Berkeley gets state grant for expansion of recycling

By JOHN ECKHOUSE

BERKELEY — Recycling, which has become almost second nature to residents here, will soon become easier.

The Berkeley Ecology Center recently won a $90,000 grant from the state Solid Waste Management Board to operate a curbside pickup of recyclable materials.

The center has been picking up bundled newspapers from city residents for the past six years, and the grant will enable the program to expand to the collection of glass and cans. Kathy Evans, administrator at the ecology center, hopes the program can be started in April.

The only thing that might delay the start of the new collection is the acquisition of proper equipment. “It’s really difficult to find good used trucks,” Ms. Evans said.

She is looking for three trucks that will be specially altered for the program. Bins will be mounted on the flatbeds to collect the glass, cans and newsprint and are designed so that they can be removed with a forklift.

The grant will cover only the cost of the equipment. Ms. Evans said the salaries of employees would come from the proceeds of selling the recyclable material to various dealers in the area.

Berkeley already has three other recycling programs, two of which make pickups at a resident’s door, but they are all cooperating in the new program.

Pam Belchamber, project director for the recycling center operated at Grove St. and Dwight Way, said “their curbside pickup will impact our program by about 30 percent which is good, because there will be a net increase in the amount of recyclables recovered.” The recycling center collects about 160 tons a month of glass, tin, aluminum, newspaper and cardboard that residents donate. Sales of these items brought in over $60,000 last year.

Other programs are operated by Recovery Recycling and the Berkeley Youth Recycling Center. Recovery Recycling collects items at a customer’s door for a set fee, while the youth project is a non-profit operation. It collects materials door-to-door, serving about 200 homes at present.

‘Curbside pickup will impact our program by 30 percent which is good’

sent, with no charge for the collection of aluminum, tin, cardboard, glass separated by color, newspapers and scrap iron.

Altogether the programs collect about 230 tons a month of goods for recycling, and officials hope the new curbside pickups will double that amount. “With combined efforts we plan to cut the waste stream in Berkeley 12 to 15 percent from what it is now,” said Ms. Belchamber, who is also a member of the city solid waste management commission. At present the amount of goods recycled is about 4 percent of the total refuse produced in Berkeley.

All the recycling services will jointly work together at a centralized location beginning in 1980 if present plans are approved by the city and the state. Community Conservation Centers, the group that operates the site at Grove St. and Dwight Way, has asked the state waste board for a grant to operate the proposed facility at the city’s new garbage transfer station at 2nd and Gilman streets.

At first the recycling groups will use the area to separate and store recycled materials they individually collect. Eventually a new program to purchase newspapers, cans, bottles and cardboard will also open on the site.

The city of Berkeley purchased the land in 1973 as a replacement for the present landfill, which is expected to reach capacity by 1981. Final plans have not been approved, but tentatively the city plans to transfer garbage to other landfills from the new site and it may try to burn some of the refuse to produce steam for sale to local industries.

Ms. Belchamber said her group is looking forward to the opening of the new facility because they, too, are running out of adequate storage space. “We’re at a saturation point right now,” she said. “The neighbors are going crazy.”

Some other local cities have started curbside pickups of recyclables and all claim a high degree of success. The city of Livermore began a pilot program in the spring of 1978 with the assistance of the Oakland Scavenger Co.

Every house in the town of 50,000 is served twice a month by a specially designed scavenger company truck that has storage bins for clear glass, mixed glass, newspapers and metal cans. Aluminum is not separated from tin to discourage pilferage in front of the homes.

Edward Schilling, the assistant city manager of Livermore said about 90 tons a month of recyclables are collected in this way. The city has hoped the program would pay for itself by selling the salvaged goods, but there was a net loss last year of $22,000 even after sales of $35,000 of material to scrap dealers.

A recent study showed that 38 percent of the households participate in the program.

(Turn to Page 4, Col. 1)
RECYCLING
(Continued from Page 1)
the program at least once a month.
"It's very convenient," Schilling
said. "I never recycled before we
started the program and now it's just
second nature."

A curbside pickup program in
Palo Alto currently serves just
under two-thirds of the single-family
dwellings in the city of 65,000. The
program will serve all homes by
April and will expand to cover apart-
ment buildings six months after
that.

Robert Wenzlau, the original coor-
dinator of the recycling program
and now a consultant to it, said 80
percent of the households partici-
pate in the program at least once a
month. He said the collection of re-
cyclables amounts to 160 tons a
month at a net cost (after selling the
newspaper, cans, bottles and car-
board) of about 25 cents a household
per month.

One of the oldest curbside recy-
cling programs in the area is operated
by the city of El Cerrito. The pro-
gram started in 1977 and became free
in April 1978. Trucks serving 49,000
residents in El Cerrito, Albany and
Kensington collect glass, newspaper
and aluminum from each house once
a week.

The city also operates two other
recycling programs, one that pays
residents for their recyclables and
one where people donate their goods
to the city. It cost the city $183,000 to
run all three programs last year, but
officials said the results justify the
cost.

Last year the city collected an av-
verage of 330 tons a month of recy-
clables and achieved a reduction of ab-
out 18 percent in the amount of re-
fuse going to landfill. Lois Boyle, as-
istant director of community ser-
VICES for the city, said the goal for
next year is to collect 431 tons of re-
cyclables and reduce the amount of
municipal refuse going to landfill by
25 percent.

Landfills are generally considered
the antithesis of recycling, but not to
the present operators of the Ber-
keley landfill. After winning the con-
tract to manage the area last sum-
mer, the present operators changed
the name to Bay Cities Resource Re-
covery Depot to encourage conser-
vation and recycling.

Robert Beatty, one of the oper-
ators, said about 350 tons of refuse
are dumped daily at the site and his
group of workers manages to recy-
cle 14 tons of that a day. Most of the
material recovered is ferrous metal,
though aluminum, brass, copper,
lead, lumber, bicycles, household
goods and even a truck load of
Christmas trees have been salvaged
in recent weeks.

Beatty thinks the life of the landfill
can be prolonged if the city will let
him expand his recycling efforts. He
said he hopes to soon open a com-
posting center and a concrete recy-
cling facility on the site.

Beatty estimated composting
could divert over 100 tons a month
from the landfill, while operating a
concrete and asphalt crusher could
eliminate up to 4000 tons a day from
going to landfill. He said the city now
operates a special landfill where it
charges contractors to dump con-
crete.

"They make $40,000 a year off of
that," Beatty said. "They'd lose that
income, but we've said we would
give them a share of the income from
operating the crusher and I think
that would be more than their pre-
sent income. Besides, we could sell
the material to be reused as base
material for paving new roads in
stead of just throwing it away."