could drive up the overall costs of recycling. A recent SurveyUSA poll showed that 90% of Americans say it is important to recycle materials rather than send them to the landfill and 95% want glass to continue to be collected in their recycling program.

What will the effects be of this decision?

The impact of this decision will be very detrimental. The city will also have to pay more to dispose of glass at the landfills, as the number of tons landfilled will increase. The recycling rate for the city will also decrease by 22% with glass removed from the curbside program. Residents not only want to recycle glass bottles and jars, they expect their cities and counties to provide them that option.

Could this have a reverberating effect on contract negotiations between other cities and companies, leading to more cities taking this step?

It sets a negative example for other cities to follow, however we believe that when presented with the facts, most communities will chose to keep glass in their recycling programs. Residents want to recycle glass and expect their local government to provide them with comprehensive recycling services. Recycling is an important part of any community's sustainability efforts. The City of Houston is expected to save \$900,000 annually over two years through its new contract. This equates to only about 44 cents per household per month. We think providing glass recycling is an investment that most communities will want to make when faced with the alternative of sending this 100% recyclable materials to the landfill.

Is Waste Management trying to eliminate glass in other cities, as well?

Waste Management has cited collection and recycling of glass containers as a challenge for their business model. Glass has been singled out, as the prices paid for commodities have been down across the board. The prices paid for amber, clear and green glass have been consistent for many years. Trimix (glass, mixed with solid waste and other recyclables) has seen its value go down, due to the amount of cleaning and sorting that needs to be done. Tri-mix as a commodity, is largely the result of the single stream recycling system. We believe that Waste Management is

happy to recycle glass as long as they are compensated for the costs of providing that service. GPI is working with the recycling industry to create best management practices and specifications that will clean up the quality of the recycled glass commodity. This approach is much preferable long term for the recycling industry as compared to sending glass to the landfill.

Could this hurt the recycling rate in Houston?

Absolutely, removing glass will decrease the recycling rate in Houston by 22%. The City of Houston is a leader in sustainability on many fronts. Removing glass from recycling is a giant step backwards for their sustainability efforts and their recycling goals.