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Councilman proposes bringing plastic waste recycling plant to San Jose



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The Bay Area's largest city could soon be in position to do something about California's recycling crisis thanks to a proposal by a city councilman to bring a plastic recycling plant to San Jose.

By Chris Nguyen

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SAN JOSE, Calif. (KGO) -- With China increasingly rejecting most of our waste, many say California has a recycling crisis on its hands.

But the Bay Area's largest city could soon be in position to do something about it.

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Recycling used to be a money maker, but nowadays, dirty plastics cost more money to get rid of while also clogging our landfills.

That's why San Jose city councilmember Johnny Khamis is leading an effort to bring a polypropylene plastic purification and recycling plant to the region.

"This is a great way for us to not give up our plastic stuff and to create new products out of it," said Khamis, prior to Tuesday's city council meeting.

In 2018, China placed bans on imports of most US recycling, upending the industry as we knew it.

But despite Americans' best efforts, many continue to discard plastics such as juice containers and ketchup bottles into recycling bins in soiled and stained conditions, which essentially defeats the purpose.

"These are the kinds of plastics that even if we have a market, they're very challenging to get the commodities brokers to purchase those plastics," said Emily Hanson of GreenWaste Recovery in San Jose.

In San Jose alone, 10 percent of the overall waste stream is plastic.

Officials with the city's department of environmental services say 1,000 tons of polypropylene plastic waste are generated by homes and businesses across the city every year.

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Under the Khamis plan, the new recycling facility could help reduce plastic waste volume by as much as 88 percent.

It would be built on land adjacent to the San Jose Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility near Alviso as part of a public-private partnership.

The city would provide the land, whereas a private sector partner would be responsible for building the plant.

"This is an opportunity for smart government, efficient government and enterprise to collaborate on a process that will benefit the city and the region and the state," said Joel Corona of California Waste Solutions.

Although the project would take years to complete, the city council will take its first step toward considering it on Tuesday evening.