Since its inception in 1997, the Council Bluffs Recycling Center (CBRC) has been a metro area leader in the recycling industry with eclectic efforts and initiatives. Construction and demolition debris, event recycling, household hazardous materials, shingles, tires and tree debris, along with regular curbside materials are all programs the CBRC currently provides to the metro area. This facility is one of the most comprehensive facilities of its type which continues to provide consistent, sustainable opportunities.

**PROGRAM/PROJECT**

**How is effective recycling promoted?**

A full-time education coordinator was hired in 2007 to help promote effective recycling throughout Council Bluffs and the metro area. The education coordinator provides around 50 programs to school-aged children at the request of teachers as well as civic organizations. Approximately 2,300 people per year are reached through these programs. Not included in these numbers are annual health and wellness fairs, an annual Home Improvement and Landscaping Show and other outreach opportunities in which the education coordinator annually participates.

Nineteen thousand households on City waste services receive an annual Recycling and Solid Waste Services Guide via direct mail with information about waste placement and guidelines to follow as well as services offered by the Recycling Center. A direct mailer of some sort has been provided to residents since 1992. Approximately 21,000 of these are distributed each year. The quarterly sanitation bill contains a recycling and solid waste newsletter on the reverse side.

Several brochures and documents are also available for residents and businesses concerning pricing, construction and demolition debris recycling, drop-off bins, commercial recycling, mulch, etc. Displays at hardware and auto stores around town and throughout Pottawattamie and Page Counties distribute some of this material.

The website www.cbrecycles.com as well as a Twitter feed and Facebook page are updated regularly to inform citizens of proper recycling habits, creative ways to reuse items and other informational tidbits. The most recent addition to the social media repertoire is the My Waste app for smartphones and tablets. This rolled out at the beginning of 2016 and is used to promote
effective recycling techniques, to remind residents of their waste collection schedule and to report any waste collection problems or illegal dumping instances.

Emails are sent to teachers periodically throughout the school year to encourage environmental education in the classroom and recycling at school. Nearly 1,100 annual flyers are sent to landlords and rental properties in the city via direct mail through a partnership with Public Works.

The contracted waste hauler, Red River Waste Services, sponsors a bi-annual ad in The Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil, the local newspaper, each spring and fall to remind the public about important waste and recycling information that helps both the contractor and the customers. In addition, Red River sponsors an annual poster contest where two 3rd and 4th graders from each school in Council Bluffs can enter the contest. Winning posters have their designs displayed on recycling trucks throughout the year and debuted at the annual community Celebrate CB parade. Winning schools receive cash prizes between $500 and $1,250 designated for their school’s art programs.

Further effective recycling promotion can be seen under the “Partnerships” discussion of this application.

**What are the program’s significant accomplishments?**

Shortly after the CBRC opened in 1997, a large storm came through the area. The CBRC stepped up to the task to accept 20,000 tons of tree debris and yard waste from that storm. A tub grinder was purchased to process this material. The next few years saw steady growth of employees being added, a horizontal baler purchased, a scale house was built and HHW services were expanded. By the year 2000, four positions were added to the operations, and a second replacement baler and a second replacement tub grinder were purchased for the facility. Expansion of the recycling processing facility occurred as a building and sort line system were added at the cost of nearly $1,000,000.

The new millennium brought more expansion to the CBRC with HHW partnerships with Pottawattamie and Page Counties as well as the addition of an appliance de-manufacturing program, an electronic waste recycling program, a building expansion for the production area and a glass crusher to process glass and porcelain materials.

In 2008, Council Bluffs was one of the last large Iowa communities to switch from drop-off recycling containers to curbside recycling bins. The CBRC used this program change as a springboard to continue to improve its recycling efforts and community outreach. With the addition of curbside recycling, CBRC staff also purchased drop-off recycling containers for several area grocery stores, as well as a hook-lift truck to haul these materials and construction and demolition materials with the help of a DNR SWAP grant. These containers and services had
previously been provided by a local trash company. This change not only saved $100,000 per year on contracted costs but also necessitated another employee at the CBRC.

The introduction of curbside recycling, in conjunction with a major storm to hit the area nearly simultaneously, significantly raised awareness of the CBRC and its programs. To keep up with the demand of these programs and services, a new tub grinder and wheel loader were both purchased by 2011 to replace older models that were wearing out.

Prior to those large facility purchases, another DNR SWAP grant for event recycling was written and received in 2009 when RAGBRAI came to Council Bluffs. One hundred and ten rigid plastic recycling containers and 60 Clear Stream containers were purchased and utilized for RAGBRAI. The rigid plastic containers were then distributed at the local community college, Council Bluffs Recreation Complex and the Mid-America Convention Center. The Clear Stream recycling containers became part of an ongoing checkout program.

