

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

To learn more about this project, please explore the below list of frequently asked questions. If you have questions that are not covered, you can contact Lee County Solid Waste at SolidWaste@leegov.com.

Facility/Hours

Why is the construction of a new Material Recovery Facility (MRF) necessary?

Lee County Solid Waste consistently has been ranked as one of the top five recycling communities in the state of Florida. As the County continues to grow, the current facility is projected to reach capacity for processing materials. In order to ensure that the County meets recycling requirements, a facility with increased capacity is needed.

What is the purpose of a Material Recovery Facility (MRF)? How does it operate?

Lee County residents enjoy single-stream recycling - meaning everything can be thrown in one container without separating materials. The purpose of a MRF is to process the recyclable material generated.

At the new facility, the operation will be comparable to the current facility. The material will be received via route trucks, tipped at an interior floor, processed inside the building, baled, loaded onto tractor trailers and shipped to end users.

The County expects to have a general development plan available in July 2024.

What is the proposed new Material Recycling Facility?

The facility will process clean bottles, cans, paper, cardboard and containers. It's a fully indoor operation. Trucks tip the materials inside, the machinery is inside and the rolling stock is inside. The facility will accept household and business material; there will be inspections of inbound material to remove unacceptable materials.

What other entities will the Solid Waste Department be working with to ensure all environmental needs are met?

The recycling center development consultants for this project are RRT Consulting and Johnson Engineering.

The facility will be permitted through the South Florida Water Management District, Lee County, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Will the county commit to minimum such as "it will be no worse than X" parameters for this facility and its operation?

The county is committed to transparency. More opportunities for public input will exist in each step of the process, such as when items like equipment contracts and site design go to the Board. We also plan further community engagement updates. Follow Lee County Government on social media and

sign up to receive Lee County Updates at www.leegov.com/resources/newsletters. The county newsletter includes an alert when Board agendas are posted for regularly scheduled meetings. Future opportunities for public comment will be noticed through these channels.

What are the hours of operation?

The daily operating hours for this facility have not been determined yet, pending future operating contracts. The Materials Recycling Facility at Buckingham currently receives trucks between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and between 6 a.m. and noon Saturday.

Why 12 hours - 6am to 6pm?

The operating hours of the facility will ultimately be determined by the demands of the surrounding area for which the facility is serving. The current Buckingham facility currently receives trucks between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. to meet its intake demands.

Who will own the facility vs. who will operate? Lee County or Waste Management?

Lee County will own the property and facility. The county will solicit an RFP (Request for Proposal), tentatively around mid-2025, to award a contract to a vendor to operate the facility. The RFP will be open to all qualified proposers. Presently, Balcones Inc. holds the contract to operate the current county recycling facility, having been selected by an RFP process in 2021/2022.

Approximately when does the county expect to begin construction on the new facility?

Lee County expects to close on the property purchase in May, with construction tentatively planned to begin in 2028.

Why have a Lee County Recycling Center when there will be other counties using the facility on 82?

The overwhelming majority of material processed will be from Lee County residents and businesses. Less than 5% of the material processed at the new facility will be generated outside of Lee County. For example, Lee County Solid Waste recycles small amounts for the City of Naples and Babcock Ranch under Board-approved agreements. These agreements are reviewed each year and are contingent upon facility capacity.

How are current factors viewable from S.R. 82 being factored into a recycling facility i.e. old and abandoned tires, rusty dumpsters, badly damaged vehicles?

The county is investigating the issue of rusty dumpsters and has been in contact with Waste Management to remove the containers. Other factors viewable from S.R. 82 as a result of established businesses would be at the review of Code Enforcement for identification of any violations that may be present.

Contamination/Material

What will not happen at the proposed new Material Recycling Facility?

The facility will not be a waste-transfer station. There will be no wet garbage, no tire processing, no yard-waste grinding and no hazardous waste. (Deed restrictions prevent any hazardous waste processing.) There will not be any outdoor processing or dirt roads. No operations will take place close to houses.

Will this facility only serve the residents of Lee County?

