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One on 1
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This Day in History
Lottery

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SPECIAL
REPORTS

POLLS

COMMUNITY
CALENDAR

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City Signs 20-Year Contract To Continue Recycling

DIAL UP BROAD BAND

SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2004

After a few confusing years in which the city slashed its recycling program and gradually reinstated it, Mayor Michael Bloomberg Tuesday announced a 20-year commitment to recycling, as well as the construction of a new processing plant on the Brooklyn waterfront.

The city signed the long-term contract with one of the nation's largest recycling companies, the Hugo Neu Corporation, to operate a \$45 million processing plant that will be built on the Brooklyn waterfront. The new plant in Sunset Park will handle all of the city's residential metal, glass and plastic recycling.

The plant, which will be built on city-owned land at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, is scheduled to be completed by 2007. Hugo Neu will also invest about \$25 million in the project.

"I think because we have the courage to step back and re-assess the recycling program, we are now able to put it on a much firmer economic and environmental foundation," said Bloomberg.

"New York City is committed to recycling," said Sanitation Commissioner John Doherty. "It's a long term. It's not going to go away; it's here to stay. You don't enter 20-year contracts unless you mean to keep recycling in New York City."

"We're excited to be building a state-of-the-art facility here in Brooklyn, bringing Brooklyn residents good 'green-collar' jobs and helping to bring back economic vitality to Sunset Park," said Hugo Neu Chairman John Neu.

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The city now pays about \$50 per ton to send glass, metal and plastic out of town for recycling. The cost is expected to drop to \$40 with the completion of the plant and could eventually go as low as \$20.

The announcement comes two years after the city halted all recycling except for paper and metal to help make up a severe budget shortfall, because the mayor said the program was not cost effective. Plastic and glass recycling were eventually resumed in stages.

"Currently, we collect more than 330,000 tons a year of metal, glass and plastic for recycling," said the mayor. "So compared to \$107 per ton charges the city was facing when it suspended recycling these items back in 2002, this contract will save the city more than \$19.5 million."

Some of those who live and work in the area support the plan, but others are reserving judgment, complaining the neighborhood is already burdened with a prison, a power plant and the Gowanus Expressway.

"We know it's kind of out of sight so they think it's out of mind, but there is also a plan to put a waterfront park which is still in the planning stages, so I wonder if people in our community are going to want to go to a park that is going to be next door to a recycling plant and also bordered by a power plant," said community activist David Galarza. "Why overburden communities that are already overburdened? It's not so much a 'not in my backyard,' it's [that] our backyard is full."

The mayor says the location is ideal because most of the garbage will be brought in and out by barge, reducing the number of trucks on the streets in the surrounding neighborhood.

Bloomberg said the company will create 160 construction jobs and 100 permanent jobs, and is committed to hiring locally.

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