The summer of 2011 was plagued by a 3-month long Missouri River flood where the river remained several feet above flood stage. The CBRC took in several tons of material from flooded houses, and the CBRC supervisor was pulled off-site to help coordinate the efforts to fill 330,000 sandbags to help protect the City. In August of 2011 a storm hit Council Bluffs, and the CBRC received 675 tons of trees and yard waste from City residents at no charge to help with clean-up efforts. By the end of the summer, the City had numerous sandbags to dispose of from keeping the high water at bay, and the CBRC supervisor spearheaded the recycling efforts so that 7,400 tons of sandbags (6,990 tons of sand and 369 tons of bags) did not end up in the landfill. The sand was reused in the metro area for construction and levee projects; the bags were contaminated and could not be recycled, so they did go to the landfill.

In 2012, the CBRC began diverting rigid or bulk plastic and vinyl siding from its construction and demolition debris area as markets became available; and by 2013, the CBRC staff entered into a partnership with Save and Pave shingle recycling where 383 tons of asphalt shingles were recycled. These would later be ground and used in asphalt roads.

The beginning of 2013 also expanded curbside plastic recycling from #1-#2 plastic containers to #1-#5 plastic containers and cartons. A 2012 Dodge Journey was purchased to run on compressed natural gas (CNG), to serve as an educational vehicle. By the summer of that year, RAGBRAI began again in Council Bluffs. Another event recycling DNR SWAP grant was applied for and received for more rigid plastic event recycling containers and 20 Clear Stream compost containers. After the event, the rigid plastic containers were distributed to area schools (to use for common areas and athletic events), the Council Bluffs Recreation Complex and YMCA recreation fields.
During the fall of 2015, two more full-time employees were added to the CBRC staff and a 2-ram baler was purchased with the help of a DNR SWAP grant and a zero-interest loan from the Closed Loop Fund. To commemorate this event, an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony were held. This new baler allowed better compression of bales than the previous baler and allowed CBRC staff to bale vinyl siding and the rigid plastic.

The beginning of 2016 is when the My Waste app rolled out and was highly publicized throughout the various media avenues.

**What is unique and innovative?**

All untreated lumber is ground up into lumber mulch and provided to the public free of charge or $5 per loader bucket scoop. This is better than the alternative of sending all this material to the landfill.

Motor oil that has not been mixed with any other material is utilized around the facility in four used motor oil burners. This saves disposal costs of used oil and also provides a heat source for various parts of the CBRC without utilizing natural gas or coal.

During the more recent years, CBRC staff has worked with companies to recycle carpet and carpet pad. This material very much depends on market demand, but several tons have been recycled through the years due to the diligence of facility staff. The same is true of vinyl siding and bulk plastic materials. Recent markets have opened up for this material, and staff is able to bale this material with the recent baler purchase.

The sandbag recycling was a unique and innovative project. While it would have been much easier to landfill this material, CBRC staff diligently worked to ensure the product was recycled as best as possible.

In 2013 a partnership was formed with Save and Pave to recycle shingles and turn them back into asphalt. This endeavor has kept over 2,900 tons of shingles out of the landfill since the beginning of the program. While this was happening in some parts of the state, it was not a prevalent practice. Entering into this partnership, however, helped sustain the shingle recycling efforts in Western Iowa. Residents whose shingles are recycled receive a yard sign that states their asphalt shingles are recycled into asphalt roads.

Asphalt shingle recycling has had a difficult time finding a source in this area; however, CBRC staff worked with the City of Council Bluffs Public Works and Save and Pave to utilize ground up shingles to fill potholes this past winter.

**What are the benefits to the recycling community?**

Solid Waste Management Supervisor Tony Fiala began discussions with Ripple Glass in 2011 to find a local source for glass. Ripple Glass was new at the time and looking for connections. This
partnership helped spur many other Iowa communities to send their glass to Kansas City to be recycled into new bottles or fiberglass insulation.

As mentioned earlier, Supervisor Tony Fiala and the CBRC have been catalysts to continue the asphalt shingle recycling in Southwest Iowa. When other organizations have become discouraged with the lack of innovations in this area, the fact that the CBRC continues to recycle this product helps other agencies and organizations continue with the program.

The CBRC was one of the first organizations to really offer widespread event recycling at RAGBRAI on a large scale. Other communities had done this in certain areas, but Council Bluffs worked with food and expo vendors as well as campgrounds to provide generous recycling opportunities for cans, bottles and even cardboard. Because of this, several other agencies look toward the CBRC for advice about recycling at RAGBRAI when the event comes to their area. The CBRC’s check-out form and information has also been used extensively as a template for other organizations’ check-out programs.