The overwhelming majority of material processed will be from Lee County residents and businesses. Less than 5% of the material processed at the new facility will be generated outside of Lee County.

Lee County Solid Waste recycles all material from Hendry County under a more than 30-year agreement in exchange for siting the landfill in Hendry County; this is about 1% of recyclable material received. This was approved by the BoCC.

Lee County Solid Waste additionally recycles small amounts for the City of Naples and Babcock Ranch under BoCC-approved agreements. These agreements are reviewed each year and are contingent upon facility capacity. This is under 4% of all inbound recyclables.

What happens when recyclables arrive and are not recyclable - i.e. contaminated? Where do they go?

a. All material is contained within the building. Any material that is not acceptable for recycling is reloaded and removed to Buckingham operations the same day it is received. The operator and Lee County inspect recycle loads daily. These inspections include individual carts at the curb and removing them from the residence, if necessary, before contaminated materials reach the facility.

What do you do with recyclables received at the facility that cannot be sold due to reduced purchasing from outside countries?

Recyclables through the history of our operations have been baled as commodities and sent for further use. At times, we have had to pay end users to take the commodities, but this is rare. The great majority of the baled commodities are sent to users in the United States. Essentially, we move the material at all times, regardless of the market price, as recycling extends the life of the county's other disposal facilities, such as the landfill and Waste-to-Energy plant.

Noise/Berm/Setback/Odor/Dust

Has the County studied the impact of noise and air pollution that a facility of this type could produce?

The County has conducted informal noise monitoring of its present MRF and found road noise was louder than the operation beyond 100 feet. The County has engaged a testing company to do formal noise testing at the present MRF. Noise attenuation is a factor in site design.

Air permitting is not expected, but a determination will be made during the design process.

What plans are there to ensure that the plant will operate within the proper noise ordinance levels?

The County expects to mitigate sound impacts, which is a clear goal of the designer, and a reason for the size of the purchase.

What about dust and odor?

The enclosed operations along with the distance from homes and regular inspections will mitigate this.

What steps will be taken to make sure the facility is not an eyesore to the surrounding communities?

Lee County Solid Waste maintains a high standard of facility maintenance across the department, the new MRF will be no exception to that standard.

The County expects to mitigate sight impacts, which is a clear goal of the designer, and a reason for the size of the land purchase (approximately 50 acres).

The exact building location within the property has not been determined as due diligence continues, but it will be about 1,000 feet from the property line to the west where residential properties are located.

What does the county plan to construct between the facility and Pelican Preserve? Will there be any sound mitigation structures? Is a 6-foot berm effective?

The makeup of the land between the facilities will primarily be berms, trees and other non-invasive vegetation as determined by subject-matter experts. Historically, the county has found that 6-foot berms are effective.

How will noise abatement be handled?

The operations will be enclosed and at a large distance from homes. Berms and trees will also mitigate noise. The enclosed operations will encompass all unloading, processing and rolling stock. Rolling stock will be fitted with low-frequency back-up alarms, instead of the typical beeping. The building will be set back plus/minus 1,000 feet from Pelican Preserve.

How is the noise from trucks and the back up beepers going to be controlled since Fort Myers' noise ordinance specifies noise 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., if facility opens at 6 a.m.?

The entirety of the facility is located in unincorporated Lee County and will adhere to established Lee County noise ordinances.

Where do we go if smell and noise is too much? Who do we go to?

All material is contained within the building. Any material that is not acceptable for recycling is reloaded and removed to Buckingham operations the same day it is received. The operator and Lee County inspect recycle loads daily. These inspections include individual carts at the curb and removing them from the residence, if necessary, before the contaminated material reaches the facility.

How will odor control be handled?

All material is contained within the building. Any material that is not acceptable for recycling is reloaded and removed to Buckingham operations the same day it is received. The operator and Lee County inspect recycle loads daily. These inspections include individual carts at the curb and removing them from the residence, if necessary, before the contaminated material reaches the facility.

Will you bring “walls” on the berm to counteract noise and view?

Lee County has no plans to add any walls, however, the berms themselves will act as a form of wall to reduce noise and visibility of the facility. The berms will include trees and vegetation to reduce visibility even further.

