

NEWS & RECORD

Monday, April 1, 2013

Greensboro, North Carolina

Greenway has smart trash cans

■ The sun-powered cans email the city when they are ready to be emptied.

BY AMANDA LEHMERT
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GREENSBORO — The future is here.

Robot trash cans have arrived. More specifically, sun-powered, electronically communicating garbage compactors.

The new Downtown Greenway got two BigBelly Solar trash cans last spring. That means Greens-

boro was ahead of cities like Raleigh and New York, which only recently switched to the cans to reduce litter, increase recycling and save on waste-collection costs.

Action Greensboro raised the money to buy the cans, which are the property of the city.

The BigBellies look like regular trash cans.

But they know when they're full.

The cans send trash collectors an email notification that they are ready to be emptied.

And the cans take longer to fill up. Thanks to an internal com-

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pacting function, the cans hold five times the amount of a regular trash container, according to BigBelly Solar.

Officials in Philadelphia said they have saved about \$1 million a year in manpower and other trash collection costs since switching to the cans, according to news reports.

All that action is powered by the sun, thanks to solar panels

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placed atop each container.

Action Greensboro, which has spearheaded the private fundraising for the greenway, researched the high-tech trash containers last year.

They seemed like a good match for the Morehead Park section of the greenway, which has solar-powered lights, said Dabney Sanders, Downtown Greenway project manager for Action Greensboro.

"It just sort of fit in with our interests in trying some innovative technology," Sanders said.

The city staff contemplated using the BigBelly cans in other parts of the city but were dissuaded by the high up-front costs: \$5,000 per can.

"In the meantime, we thought, 'What a great opportunity for us to actually showcase them on the greenway,'" Sanders said.

"The city would be responsible for the maintenance and pickup, and it would give them an opportunity to see how it works."

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HOW THE BIGBELLY SOLAR INTELLIGENT WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION SYSTEM WORKS

How it works:

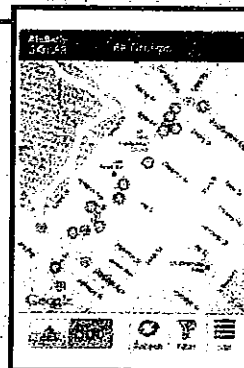
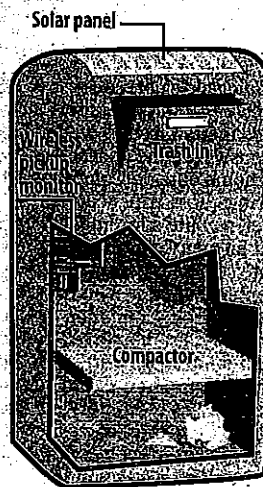
The solar panel extracts energy from the sun and transfers the power to a battery on the trash can. This gives power to software that checks fullness with a photo eye and triggers compactions automatically.

When full, external LED indicators send information to monitoring sites.

For units equipped with wireless monitoring, the fullness and pickup status can be tracked from a remote computer.

What it holds: Five times the amount of trash as a regular trash can

Where are they: Near the Spring Garden Street and Lee Street exits of the Downtown Greenway



Source: Bigbelly.com