



# Sustainability and Recycling

## From Dump to Destination: The Transformation of Centennial Park

When you walk your dog or enjoy a picnic at Centennial Park, you are standing on a landmark of local history—though perhaps not the kind you might expect. For many longtime residents, the area just east of the current Transfer Station is known simply as the "old city landfill," a site that played a vital role in our community's waste management for half a century.

### A Half-Century of History (1950–2000)

The landfill officially opened its gates in **1950**, serving as the primary disposal site for our growing city. During those early decades, waste management looked very different than it does today. In fact, until roughly **1970**, the practice of using burn barrels for residential and commercial waste was common, and the landfill often saw open-air management of refuse.

As our understanding of environmental health evolved, so did our infrastructure. With the introduction of stricter Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) landfilling regulations in the 1970s and beyond, the city

transitioned away from older disposal methods. These federal mandates were instrumental in helping us clean up refuse handling, introducing modern sanitary landfill practices.



### From Closing to Community Space

The site officially ceased operations in **2000**, marking the end of an era. Since its closure, the city has worked diligently to cap and monitor the land, ensuring it remains safe for public use. What was once an active site of industrial utility has been successfully reclaimed as a vibrant, green space for all to enjoy.

Today, Centennial Park stands as a testament to how effectively cities can evolve. The next time you find yourself enjoying the trails or open fields, take a moment to appreciate the journey of this land—from the essential, rugged work of mid-century waste management to the peaceful community sanctuary we value today.



## The Silent Drain: How to Spot and Stop Household Leaks

Enjoy part 2 of our 3-part series on water conservation, as we kick off the summer months.

Did you know that the average household wastes more than 10,000 gallons of water a year just from minor leaks?

That is enough water to wash 270 loads of laundry!

This month, we are diving into the simple ways you can detect and fix household leaks. By spending just a few minutes checking your plumbing, you can save water, lower your utility bills, and avoid costly water damage repairs down the road.

### How to Play Water Detective

Many leaks are silent and hidden. Here are three quick ways to catch them in the act:

**The Meter Test:** Turn off all faucets and water-using appliances in your home. Go check your water meter. Wait about 15–20 minutes without using any water, then check the meter again. If the dial has moved, you have a leak.

**The Toilet Dye Test:** Drop a few drops of food coloring into your toilet tank (do not flush!). Wait about 10 minutes. If color starts seeping into the toilet bowl, your flapper valve is leaking and needs to be replaced.

**Look and Listen:** Check under sinks for dampness, look for pooling water around the water heater, and listen for the faint sound of dripping or running water when the house is quiet.



### Easy Fixes, Big Savings

The good news? Most common household leaks are inexpensive and easy DIY projects:

**Leaky Faucets:** Usually caused by a worn-out rubber washer or O-ring. Replacing these small parts costs just a few dollars at the hardware store.

**Running Toilets:** A degraded toilet flapper is the most common culprit. It's a cheap, 5-minute fix that can save thousands of gallons a month.

**Loose Showerheads:** Often, a bit of pipe tape (Teflon tape) and a tight turn with a wrench are all it takes to stop a dripping shower.

**The Bottom Line:** *A little maintenance today goes a long way. Taking care of leaks doesn't just protect your wallet—it protects our planet's most precious resource.*

Stay tuned next month for Part 3 of our Water Conservation Series.

## Helena Water Usage: March - April 2026

Comparison in millions of gallons. Differences between treatment plant outputs are typically due to maintenance or the need to utilize additional water sources as natural water flow fluctuates throughout the year.

	Ten Mile	Eureka	Missouri River	Monthly Total	Peak Day Demand	Average Day
<b>March</b>	94.2	18.1	0	317.3	4.6	3.5
<b>April</b>						



## Keeping Helena's Alleys Clear for Garbage Collection

We all appreciate having our city garbage cans dumped weekly. Your garbage truck drivers do an excellent job of navigating the many alleys and roads around town. However, there are several things you can do to make their jobs easier, including keeping alleys clear of debris, garden beds, landscaping, firewood, infrastructure, vehicles, boats, and other items.

**The alley is not storage!** While it can be tempting to park, stuff, and shove all your extra stuff and vehicles in every crevice, your alley must remain clear so that the large garbage trucks can maneuver through it without issues. Ensure vehicles, RVs, and boats are clear of the alley right-of-way. When in doubt, ask yourself if a garbage truck has enough room. If it's even questionable, it's best to find a different place for your stuff.

**Landscaping is nice, but the alley isn't the place.**

We understand the urge to beautify the areas around your home, including the alley. However, landscaping encroachment also severely hinders the mobility of our garbage trucks. Rocks, pavers, bushes, trees, and decorations make it difficult for your drivers to navigate down the narrow alleys.

**Watch your infrastructure!** Ensure you have the proper permits and know the rules for building infrastructure, such as retaining walls, fences, garages, sheds, and porches, on your property and near the alley. There are setback standards for a reason, and the last thing you want to do is remove what you've built because you've put it where you're not supposed to.

**Keep the gardens and flower beds out of the alley.**

We all love gardening and flowers and encourage your green thumb. It's a sustainable way to obtain fresh produce during the summer months and bring color to your property. However, please keep your gardens, raised beds, and flower containers out of the alley. As with the other items listed, it's one more obstacle for your garbage truck drivers to navigate, making their job more difficult.



**Trim your trees and shrubs.** Your garbage trucks are expensive pieces of equipment, and overhanging trees and shrubs can not only hinder navigation but also cause damage to them. Please trim all trees and shrubs that encroach into the alley to help keep our trucks running.

Don't forget the snow! We know it's spring and we're not thinking about snow. But since we're talking about keeping alleys clear, please ensure your snow removal doesn't hinder your garbage trucks. Even in the winter, your trash still needs picked up. Snow and ice make your garbage truck drivers jobs even more challenging without adding piles of snow blocking access.





Some other reminders. While we're talking about garbage collection, here are a few more tips to ensure your trash is picked up on time.

- Put heavier items on the bottom so your cans don't blow over in heavy winds.
- It's required that you bag all your garbage, so it doesn't blow everywhere when being picked up.
- Take your green waste (branches, grass, bushes) to the Transfer Station green waste area. Branches can get stuck in the cans, preventing other garbage from being dumped. Additionally, our green waste is chipped and composted at the landfill, giving it a sustainable second life!

***Keeping our alleys clean and clear of debris and vegetation ensures our garbage collectors can do their jobs effectively and keep our city operating efficiently!***

## Dive into Summer at Last Chance Splash Waterpark & Pool!

The countdown is over! Helena's favorite summer hotspot, Last Chance Splash Waterpark and Pool, officially opens for the season on Monday, June 15th. Enjoy daily open swimming, thrilling waterslides, a relaxing lazy river, and a fully stocked concession stand for all your favorite summer snacks. Weekday lap swim and adult water walking kick off at 9:30 AM, with full waterpark features opening at 12:30 PM. For full schedules and pricing, check out the website here. See you on deck!



## Transfer Station Hours

**CLOSED** June 18 & 19 for Juneteenth & maintenance

Open daily, 8 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Vehicles must be unloaded and out of the facility by 4:30 p.m.



## Want to see more from us?

Go to [www.helenamt.gov/Sustainability](http://www.helenamt.gov/Sustainability) to sign up for our monthly newsletter.

Follow the City of Helena on Facebook and Instagram!

Join City of Helena staff at the Farmers Market most Saturday mornings to answer your questions, share information about city services, and connect with the community. You can find our booth at the corner of Fuller and Neill Avenue.