What prevents the facility to keep back 1,000 feet when zoning allows a 25-foot buffer set back?

a. Lee County is planning on constructing the building with a plus/minus 1,000-foot set back in order to mitigate the impact the facility would've had on any surrounding areas. Lee County has no plans to construct anything on the west side of the property. Only berms and native vegetation will be in that location.

The plus/minus 1,000-foot buffer - What guarantee can you offer for this to remain?

The county is committed to being a good neighbor. The parcel is 50 acres, yet we only need part of that for our facility. The building, parking areas and stormwater facilities will be located to the east of the property; the remaining land to the west will be native vegetation, trees and berms.

Can anything be stored in the plus/minus 1,000-foot setback area?

Lee County's conceptual design keeps the building plus/minus 1,000 feet from the west property line. There are no plans for storage or other facilities to the west of the building. Lee County plans to use the setback area to use native vegetation, trees and berms to minimize the sound and visibility of the facility.

What will be done for dust control?

The entirety of the operations for the facility will be taking place indoors and all traffic areas will be paved. There will be quick roll doors when trucks are pulling through to minimize the amount of time materials are exposed to the outside air. The materials coming through the facility everyday will be inspected to ensure contaminated materials are not being processed in the facility.

Equipment

Where will the trucks that are unable to unload be stored at the end of the day?

Recycle-collection trucks that cannot unload by the end of day will go back to their owner's facility. They will not stay at the county facility overnight.

What is the maximum number daily truck traffic for the facility?

It's anticipated it will start with about 100 trucks per day and max at 200 trucks per day.

It was stated trucks will be early and late - what are the early times?

Truck operations will be occurring between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays and between 6 a.m. and noon on Saturdays. Trucks that are unable to unload during operating times will go back to the property of their owner and unload the next day within operating hours.

Environmental/Zoning

How was the property chosen for the construction of the recycling facility?

An 18-month search by size, cost, zoning, transportation and seller willingness was conducted to identify a property with the specifications needed for the facility. County staff conducted an internal search of county-owned lands first. There was no land identified that would have avoided the purchase of a new parcel due to zoning, size and transportation infrastructure needs.

What considerations were given regarding the environmental impact the facility may have?

The County continues to ensure that due diligence is completed thoroughly by the consulting contractor.

The MRF will not process hazardous waste. The site will process recyclables from homes and businesses. The site will operate on a concrete pad.

The County says deed restrictions prevent any hazardous waste processing at this site. What does this mean and what are the deed restrictions?

A deed restriction is a condition written in the conveyance deed, from seller to buyer, whereby the buyer is precluded from doing that restriction upon the property. In this instance, the seller (grantor) will not allow the County to use the property as a landfill for disposal of municipal waste or hazardous waste.

So if a private entity bought this site, it could literally build within 25 feet of the property line?

Yes.

What will be visible from the roads inside our community?

Primarily berms, trees and other vegetation. The facility will be set back plus/minus 1,000 feet. The operations will be fully enclosed in a building.

Is the property zoned appropriately for a recycling facility?

This property and land to the north is zoned Industrial General (IG) and designated as Industrial Development on the Future Land Use map. IG Zoning has a minimum 25-foot setback requirement. The proposed site plan for the recycling facility is anticipated to provide a plus/minus 1,000-foot setback from the property line: about 1,000-feet more than would be required for another development.

How long has this property been zoned Industrial?

The property was zoned to the General Industrial (IG) District in 1980 by Zoning Resolution Z-80-350. Prior to the rezoning the property was zoned Agricultural (AG-2). Adjacent properties include a landfill and the storage of used and salvaged motor vehicles pending auction.

Why does the County's purchase of this property for the intended use not require a zoning hearing before the Lee Board of County Commissioners?

The General Industrial (IG) District allows a recycling facility as a permitted use. The Lee County Land Development Code (Section 34-2) defines Recycling Facility as: a building within which sorting, separating, baling or crushing of materials such as glass, aluminum or paper products is conducted prior to being transported to another location for recycling into usable products. The term "recycling facility" may not be interpreted to include auto wrecking or salvage yards, junkyards, trash or refuse dumps, incinerators, wood chipping, or shredding and composting of vegetative matter.