Several smaller Iowa communities and even one Nebraska community bring some or all of their recyclables to the CBRC to be processed. While many small communities collect “curbside” recycling materials and can haul these materials, they do not have processing capabilities. This was the case with Harrison County, Iowa who is now delivering all of their recycling from their county drop-off containers to the CBRC. Also, many residents in the county and in neighboring counties and communities who may not have access to curbside recycling bring their recyclables to the CBRC drop-off containers at the 7 locations around Council Bluffs when they are in the metro area for other reasons. CBRC staff and volunteers have conducted surveys to prove this fact.

**IMPACT**

*How has the program/project ensured materials are reused or recycled and put to their highest and best use?*

Much of this information can be found in the “unique and innovative” section. Staff consistently work to reuse or recycle as much material as feasibly possible.

One partnership that has not been mentioned elsewhere is with the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, NE. Artists from this studio come several times a year to tour the CBRC to see what materials might be utilized in their exhibits, and CBRC staff strive to work with individuals who make reasonable requests for materials to reuse for nonprofit or educational uses. Reuse is always a better and preferred method than recycling. When applicable, materials are brought back to the CBRC after artists have completed their projects.
Furthermore, within the past year, a local supply company needed to dispose of 108 cases of #1 and #5 food service plastic trays and lids that were slightly mismatched. This equated to 27,000 pieces, or nearly 15,000 pounds, of plastic. While the CBRC could have easily recycled this material, supervisor Tony Fiala reached out to another local organization, Mohm’s Place, that provides resources such as meals, clothing and shelter to those in struggling situations. Mohm’s Place was thrilled to receive this donation, and CBRC staff are excited that they could help facilitate this exchange.

**How is the community positively impacted?**

Every community needs to have proper disposal options for their items, and the CBRC offers a plethora of options. As CBRC staff continually educate the ever-changing population of residents on City waste services, work to expand programs and services and simultaneously foster community partnerships, the community, as a whole, has learned the value of having the CBRC.

The CBRC partners with various organizations to better the community and help residents more fully understand the importance of taking care of the community and the environment.

**What are the environment benefits?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solid Waste Program (tons) 1987-2016</th>
<th>Council Bluffs Recycling Center Materials Managed (tons) 1997-2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curbside Garbage</td>
<td>Drop-off Recycling</td>
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<td>Curbside Recycling</td>
<td>Curbside Recycling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curbside Yard Waste</td>
<td>Construction Debris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curbside Bulky Waste</td>
<td>Tree Debris &amp; Yard Waste</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drop-off Recycling</td>
<td>Scrap Metal</td>
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<td>Tires</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Solid Waste</td>
<td>Household Hazardous Material</td>
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<td>Electronics</td>
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<td>Recycled</td>
<td>Appliances (each)</td>
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<td>Percent Recycled</td>
<td>Total Tons Managed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tons Recycled</td>
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<td>Percent Recycled</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total Traffic</td>
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</tbody>
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The above chart shows the impact the solid waste program and the CBRC have had on the metro area. Materials that come through the facility are recycled at a rate of 67%, and over 600,000 vehicles have utilized the recycling center as paying customers since its opening in 1997. Because of these statistics, many materials have been recycled that otherwise would have ended up in the landfill.
How have cultural or behavioral changes occurred?

Curbside recycling was a huge cultural shift for residents. Some embraced it willingly while others took a bit more convincing. With the continued support of the mayor and the City Council, though, the CBRC made this switch and continues to expand programs and services as much as possible. CBRC staff have noticed that certain areas of the city tend to have better recycling rates than others. This may be due to some neighborhoods being more affluent but also to the peer pressure of recycling on certain blocks or areas of town.

The beginning of curbside recycling also spurred a conversation with the Council Bluffs School District who contracted for recycling services at elementary, middle school and high school buildings soon after curbside recycling began. As noted elsewhere in this grant, Council Bluffs schools received some event recycling containers to use long-term. With more event recycling opportunities being added through the past few years, we are seeing both cultural and behavioral shifts. An expectation has been set that recycling should be available. Cultural shifts take time, but Council Bluffs is headed in the right direction.

Event recycling has seen a large success in Council Bluffs and has changed the cultural expectations. The Mid-America Convention Center, the recreation sports complex, Iowa Western Community College and several schools all have permanent event recycling containers to utilize. This has inspired various other events and destinations to request the event recycling check-out containers on a regular basis. The West Pottawattamie County Fair has utilized the check-out containers each year since the program began. Tom Hanafan Park, a new park that hosts contests and events, also often utilizes the check-out containers for large events, holiday concerts, etc. With Omaha having permanent recycling containers in their downtown area, expectations have been set that recycling can take place not only at home but also at events, in common gathering places and with large crowds in the metro area.

