



Most often when the word recycling is used, what comes to mind is a variety of household materials—cans, paper, cardboard, plastic, glass. But, Chatham County’s Environmental Program Coordinator, David Nash thinks about recycling on a much grander scale—facility recycling.

The old Mosquito Control Facility located on Eisenhower Drive is being “recycled” and by Earth Day, the ugly, over-grown caterpillar will have begun its metamorphosis into what will eventually be a one-stop recycling, resource conservation and education center that will serve the entire community.

“At present, it’s a ‘work in progress,’ explains Nash, as he looks around at the transformational work already underway, “When we’re finished, we will have a facility that will offer drop-off recycling serving the Southside, classroom space, an on-site educator, community workshops and much more. Due to the central location of the facility, we are all incredi-

bly excited about this project and its environmental impact in the community.”

The Resource Conservation Education Center is the first of its kind facility in the area. It is a joint venture between Chatham County and the City of Savannah. Chatham County is providing the facility and staffing. The City of Savannah is providing the stationary compactors and containers that will be used for on-site recycling. The City will also provide transportation for the recycled material to the end markets. The proceeds from the sale of recycled materials will be shared by the two entities

Earlier this year, Chatham County Board of Commission Chairman Pete Liakakis made the development and opening of the Resource Conservation and Education Center by Earth Day one of the goals mentioned in his inaugural address. Work on the facility began in earnest in early January, 2009 . The preliminary opening for the facility is slated for Earth Day, April 22, 2009. Between





now and then, however, there is much work to be done.

On the 'light side' of all the many changes happening on the site are the facelift and cosmetic changes that include painting and re-roofing. Internal building changes include: New office space, one class room and an exhibit room area along with a multiple purpose room.

On-site there will be an 80' X 80' covered recycling drop-off area to keep people out of the weather as they do their drop-off recycling. A full line of drop-off recycling opportunities will be offered to include: aluminum and steel cans, scrap metal, paper, cardboard, magazines, paperbooks, telephone books, pasteboard, plastics, No. 1 & No. 2, glass, clear, brown and green. Also, some recycling opportunities for items that are not so common: Used motor oil, electronics, lead acid batteries, rechargeable batteries, CD/DVD's, and toner and ink cartridges.

One of the primary goals of the facility is to be a working laboratory to

showcase renewable products that can successfully incorporated into home and business settings alike such as: solar, VOC-free bamboo flooring and wall coverings, ply-boo, recycled glass tiles, 100% recycled sheetrock, low-flow plumbing fixtures and wheat-cored doors, HVAC SEER-16 individualized room heating/cooling systems, VOC-free interior and exterior paints, 100% recycled roofing shingles, energy conserving lighting, spray foam roofing insulation, and a solar water heaters to provide on-site hot water. The idea of the center is to provide actual applications of these products in a real world setting. Initial "green" guidance and input for the project was provided by Commissioner Pat Shay, who is a local architect in the Savannah area.

In order to incorporate "green building concepts" into this rehab project, a lot of planning is currently going on. This is particularly true with regard to converting to solar power. "The process is not quite as straight forward as simply deciding to "go solar," explains





Nash, “ You have to be able to entirely power your own facility using solar or you have to be on the grid. Either all the solar power you generate goes back to Georgia Power and you’re, technically on the grid, or you’re generating all your own solar power and you’re not on the grid at all. It used to be that you could switch back and forth.”

In the end what the Resource Conservation Education Center is hoping to do because of it’s unique situation is by working with Georgia Power and it’s own electrical engineers design a switch that will allow the Facility to do both. Powering lights, hot water, office power requirements and some of it’s recycling equipment with solar power and the HVAC system from the Georgia Power grid.

There also will be changes to the parking area including incorporation of some type of pervious paving that will serve as a transition to on-site xeriscaped demonstration areas that will all be designed with the assistance of the Chatham County Cooperative

Extension Service. All of the landscaped areas will be xeriscaped, capturing rain water from a guttering system that will direct the water to cisterns for on-site irrigation needs.

In addition, the Resource Conservation Education Center will serve as host to continuous on-site projects and workshops open to all ages, including individuals, families and groups in the community. Vendors and knowledgeable professionals with various resource conservation backgrounds, experience and expertise will present hands-on workshops and lectures about products and practices demonstrated in the Center. Xeriscaping demonstration areas as well as a variety of lectures and workshops for individuals and families will be offered to share knowledge and practical applications for projects to then be done in homes and businesses throughout the community.

The Resource Conservation Education Center will focus on rotating community artists or interns to do “found object” art demonstrations





that shows the artistic process involved in developing individual works of art. Eventually, there be Artisan rental space with rotating exhibits of reclaimed art projects.

The Center will have an on-site Solid Waste Programs Coordinator who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the site. In addition, this individual will also be responsible for conducting facility tours and coordinating educational field trip with the Savannah-Chatham County School System with hands-on environmental/resource conservation lesson plans by grade level available by request. These lessons plans will be available for both on-site activities with classes visiting the Center, and as ancillary activities to be used by classroom educators after field trips to the Center to enhance the student's learning experience.

What part can individuals or businesses who are interested in involved in the metamorphosis of this facility into the Resource Conservation Education Center help if

they are interested? "Eventually, we would like to have a cadre of volunteers to help staff the center and provide assistance to others in correctly sorting the materials brought in for recycling and to provide general information and site tours," said David Nash, " and to help out with demonstration workshops." "We also need professionals and qualified individuals with environmental, conservation, horticulture or related topics to give workshops and community demonstrations at the Center. Potential topics are almost limitless. We also would like artists , artisans or even hobbyist who utilize "found" or "recycled" or reusable materials in their art to work in and on the facility."

Interested individuals can contact David Nash at Chatham County Public Works and Park Services at 912-652-6856.

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