



KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kristen Wieland, Communications & Marketing Manager

Recycling Center undergoing upgrades to accept cartons, increase efficiency

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – The Kent County Recycling & Education Center at 977 Wealthy St. SW is undergoing upgrades to improve recycling efficiency and add dairy cartons and juice boxes to its list of accepted materials. The upgrades will take place from Tuesday, Nov. 28 to Tuesday, Dec. 19. During this time, the facility will be closed and unable to accept materials for recycling.

“Periodic upgrades and equipment modifications like these ensure our recycling facility is up-to-date with the changing recycling needs of our community,” said Kristen Wieland, Communications & Marketing Manager for the Kent County Department of Public Works. “The Kent County Recycling & Education Center allows residents to easily recycle materials through a single-stream sorting process, and these equipment additions will allow us to accept even more types of materials and continue delivering high-quality services to the community.”

Equipment upgrades will include a new corrugated cardboard screen, additional optical sorting equipment and conveyor system refurbishment. The upgrades will allow the facility to accept paper cartons and mechanically sort corrugated cardboard to help keep up with the community’s growing recycling needs. Examples of cartons that will be recyclable include empty creamer, soy and almond milk containers, juice boxes, milk cartons and boxed water.

“Prior to having this equipment at our facility, paper cartons were not recycled because they’re a mixed material. They are coated in plastic and sometimes also have a metal layer. These layers make them great for storing food and beverages but makes them challenging to recycle,” explained Wieland. “Just think about the volume of juice boxes and milk cartons that come from school cafeterias that can be recycled now!”

The Kent County Recycling & Education Center is approaching its eighth year of processing single-stream recycling. Over the past seven years, the center has undergone periodic maintenance and upgrades to adapt to changes in community recycling habits. Kent County is investing \$1.5 million into this round of upgrades. The center will begin taking cartons on Dec. 19, 2017.

“It’s important for residents and small businesses to remember that during these upgrades, material that would normally be sent to the Kent County Recycling Center will be diverted elsewhere, most likely to the county’s waste-to-energy facility. Those with the ability to do so should hold onto their recycling until after the updates are complete on Dec. 19,” said Daniel Schoonmaker, Executive Director of the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum. “These upgrades are necessary to improve the system and will ultimately help us reduce waste in our community.”

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Media Note: DPW Director Darwin Baas will be available for interviews Monday afternoon, 11-20-17. Contact Kristen Wieland 616-293-7175.