

# To become a green hub, city must act greener

## Tailgaters' recycling success shows Charlotte can do more.

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The success of a recycling effort for Carolina Panthers' tailgaters - it beat its goal by 50 percent - shows people will, in fact, recycle if it's handy. That good news should inspire many more such efforts by local government and businesses.

The tailgating effort was a collaboration among the Panthers, city and county governments, the nonprofit Charlotte Center City Partners and Bojangles', which donated the yellow recycling bags. As people grew familiar with the idea, the amount of recycling grew - from 10 percent of the waste generated at the Sept. 3 game to 49 percent for the Saints game Sunday.

But recycling is all but invisible in too many public places in Charlotte.

Some welcome initiatives are in the works. The NASCAR Hall of Fame will offer recycling when it opens - as the Convention Center and Time Warner Arena already do. You can recycle at the airport, Ovens Auditorium and many county parks, libraries and schools. The city has applied for a \$120,000 federal stimulus grant to buy 15 recycling bins for uptown. The money would also pay to service the bins and for a promotional effort.

However, a brisk walk through uptown on Wednesday found no obvious recycling along the Lynx line or in the Transportation Center. Nor was recycling visible in some prominent private spaces open to the public, such as The Green, the EpiCentre, much of Overstreet Mall or in the Wells Fargo Atrium. While many uptown offices do recycle, as do some restaurants and hotels, too many spots throughout the city aren't recycling-friendly.

Why does this matter? For starters, it's now illegal in North Carolina to send aluminum cans and plastic bottles to landfills. In addition, the more trash sent to landfills, the more taxpayers must shell out to buy more landfill space.

Image matters, too. Civic leaders, realizing that banking too heavily on banking as an industry hasn't worked out so well, hope to diversify the economy and promote the city as a hub for "green energy." As such, it's key for the city to present itself as, well, green. Although the city's residential recycling program plans a major upgrade this year, the lack of recycling in public places doesn't look so good.

The tailgating campaign shows a little initiative and collaboration can make a big difference.  
Let 2010 be the year recycling comes to Charlotte in a major way.