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City of Tallahassee to launch recycling partnership

Downtown businesses are encouraged to participate in the program

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Officials from the city and business community announced a Downtown Recycling Partnership on Thursday that should encourage more businesses to participate in the city's recycling program, they said.

The downtown project officially begins May 20. Participating businesses will pay \$14 each month to receive a 96-gallon container that will be used to collect paper and cardboard.

Also, business may use a container the size of a parking space to recycle plastic bottles and aluminum cans. The first container will be placed at St. John's Bookstore on 131 N. Calhoun St., while a second location has yet to be determined.

Reginald Ofuani, general manager of Tallahassee's Solid Waste Services Department, said there are more than 1,000 businesses that participate in the city's recycling program. He said the partnership is striving to have 40 percent participation throughout the city in the next year.

Mayor John Marks said the local business community has made strides to improve its recycling percentages, but there is always more that can be done.

Marks expects the pilot program to become permanent, but that can only be accomplished if others besides government are advocates for environmentally sound practices. "It takes every business and every homeowner," Marks said, "The Chamber has shown true leadership in that regard."

Ron Sachs, chairman at the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce, thanked the Downtown Merchants and Business Association, the Tallahassee Downtown Improvement Authority, Sustainable Tallahassee and other organizations for making the partnership possible.

The Chamber has been working with the city and downtown business organizations for six months leading up to Thursday's announcement. Sachs said Kristin Heilman, an account executive in his public relations firm, devised the idea to extend the firm's practices to other businesses.

"She advocated for us to have a recycling program in our company," Sachs said. "She said it would be great if we had recycling downtown. That's when we started working with the Chamber board."

Heilman routinely took aluminum cans, glass and other recyclables home with her before her office developed a recycling program last summer. She said she grew up in the 1980s understanding environmental protection and the small steps that can be done to assist the process.

"It's silly that we have a great residential recycling program, but we don't have a recycling program with our businesses," Heilman said. "We don't view it in our generation as the right thing to do, it's just something you should do."