

June 10, 2022

To: Mayor Haila and Ames City Council

From: Ames Climate Action Team

If Ames is going to meet our 2030 and 2050 carbon emissions reduction goals, we have to get moving. One area to focus on now is our waste stream. The SSG and SIC have identified the reduction of waste stream-related emissions as one of the six big action moves for the city to take. Specifically, the city's handling of plastic waste is where we can take action now.

Plastic recycling makes sense for four major reasons:

- It complements the current consultant study for future of incineration in Ames, and regardless of that report conclusion, jumps us ahead on DNR priorities (Waste diversion & recycling are a higher priority for permitting than combustion and landfill).
- We need the community engaged in the climate action process. Plastic recycling responds positively to citizen and business interest (identified in the 2018 SCS report\* and the 2019 League of Women Voters report\*\*) and engages the community in climate action activity by giving them something to do.
- It is environmentally responsible -- lowering our carbon emissions footprint, keeping toxins out of the air and landfills, and reducing our contribution to the global water footprint.
- It generates revenue by selling materials and saves money by burning less waste and natural gas.

We request that one or more of the following options be initiated now:

Opt. 1 As a condition of permits, require haulers to offer curbside recycle collection.

Opt. 2 Sort plastics out of the waste stream at the resource recovery plant (RRP). Four years ago, Ames paid a consultant whose recommendations included the installation of an optical sorter and related equipment, citing a payback in less than two years for a roughly one-million-dollar investment\*. The technology is being successfully used (DSM metro waste, Mid America Recycling are two local examples) to efficiently divert plastics and other specified materials from the waste stream. It is also important to move forward with this option because future DNR permits will require recycling ahead of incineration or landfill.

Opt. 3 Expand bin collection for #1 and #2 plastics, similar to our successful program for collecting glass.

We see a lot of opportunity here for Ames, and can provide more in-depth material on any of these points raised. Thank you in advance for your consideration and action.

Referenced:

\*Waste Diversion Enhancement and Recommendations, action recommendations that would increase fuel to power plant and reduce material to landfill, saving tipping fees.

<https://www.cityofames.org/home/showdocument?id=49177>

\*\*LWV local waste management study, 2020 report and policy recommendations

<https://my.lwv.org/iowa/ames-story-county/local-waste-management-study-0>

<https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/ames-resource-recovery-system-2020-report-and-policy-recommendations.pdf>