

# NEW BRAUNFELS Herald-Zeitung

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## GARBAGE TIME



Rudy DeLeon picks up residential trash on his route for the Solid Waste and Recycling Division on Wednesday. **MIKALA COMPTON | Herald-Zeitung**

# Talking trash

By Lindsey Carnett  
The Herald-Zeitung

With New Braunfels growing so fast, sometimes it's good to talk trash — as in actual garbage.

Approved during Monday night's regularly scheduled city council meeting, New Braunfels' new Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan is a first for the city.

The plan draws out several major goals with specific objectives to help the city plan for an increase of people and their trash from 2020 to 2040.

A 30-minute presentation by SCS Engineers' Michelle Leonard and Vita Quinn went over



Solid Waste and Recycling Division Residential Foreman Omar Algeria talks to his team on Wednesday, July 10, 2019. Algeria says the most challenging thing about the population growth is taking on the extra workload that comes with it. **MIKALA COMPTON | Herald-Zeitung**

how the plan can address city needs over the next 5, 10 and 20 years, and how rates may change.

"When we started out with this project, (the Solid Waste and Recycling Division, or SWARD) had established a

vision and noticed a need for plan to be prepared because of immense growth in this city," said Leonard, SCS vice president and project manager. "Based on plan vision, we established five primary goals

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and supporting objectives."

The plan's goals are to achieve further progress in waste reduction; waste minimization and reuse; maximize resource recovery and diversion; ensure available capacity solid waste facilities utilized currently by the city; maintain sufficient funding mechanisms to support programs; and encourage and expand coordination and communication regarding solid waste issues among all agencies and private firms in New Braunfels and the region.

Explaining how the plan was prepared, Leonard broke down how SCS Engineers looked at the city's present waste management strategies and spoke to how the growth of the population in New Braunfels was a major driver in projections for the future of the city's trash management.

"We used the growth projections, and we also looked at types and quantities of waste that we know are generated in the city, and identified what will we need in the short, the medium and the long term to meet the needs of the city's solid waste system," Leonard said.

Options for how the city can meet these needs were then drawn up based on data evaluation, Leonard said.

"We narrowed those down and selected some specific strategies," she said.

Special attention is being focused on reduction, reuse and repurposing, Leonard said.

"If we don't generate the waste, we don't have to pick it up, we don't have to recycle it or compost it or landfill, so we always have those at the top of the plan," Leonard said.

Education is the next big piece — teaching residents and commercial facilities how to recycle, and how to stop contaminating recyclables.

"A problem here and across the US — the constraints the recycling has experienced in exporting of materials to China —

there's a lot of non-recyclables in our recycling — in New Braunfels it's about 24% of our city's recyclables — so we want to educate people so there's less contamination and people are getting the right stuff in the recycle bin," Leonard said.

Making recycling easier for multifamily facilities and commercial residences are also goals, Leonard said.

"Another big component of the city's waste stream is organics — we believe it could be up to 40% to 45% of what is presently being land-filled," Leonard said. "So a number of programs are targeted for organic waste stream."

She also touched on special waste such as e-waste, and fleet management as the city grows.

Vita Quinn, SCS Engineers director of management services, then took over the presentation to speak on the financial aspects of the future.

"As the next step, we want to address, 'Can I afford it? Are my revenues sufficient in the long run to operate what I need to?'" Quinn said.

Population growth may mean more trash but it also means a growth in revenue income, Quinn said.

"We talked a lot about population and growth projections, keeping in mind you are considering an additional service area and more," Quinn said.

At the moment, Quinn said projections do not show a need for a rate increase up until 2028.

"In the future, there will be a need for some rate adjustments but not in the near term or certainly not in this fiscal year," Quinn said.

As a need for new facilities, and for fleet hiring and maintenance grows, however, this may be something that needs revisiting beyond current rates, Quinn said.

"These do not include ... any capital or solid waste management projects besides vehicles and hiring, so that may trigger need for rate adjustments, but planning ahead will make those rates more minimal," she said.