

## **Comments on Increasing Cardboard Recycling and Reducing Disposable Bag Use**

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) is pleased that Council directed City Staff to develop ordinances concerning increased cardboard recycling and disposable shopping bag use reduction at the work session on November 27<sup>th</sup>. We believe that an ordinance requiring residential, commercial, and industrial customers to recycle cardboard instead of placing it in the trash would lead both to a significant increase in diverting materials from the landfill and to a significant decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. Although reducing the use of disposable paper and plastic shopping bags would be less impactful in these areas, such a reduction would provide other benefits, such as increasing the efficiency of single stream recycling and reducing litter.

Despite the fact that cardboard is easily recyclable, a great deal winds up in the Larimer County landfill – about 12,000 tons per year, according to city documents. This represents over 9% of the municipal waste stream. Since the 2011 diversion rate from the landfill was 47%, requiring all cardboard to be recycled would allow Ft. Collins to exceed its goal of a 50% waste diversion rate.

Recycling 12,000 tons of cardboard per year would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of 42,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide, or about 2% of total community-wide emissions. Requiring cardboard recycling would be a relatively easy way of maintaining our forward momentum on reducing the City's impact on climate change.

Although Ft. Collins would be the first city in Colorado to require that cardboard be recycled, a number of other U.S. cities do this, including Durham, Cleveland, Seattle, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These programs have generally been successful and enjoy widespread community support. Given our community's support for other environmental programs, we would anticipate that an ordinance keeping cardboard out of the waste stream would be well received here.

Although the impact of disposable plastic and paper bags on the landfill and on greenhouse gas emissions is nearly two orders of magnitude lower than that of cardboard, it's a little disturbing to think that Ft. Collins residents dispose of nearly 50 million such bags per year. The FCSG supports efforts to reduce this waste of resources, including requiring stores to charge a fee for plastic and paper bags, or to give their customers credit for providing their own.

In conclusion, the Fort Collins Sustainability Group looks forward to seeing council approve ordinances early in the new year that would significantly reduce the amounts of cardboard and disposable shopping bags that are currently being sent to the landfill.