Electronic waste or e-waste recycling has also become more popular in the past few years. Until recently, Best Buy accepted televisions for recycling at no charge. Recently, however, the company started charging per television set. Because of the media’s (sometimes negative) publicity around e-waste disposal, residents seem more aware that e-waste needs to be recycled and are constantly looking for options to properly dispose of these materials. The CBRC has strived to keep e-waste recycling costs consistent and reasonable, and this has helped the success of the program.

Has the program been replicated, or could it be easily replicated?

There are several aspects of the CBRC that could be replicated. As mentioned earlier, some of the programs such as asphalt shingle recycling and event recycling check-out containers have been replicated by other places and organizations in the state. To be a comprehensive facility such as the CBRC, a facility would need to have sufficient staff, space and expertise to implement the various programs available.
COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS

How has the nominee engaged potential partners, stakeholders and others?
Potential partners and supporters of the CBRC have been constantly engaged by CBRC staff. Staff speak highly of the CBRC whether “on the clock” or in the community on their own time. The 12 CBRC employees and the City of Council Bluffs Health Department Director are continually looking for partnership opportunities and answering questions to foster education, support and understanding of the recycling and waste industry. Because employees are proud of the work they do and how it helps the community and the environment, they consistently spread information to others with whom they engage.

How has the project garnered community support and partnerships?
The partnership with the City of Council Bluffs’ waste hauler, Red River Waste Solutions, has consistently grown and developed over the past few years. The poster contest was mentioned earlier and continues to be a popular event with both students and teachers at local schools. CBRC staff publicize the event, and Red River provides the monetary prizes to schools. This partnership also initiated the transfer from diesel to CNG waste collection trucks. By fall of 2016 all waste collection trucks will run on CNG. New CNG trucks purchased by Red River are popular in the community not only for their cleaner burning fuel but also for their quieter performance. They make significantly less noise than diesel trucks. Furthermore, it is Red River that is paying for the use of the new My Waste app while the CBRC staff is keeping it updated.

Keep Council Bluffs Beautiful has been another community partner that CBRC staff have worked with closely. CBRC staff have given time to help with projects such as the community garden, the shoe recycling program and the Adopt-a-Street program. The Keep Council Bluffs Beautiful office was even hosted at the CBRC facility for 6 months until it moved into a larger space. Both organizations work together for an annual Clean Sweep event where volunteers from all aspects of the community help clean up litter across various areas for a week-long city celebration that culminates with a parade for Council Bluffs.

Cooperation between the CBRC, Save and Pave and the Council Bluffs Public Works was mentioned earlier as ground asphalt shingles were used to fill potholes last winter. In addition, the CBRC has promoted the asphalt shingle recycling program by offering participating contractors discounts on shingle disposal as well as yard signs for contractors to utilize. These signs can be placed in residents’ yards to display that shingles from their home are being recycled.

CBRC staff often participate in and assist with community events when possible. Staff have helped with events such as Dumpster Day and Servefest where volunteers help clean up neighborhoods or areas of the city. Last fall CBRC staff set up a booth at the National Night Out, an event sponsored by the police to educate the public about safety and various other issues.
Staff will again participate in this event this year. CBRC staff also partner with the police department to help with a bi-annual drug take-back program to decrease the amount of unused or expired drugs in the community.

Partnerships have been formed with Pottawattamie and Page Counties to assist with Household Hazardous Waste services and education. This includes giving presentations upon request and producing printed materials. During past few years, the partnership with the Page County satellite facility has been strengthened as the CBRC education coordinator expands advertising and outreach in the county as well as assists with landfill tours.

When the CNG recycling trucks and the new baler arrived, the Chamber of Commerce partnered with the CBRC to hold ribbon cuttings at the facility for each event. The Chamber also has an annual directory where the CBRC has a featured page detailing its programs for the public.

Community support is strong overall, and residents of the community look to the CBRC for their waste solutions.

**How has the project earned media coverage?**

CBRC programs consistently receive coverage from not only Council Bluffs outlets but also from Omaha and area media. Press releases are written and CBTV-17, the local college television station, appearances occur regularly to keep the public informed about waste guidelines, holiday reminders and new programs. CBTV-17 recently filmed two commercials with CBRC staff that will air routinely over the next year or two. Periodic advertising is implemented as funding and programs allow.

Media outlets are excellent to publicize changes to waste collection due to inclement weather and other big program changes that occur. One recent example of this was this past spring. KETV Channel 7 featured the CBRC’s presence at the Home Improvement and Landscaping Show and the release of the new app. CBRC staff and the app appeared on several live morning clips on Channel 7.