

## Going blue to go green; Hastings places blue recycling containers in key locations



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Nine blue recycling bins in Hastings provide pedestrians with an alternative to throwing their plastics, metals, glass, and paper products in the garbage.

The Downtown Development Authority has taken a big step toward greening the city. Nine blue recycling containers recently were installed in key locations and intersections throughout Hastings, giving people an environmentally friendly alternative to throwing recyclables in the garbage. Bins have been placed at the Thornapple Plaza, the corner of Church and State streets, the corner of Jefferson and Court streets, Tyden Park, Fish Hatchery Park, and the 1st Ward Park.

The bins are the brainchild of the downtown development authority.

"I think that the DDA just decided that it was a nice option to offer to people," said City Manager Jeff Mansfield. "We've talked about it for quite a while, and it's a shame to have all the water bottles, in particular, go into the landfill all the time when there is a viable option for them."

The project was funded in part by the City of Hastings, the remainder of expense covered by matching grants from the Solid Waste Oversight Committee and Barry Community Foundation for a total of \$4,500. Les's Sanitary Service has agreed to provide free pickup service once a week to help make the project more affordable.

"It's certainly a wonderful contribution from Les's," Mansfield said.

The bins are set up to receive commingled glass, metal, plastics and paper products. Stickers providing instructions and acceptable materials will be adhered to the containers in the near future, helping distinguish the bins from trash cans and keeping garbage out.

"Once you get much garbage in it, it ruins the recycling opportunity," Mansfield said, adding that time will tell if the containers will be used appropriately.

He thinks with time, people will warm up to the bins, and begin filling recycling containers instead of the landfill.

"A lot of people want to recycle, but they don't know how or what the rules are," Mansfield said.

The containers are not meant to collect household recyclables, or trash. Recyclables don't have to be squeaky-clean, but they can't be so dirty they contaminate the entire stream. Trash and dirty recyclables make sorting and processing difficult, if not impossible.

The containers will be on trial throughout the summer to test their effectiveness, how the community responds, and if the arrangement with Les's is sustainable. If something is amiss by the beginning of fall, Hastings will go back to the drawing board to develop a successful recycling program in the city.

"We don't make recycling very easy right now in the city of Hastings," Mansfield said, adding that people have always expressed interest in recycling, in Hastings and throughout the county.

Recycling initiatives, he pointed out, are among the most popular municipal and township programs. The blue containers in Hastings are a step toward incorporating recycling into daily life and represent another phase in an ongoing dialogue about reducing waste in Barry County.

“As we engage in that dialogue, I’m hoping we can make it more convenient for people to recycle here, and more cost effective,” Mansfield said.

City officials are hopeful other municipalities will follow suit and establish downtown receptacles of their own.

The future recycling landscape of Barry County, Mansfield said, is likely to be a more centralized location for convenient recycling for all county residents.

“But that has to be something we can afford,” he said. “Unfortunately, recycling costs money right now.”