

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# Vancouver, Washington

Population: 69,000

Type of Community: Urban

Type of Program: Cans

Program Start Date: January 1990

*An excellent public information and education program is imperative.*

## Getting Started: Why Pay-As-You-Throw?

The city of Vancouver is located in Clark County, the southernmost county in the state of Washington, along the north shore of the Columbia River. Garbage collection service in the city is mandatory and has been a contracted service since 1937. In 1989, the state of Washington passed the Waste Not Washington Act, which required cities and counties to implement programs aimed at reaching a statewide goal of 50 percent waste reduction and recycling by 1995. In an effort to reduce our reliance on landfill disposal and to meet local and statewide goals, the city adopted the philosophy, "The more you use, the more you pay."

basic service and a corresponding decrease in customers choosing the two-can service.

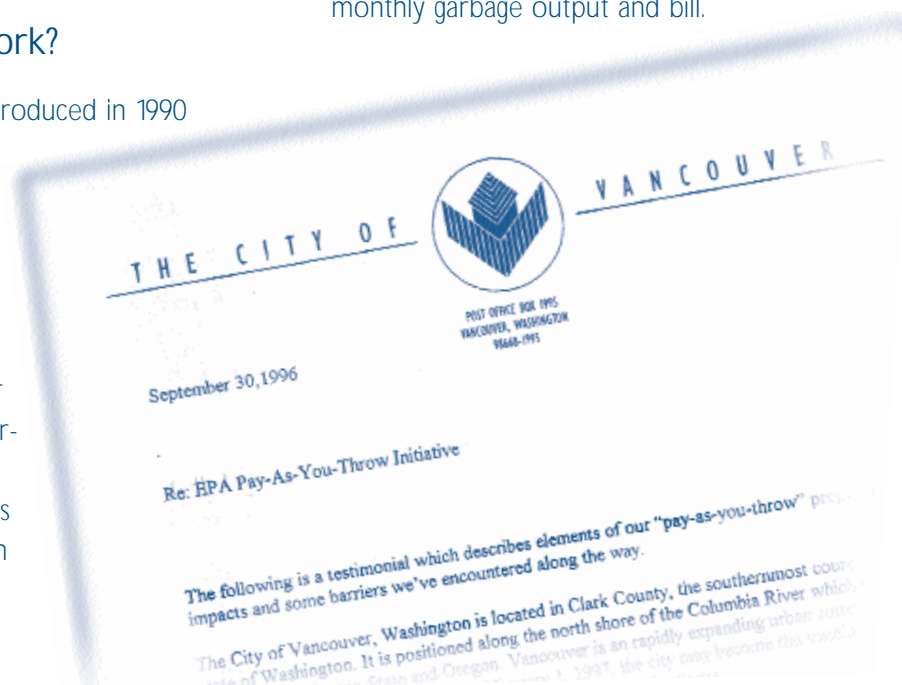
In 1992, the city implemented a weekly mini-can option, and within five months nearly 500 residents had switched to the mini-can. By the end of the following year, this number had doubled and the city was receiving numerous customer requests for more service choices. Three new residential garbage service level options were implemented: every-other-week 32-gallon can, every-other-week mini-can, and monthly 32-gallon can service. These options are increasingly being utilized as customers learn how waste reduction and avid recycling can help them reduce their monthly garbage output and bill.

## How Does It Work?

Linear rates were introduced in 1990

when the city council approved a rate increase that made the second can rate 84 percent greater than the first can. After 15 months, our data showed a 13 percent increase in the number of customers choosing the one-can

***Two years into our program, residents had significantly increased their recycling—and many had also requested services that could help them reduce waste even more!***





## Complementary Programs

In 1992, in cooperation with Clark County, the city implemented a curbside recycling program. The program is mandatory for single-family households, and all households are billed \$3.10 per month for weekly recycling as part of their garbage service. A similar program is also available to all multifamily complexes within the city limits.

The city's contracted hauler also offers a voluntary yard debris collection program. For a monthly fee (\$5.55), customers can set out up to 96 gallons of material. Since the program is voluntary, it does not conflict with citizens who choose to compost their organic wastes at home or self-haul to local composting facilities.

## Meeting the Challenges: Tips for Other Communities

Vancouver has encountered a variety of challenges throughout the past several years, and we hope that other jurisdictions may benefit from our experiences. A significant concern has been whether we are receiving accurate and up-to-date data from our garbage and recycling program service providers. It is important to select providers who have excellent computer tracking and reporting systems and adequate staffing in place to accomplish these needs. All solid waste programs require the contractor to provide monthly reports that enable the city to track the program's activities and monitor progress.

An excellent public information and education program is imperative. Although our experiences with new program campaigns have been very positive, it has been a challenge to ensure that all citizens are informed

about new and existing programs and the different service levels available to them. Our ongoing challenge has been finding sufficient time and resources to dedicate to frequent, targeted public relations campaigns.

When the city first attempted to implement our once-a-month collection option, it was not approved. The city council, along with the local health district, had concerns about its potential negative impact on health and safety. Monthly service was eventually approved due to the pressure from recently annexed citizens, namely avid recyclers and senior citizens who were used to handling recycling and garbage on their own. The variety of service options, although positive from a waste reduction and customer standpoint, increases the instability of the revenue stream for the service providers and makes enforcement of mandatory collection more difficult.

## Program Success

We have found volume-based linear rates to be an effective tool for encouraging residents and businesses to examine their disposal habits, to recycle more, and to decrease their garbage service levels. The city exceeded its 50 percent recycling goal by the end of 1995. Based on available data sources, it was determined that 51 percent of the city's wastes were recycled and 49 percent were disposed of in the landfill that year. While some residents are motivated by environmental stewardship, others are encouraged to change habits based on their pocketbooks. Although volume-based linear rates pose challenges, we believe that they are the driving force behind our success in meeting our waste reduction and recycling goals.

*Vancouver's success story was compiled by Andrea Friedrichsen and Tamera J. Kihs, Solid Waste Program Manager, (360) 696-8186.*