What is an "IPD"? Does the property need to be rezoned to an IPD to allow a recycling facility?

An "IPD" is an Industrial Planned Development. Planned Development is defined as "a development that is designed and developed as a cohesive, integrated unit under unified control that permits flexibility in building siting, mixture of housing types or land uses, clustering, common functional open space, the sharing of services, facilities and utilities and protection of environmental and natural resources."

The property does not need to be rezoned to IPD to allow a recycling facility as the use is permitted in the existing, underlying General Industrial zoning district. If a rezoning to IPD were pursued and ultimately denied, the recycling facility use would still be permitted.

What studies are available related to this site?

- Geotechnical Report
- Environmental Assessment
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
- Phase II Environmental Site Assessment
- Phase II Environmental Site Assessment Memo
- Facility and Equipment Sizing Memo
- Noise Study

How will preservation and safety of our water be handled?

Lee County has extensive experience in managing water and preservation lands. The county will continue utilize its best practices while handling water conservation on and around the property.

Why shouldn't the property be rezoned from Industrial to Commercial, which would allow development that could be taxed, thus providing income forever for the county, as opposed to a recycling center?

Only a property owner can choose to undertake rezoning, and the MRF is a permitted use in the current Industrial zoning.

Has the current Buckingham facility been fully evaluated and considered to accommodate the projected demand?

Yes. The Buckingham expansion will be used for other materials such as municipal solid waste (wet garbage), construction/demolition recycling, and yard waste grinding, which are all more intense uses than the proposed recycling facility. In addition, the Buckingham site has traffic constraints, as there are more than 1,100 truck entries per weekday.

How do you plan to maintain the area with native vegetation on the property for the buffer?

The county has extensive experience managing invasive, exotic vegetation and will use best practices as it does on its preserve lands, parks and other properties.

What is the solution to the berm and trees so that residents are not staring at a building instead of trees and natural vegetation? Landfill height at 80 feet could easily be visible from homes.

Lee County will be constructing a 6-foot berm in the plus/minus 1,000-foot setback. There will also be native vegetation and trees to reduce the visibility of the facility.

Will the new facility affect my water pressure?

The recycling facility does not use water to wash or process the recyclable materials. Water service is only needed for employee use.

Traffic/Safety

How many recycling trucks are expected daily?

Preliminary estimates are that the new MRF will serve 100-200 customer trucks per day.

What impact will the facility have on the local traffic patterns?

Route trucks and tractor-trailers will enter from the present State Road 82 entrance, not Treeline Avenue. Trucks now use the same arterial roads to get to the current facility, located nearby on Buckingham Road. Current traffic patterns are not expected to be affected. An estimated 100 to 200 vehicles per day are expected to use the site, mostly in early morning and late afternoon.

What would this mean for traffic on Treeline Avenue, Colonial Boulevard and S.R. 82?

One entrance and exit is planned, and that's only from S.R. 82. There will be no access from Gateway or Treeline. This will not add traffic, as the traffic already goes to Buckingham on the same arteria roadways and will simply be re-directed to a new facility.

Will this backup traffic on already-busy S.R. 82?

FDOT will review the project and make a determination, but the county anticipates a right turn lane will be required and will therefore remove the trucks traveling to the site from the main traffic lanes.

What is the projected traffic impact along Treeline Avenue that can be attributed to the trash trucks?

There will be no entrance to the site from Treeline Avenue.

What is the traffic pattern of incoming and outgoing trucks in relation to Pelican Preserve?

There will be no entrance to the site from Treeline Avenue.

What, if anything, will be done to control/mitigate trash along the roadways on Treeline Avenue, Colonial Boulevard, and S.R. 82 resulting from trash blowing off the trucks?

The hauler's trucks are enclosed. Additionally, the county coordinates with organizations such as Keep Lee County Beautiful and Adopt-a-Road to assist with regularly scheduled county roadside cleanup.