

# Westword

## The Not-so-Sweet Smell of Success

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A distinct odor greeted the visiting dignitaries as they donned hardhats and toured Alpine Waste's spanking-new, \$5-million recycling plant in Adams County this afternoon, a dumpster away from Furniture Row. A warm, ripe, garbagey odor, probably from the food residue clinging to the tin cans being sucked off a conveyor belt by a spinning magnetic device.

But Alpine and its boosters smell something fine in all this: a whiff of nice, crisp money. The plant, which has been operating for weeks but had its grand opening today, means fresh jobs, more centralized hauling, and a poke in the eye to industry giant Waste Management, which has had a stranglehold on single-stream recycling efforts in Denver. Alpine, a local company that started with one truck in 1999 and now has more than 2,200 commercial and residential accounts, hopes to see its recycling business grow to 10,000 tons a month — about what Waste Management handles from Denver and other customers in its plant a few miles away, the star of our feature "The Hunt For Green."

The plant opening comes on the eve of the National Recycling Coalition Congress coming to Denver, a gathering of 500 recyclers from across the nation, bound to be the trashiest event in town.

Alpine president John Griffith says his company hauled the trash from the recent Taste of Colorado — and managed to divert twenty percent of it from the landfill to its recycling operation. He also vows that his company will seek out local customers for its recycled materials, further boosting the environmental benefits of the process. That's no small concern, since most of Denver's high-grade recyclables go to mills in other states, while the lower-grade stuff gets shipped to China (or, in the case of busted glass, ends up as landfill cover). Alpine already has one notable client for its glassware: a little place called Coors.

Now third-party haulers have more options, too, Griffith notes. That smells like a good old fashioned price war in the offing, doesn't it? — **Alan Prendergast**