

## **Recycling and Art Meet in Mears Park**

*The City of Saint Paul, Eureka Recycling, and Public Art Saint Paul launch recycling in Mears Park to increase the quality of life in Saint Paul by expanding recycling opportunities.*

Saint Paul, MN-The City of Saint Paul, Eureka Recycling and Public Art Saint Paul unveiled new public space recycling bins that are public art sculptures at Mears Park in the Lowertown neighborhood of Saint Paul today. But don't be confused by the connection: the bins ARE the sculptures and the art IS recycling.

"The City of Saint Paul is the first city in the country to systematically approach public space and park recycling to make sure it is truly sustainable," said Hubbard. The Mears Park project is part of a larger citywide project to first study and then expand public space recycling in parks and other community gathering spaces. It includes additional pilots at Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, launched in June of 2008, and new recycling efforts at the city's six largest urban park pavilions.

Saint Paul boasts one of the highest recycling rates in the county. "In 2005, the community voiced an overwhelming desire to see the city establish recycling in public spaces," explained Susan Hubbard, CEO of Eureka Recycling, referring to the community-based process called Saint Paul Environmental Roundtable that led to the City of Saint Paul's goal of being a zero waste city by 2020. "Residents of Saint Paul want to share their deep commitment to the environment and need more recycling options away from home."

According to the Beverage Packaging Environment Council, 34 percent of all beverage containers are consumed away from home. A study by the Container Recycling Institute shows that at least 8 of every 10 plastic water bottles become litter or garbage.

In addition to four new recycling containers unveiled in Mears Park today, a whimsical secret "gift," entitled This is For You, was released in the community to engage people in the thoughtful ritual of recycling, as opposed to the mindless habit of wasting. A website was launched in conjunction with the ritual so that anyone can follow along with the project: [www.RecyclinginMearsPark.org](http://www.RecyclinginMearsPark.org)

In addition to bringing Saint Paul closer to its goal of being a waste free city by 2020, the Art of Recycling in Mears Park project also increases the city's public art by designing city amenities that reflect the values of the community, another important city goal. "Today's launch of public space recycling in Mears Park illustrates why our citizens are proud to live in our Saint Paul and why this city is recognized by guests as a special place to visit," explained Bruce Beese, Director of Public Works, who oversees much of the city's infrastructure, its recycling programs, and public art projects. "This collaboration highlights the city's environmental commitment with public art and brings together two important elements that are deeply valued by our community."

"We set out to answer this question: What role can artists play in promoting behavior change achieve behavior change among an urban population?," explained Christine Podas-Larson of Public Art Saint Paul. "We were also concerned with the aesthetic of recycling bins. When recycling is carried out in our beautiful public parks it should consider the landscape aesthetic and fully reflect the environmental value that is at the heart of recycling."

Artists Marcus Young and Seitu Jones (both of whom have long histories in Lowertown) were commissioned to creatively re-conceive the recycling bin and the ritual of recycling. Jones, a Frogtown-based leader in public art, was responsible for the physical design of the bins which make it possible for Mears Park visitors to recycle their aluminum cans, glass and plastic bottles. Young, Saint Paul Public Artist in Residence, created a whimsical ritual, or secret "gift," entitled This is For You, which was launched today along with the website [www.recyclinginmearspark.org](http://www.recyclinginmearspark.org).

In 2007, Eureka Recycling received grants from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the US Environmental Protection Agency to support the development of best practices for public space recycling program. Meanwhile, Public Art Saint Paul initiated a Beyond Green program and received funding from Saint Paul Cultural STAR to support a series of initiatives to encourage sustainable art-making and to develop demonstration projects related to environmental values, including recycling in public spaces.

In the coming months, Eureka Recycling and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation will be observing and analyzing all aspects of this pilot to inform best practices to apply to the rest of the city. "A successful program takes more than just sticking bins out there and hoping they work," said Parks and Recreation Director Michael Hahm. "We're committed to understanding how we can cost effectively run a public space recycling program, and to making certain that we are really recycling the things you put in these containers."

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Eureka Recycling, Saint Paul's nonprofit partner in recycling and waste reduction, demonstrates that waste is preventable, not inevitable. Eureka Recycling partners with the city to craft zero-waste policies and strategic plans to achieve zero waste on many issues, but especially public space recycling.

Public Art Saint Paul's Beyond Green initiatives explore environmentally conscious art-making, promote public space recycling, and establish dialogues between artists and scientists to explore how public art can contribute to the essential work of making our world more sustainable.