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This Waste Site Is Much Needed

The hazardous waste site being planned by several local agencies is much needed and even overdue. Wherever it should be located (10 possible sites, most in industrial areas, have been identified), let it proceed quickly.

In this instance, "hazardous waste" may be too alarming a term. What will be collected at the site is household waste that shouldn't be dumped into the landfill, such as paint, old pesticides, some types of cleaners and drain openers. Nothing will be processed or disposed of on the site. Officials expect about three-quart-

ers of the waste to be recycled or picked up by residents for re-use (paint, for instance). The rest will be trucked to disposal facilities elsewhere.

Residents of Douglas and Sarpy Counties need somewhere to take the kind of trash they can't send to the landfill, can't recycle and can't reuse themselves. They need to get rid of it safely, without endangering the environment or their neighbors. And, after officials finish work on the proposed waste site, they will have just that.

Local Agencies Move Ahead With Household Waste Plans

BY JULIE ANDERSON
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A partnership of local agencies Friday announced a list of 10 possible sites for the Omaha area's first proposed regional collection facility for leftover paint, pesticides and other household chemicals.

Clare Duda, president of the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency board, said the naming of sites signals that the agencies are moving ahead with a project that is "long overdue and very important for our community."

Local agencies recognized the need for a permanent facility to take household hazardous wastes at least a decade ago. A recent law change, however, removed a roadblock to developing a center by freeing up money from a state waste-reduction fund.

The sites were announced at a press conference held by the partners in the project. Besides MAPA, they are the City of Omaha, Douglas County, Sarpy County and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Among those attending the briefing with Duda, a Douglas County commissioner, were Omaha Mayor Hal Daub and Omaha City Councilmen Paul Koneck and Marc Kraft.

Daub said the center would offer environmental benefits by keeping hazardous waste out of landfills and by heading off dumping in ditches, storm sewers and vacant lots.

Neighborhood groups also will benefit by having a place to take the wastes they collect during annual cleanup days, he said.

The facility, like existing operations in Council Bluffs and Des Moines, would offer area residents a permanent place to drop off household chemicals.

Such chemicals, which include cleaners, drain openers and other products, can pose hazards in and around the home and can pollute rivers, lakes and even drinking water sources.

The center initially would serve Douglas and Sarpy County households. A study commissioned by the partners indicates that residents in those counties produce almost 1,200 tons of household hazardous waste a year.

With population growth and with Washington and Cass Counties added in, the potential waste stream would be expected to reach 1,400 tons by 2010.

Eight of the sites named Friday are owned by Douglas County, Sarpy County or the City of Omaha. Two are private property. Most are industrial

Possible Sites for Hazardous-Waste Facility

■ I-80 and 60th Street

12 acres south of Interstate 80 between the Little Papillion Creek and 60th Street. Site is used to stockpile aggregate materials.

Owner: Douglas County.

■ 60th and Harrison Streets

17.2 acres next to Seymour Smith Park. The Omaha Recycling Center has a material recovery facility here.

Owner: City of Omaha.

■ 120th and I Streets

5.3 acres used by the City of Omaha Street Maintenance Department. Sand, salt and other treatment materials are stockpiled here.

Owner: City of Omaha.

■ 20th Street East and Avenue H

9-acre fenced vacant property.

Owner: City of Omaha.

■ 137th Circle and Giles Road

7.5 acres. Private development known as

the I-80 Industrial Park.

Owner: Private.

■ Highway 75 and L Street

56.3 acres. This is the former Omaha Stockyards area and is being redeveloped.

Owner: City of Omaha.

■ Highway 75 and Gilmore Avenue

7 acres. Former Omaha Pollution Control Corporation facility. The majority of the land is vacant. It is used for stockpiling materials.

Owner: City of Omaha.

■ 120th and State Streets

160 acres. Site is the former Douglas County State Street Landfill.

Owner: Douglas County.

■ Fourth Street and Abbott Drive

10 acres.

Owner: Private.

■ 156th Street and Fairview Road

160 acres at the current Sarpy County Landfill.

Owner: Sarpy County.

tracts, and none is in residential neighborhoods. Efforts were made to keep the sites centrally located for residents of both counties.

Because of the cost of buying property, the partners would prefer to stick with land they already own. But they will consider additional sites brought to their attention by the public.

"If we find a better site along the way, we can take a look at that, too," said Fred Scarpello of Jacobson Helgoth Consultants, the engineering firm working on the project.

The facility will be enclosed, so no odors are anticipated. An estimated 75 percent of the materials will be recycled or picked up for reuse by residents at the center's free swap shop.

Materials that are not recycled will not be processed on site but will be packaged and sent off site to regulated hazardous waste disposal facilities.

"It is safer to have this in a controlled environment than sitting under people's sinks or in garages," Duda said.

Paint is expected to make up more than half the material brought to the center and used motor oil about one-third. Other materials that would be accepted include pesticides, pool chemicals, mercury thermometers and automobile and rechargeable batteries.

Traffic to the facility is not expected to be heavy. An estimated 180 people would use the facility each week.

Although the design of the facility

has not been completed, preliminary drawings indicate it will have a drop-off area out front and landscaping around the building.

Estimates put the cost of the new center at \$1.1 million with annual operating costs of \$420,000.

The project partners have received a \$150,000 grant from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality to locate and design the center.

Both Douglas and Sarpy Counties already have raised their landfill tipping fees, which is expected to bring in \$110,000 a year for operating costs.

The local agencies will be working on securing additional funding, including seeking state grants for construction.

Moving ahead with the facility will depend on getting agreement from area residents, Scarpello said.

The partners' survey indicated that 78 percent of Douglas and Sarpy County residents contacted indicated that a facility was needed. More than half of those surveyed said they were very likely to use a permanent facility.

Public meetings will be scheduled, although no dates have been set, and project partners will meet with neighborhood and other groups.

The list of 10 potential sites was culled from an initial list of 38 properties. Some of the factors considered in the initial cut were size, available space and closeness to homes.

The partners hope to narrow the list of sites later this spring, after taking any public site suggestions.