



KENT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2020

Contact: Kristen Wieland, Kent County Department of Public Works (616) 632-7923

Recycling Center undergoing upgrades to paper sorting, increasing efficiency and quality

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – The **Kent County Recycling & Education Center** at 977 Wealthy St. SW is scheduling upgrades to improve efficiency and quality by replacing the mechanical screens used to sort paper. Renovations will take place starting Monday, Feb. 24 and last until approximately Friday, March 13. The facility will be closed and unable to accept recyclable materials, from both curbside and drop-off locations, for processing while new equipment is installed.

“Periodic upgrades and renovations, like the replacement of our paper screens, ensure the recycling facility is up-to-date and can efficiently and reliably process clean materials for recycling markets,” said **Nic VanderVinne**, Resource Recovery & Recycling Manager for the Kent County Department of Public Works. “The Kent County Recycling & Education Center allows residents to conveniently recycle materials with a single-stream sorting process, that requires we have screens to automate the sorting process for materials like glass, metal, plastic and paper.”

Paper accounts for 70% of the processed material at the Kent County Recycling & Education Center (REC). In 2019, the Kent County REC processed 16,692 tons of paper product, the equivalent of 283,764 trees. The facility sorts out at least a truckload of paper every day. The screens used to sort paper are original equipment from when the Kent County REC opened in 2010 and have run for over 30,000 operational hours.

“The recycling industry has changed significantly in the past few years due to increased global import restrictions,” said **Dar Baas**, director of Kent County Department of Public Works. “It’s imperative we make improvements to keep producing a high-quality product in a very competitive domestic market.”

The Kent County Recycling & Education Center is approaching its 10th year of single-stream recycling. Over the past decade, the center has undergone periodic maintenance and upgrades to adapt to changes in community recycling habits and packaging trends. In 2017, Kent County added equipment to accept paper cartons and improve automation.

“We are giving advance notice to ensure residents can get as much of their existing recycling picked up and recycled before the February 24 temporary closure”, said **Baas**. “We understand this is inconvenient but it’s necessary to ensure we can continue to be a reliable processor of recyclables for the region.”

Updates and more information on the temporary closure will be available at www.reimaginetrash.org or call 616-632-7945.

###