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The Ames Resource Recovery Center offers residents alternative options for recycling and waste management.

The Ames Resource Recovery center is where Ames' municipal waste is sent. The City of Ames does not participate in traditional recycling methods. Instead, the city burns waste for energy. Here, waste is sorted, scrap metal removed, and processed into refuse derived fuel, or RDF.

The RDF is sold to Ames Utilities to subsidize energy costs for residents. The remainder is sent to the Boone Landfill to be processed. Things such as batteries, fireworks, furniture and food-tainted waste are unable to be processed. The center is the only one of its kind in the State of Iowa, and one of 77 in the United States.

The resource recovery center aims to reclaim a deficit this coming fiscal year. The deficit, which results from a variety of factors, totalled around \$628,000 at the end of fiscal year 2017.

There were two major expenditures in 2016. Ames invested in a new, fuel-efficient loader for the center and renovated some interior areas. During the two-week renovation, the center was unable to process any waste into RDF to sell, and it was all sent directly to the Boone Landfill.

Several factors impact the center's revenue. These include prices for scrap metal, fees to use the Boone Landfill, gasoline prices, payroll, processing costs, the amount of waste received and amount of RDF produced. In 2017, 84 percent of waste was processed, but only 49 percent could be used as fuel.

While a deficit is not common for the resource recovery center, its primary function isn't to earn money.

"We are not a huge money maker for the City of Ames," said Hanson. "Our charge is to sustainably, responsibly and locally manage the municipal solid waste for Story County."

Other factors, such as weather and time of year play a part in efficiency as well. Rainy weather makes wet waste, which is heavier and costs more to transport. It also burns at a lower temperature and efficiency, since it's wet.

At the end of each semester, there is a surge in the amount of furniture taken to the recovery center. Students who are moving can't always transport furniture, and so they throw it away. This is a large burden on landfills, since furniture is too big to process at the recovery center.

Ames and Iowa State cooperate each year to hold a variety of sustainability-themed events. The Rummage Rampage has been popular the past two years. For the Rummage Rampage, volunteers collect furniture that students are throwing away. Anything that still looks usable is taken and sold at the event in August. All money earned is donated back to the groups who staffed the event with their volunteers. This event diverted over 77,000 pounds of material from the Boone Landfill.

Hanson and Rankin both agree that this event is a great way for students to get good, cheap furniture. This keeps bulky items out of landfills, costing no money to process and transport. The City of Ames has a presence at WelcomeFest each year as well.

Traditional recycling is still available throughout Ames. Waste collectors still offer subscriptions for curbside recycling. Students have the option to recycle inside many buildings on campus.

Recycling Coordinator Ayodeji Oluwalana said he is working with the Department of Residence on a pilot recycling program. In two residence halls, every room will receive a plastic bin for recyclables. Students will be encouraged to use them alongside their normal trash bins. Should the pilot prove successful, it will roll out to more residence halls on campus.

Oluwalana says that right now, recycling on campus is inconsistent, with departments and buildings doing their own thing for recycling. He is also working on securing consistent signage for recycling and grants to fund recycling efforts on campus.

According to their annual report, Ames has received over one million tons of waste over the past 20 years, keeping 70 percent of it from ever seeing a landfill.

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## Sources

Lorrie Hanson - Ames Resource Recovery Center

Merry Rankin - Director of Sustainability

Ayodei Oluwalana - Recycling & Special Events Coordinator