**For Immediate Release**

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**Lake Forest Kicks Off Recycling Campaign To Reduce Waste; Decrease Costs**

“Rethink Recycling” Featuring *Bart the Cart* To Reduce City’s

Processing Costs By Up To 25% Per Ton

Lake Forest, IL (May 4, 2020) -- While Lake Forest residents are among the most dedicated recyclers in the nation as evidenced by the City’s 95 percent participation rate, its recycling program needs immediate improvements if it’s to remain economically viable say City officials.

Planned numerous months before the outbreak of coronavirus disease, the City of Lake Forest is moving forward with a consumer education campaign aimed at significantly reducing contaminated items in the City's recycling bins. Both residential refuse and recycling materials are increasing as a result of the state's Stay at Home order.

According to Mike Thomas, Lake Forest Director of Public Works, changing international markets plus an increase in the levels of contamination among collected recyclables have raised processing costs to unacceptable levels. “For our recycling program to be successful we must drive down processing costs immediately,” said Thomas. “The good news is we can do it simply by being smarter about what we recycle.”

To that end Lake Forest is launching a two-year campaign called “Rethink Recycling” that will help Lake Forest residents determine what should and should not be placed in their recycling bins. The goal is to reduce recycling waste from the current 25 percent to 10 percent, thereby reducing the City’s recycling process costs by 25% per ton which equates to an annual savings of up to $50,000.

The Lake Forest Garden Club, established in 1912 and a longtime collaborator with the City of Lake Forest, provided a community grant totaling $110,000 to fund “Rethink Recycling.” This campaign is in keeping with the Garden Club’s history of advocating for environmental conservation, beautification and educational efforts that benefit residents, visitors and businesses in Lake Forest and beyond.

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Leading the new campaign will be a friendly animated character named Bart the Cart -- a recycling expert designed to connect with and keep involved recyclers of all ages. Bart’s

recycling direction (including a new video) will be available at [www.bartthecart.com](http://www.bartthecart.com) and on stickers placed on the underside of residential and commercial recycling bin lids. When the state rescinds the current Stay at Home order, Bart and his recycling tips will be visible throughout the community via events and outdoor promotional posters.

Bart’s campaign is organized into four basic guidelines: Empty and Clean, Be Plastic Bag Free, No Styrofoam and No Tanglers. According to Bart, by following these guidelines, Lake Forest residents can make a direct impact on lowering recycling costs.

“The result of this City-wide effort will be cleaner recyclable material that doesn’t clog recycling machines,” said Thomas. “Clogged machines make for additional work for the processors and ultimately drive up costs to the City of Lake Forest. But now with Bart’s direction and everyone pitching in, especially during these trying times, our recycling program can be among the cleanest and best in the nation.”

Lake Forest residents can track the program’s success by following measurements of recycling contamination at [www.bartthecart.com](http://www.bartthecart.com/)

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