



Fitchburg, Wisconsin

50% Residential Waste Reduction



Overview

Fitchburg instituted the first mandatory recycling ordinance and the first multi-family recycling ordinance in Wisconsin and was the first city in the U.S. to implement curbside polystyrene collection. The city's Solid Waste and Recycling Ordinance requires all occupants of residential and commercial property to separate 16 recyclables from trash, details proper preparation methods, requires the implementation of multi-family recycling programs, and prohibits delivery of recyclables to any disposal facility. Fitchburg contracts with a private hauler to provide trash collection and disposal, weekly curbside recycling collection, and curbside collection of non-woody yard debris four times a year. City crews collect brush from the curb eight times a year. Residents pay an annual base rate for trash, recycling, and yard debris service and pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) rates for excess trash. From 1992 to 1996, total residential trash disposal dropped despite a 20% increase in households served. In 1996, the city diverted 50% of its residential waste from disposal (29% through recycling and 21% through composting).

DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION: 16,254
(1992); 17,266 (1996)
HOUSEHOLDS: 6,685 (1990);
3,057 single-family
households and duplexes,
3,628 multi-family units.
7,500 (1996); 3,860 units
in buildings with 1-4 units

Keys to High Waste Reduction

Fitchburg achieved its high waste reduction through the recycling of many items, composting, and PAYT trash fees. Residents can recycle 21 types of materials: 17 through weekly curbside collection, two through monthly curbside collection, one at the drop-off, and one by special appointment. Yard debris collection and drop-off programs accept leaves, grass clippings, and other yard and garden trimmings. A separate program collects and processes brush. PAYT trash rates serve as an incentive for decreased disposal. In FY97 Fitchburg charged each household

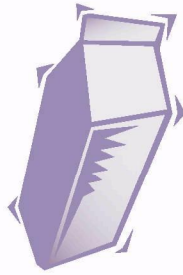
RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM SUMMARY

	1992	1996
Tons Per Year	3,644	4,147
Percent Diverted	35%	50%
Recycled	24%	29%
Composted	11%	21%
Average lbs./HH/day	6.16	5.89
Net Program Costs/HH	\$126.48	\$108.12
Disposal Services	\$72.08	\$52.51
Diversion Services	\$54.40	\$55.61

Notes: 3,243 households served in 1992; 3,860 in 1996. 1992 dollars adjusted to 1996 dollars using the GDP deflator. Numbers may not add to total due to rounding.

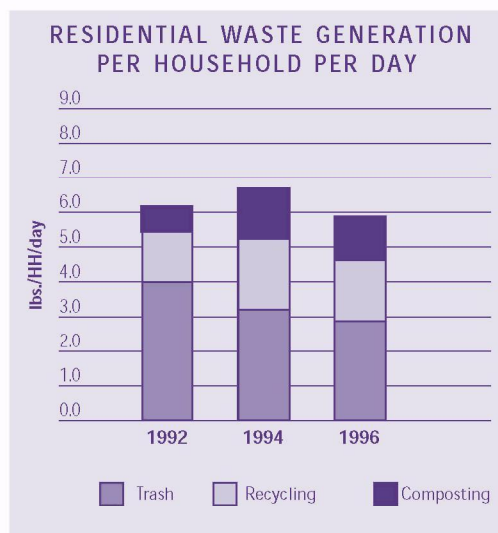
Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 1999.

\$82 for recycling and yard debris services, and collection and disposal of one 32-gallon trash can per week. The city also provided each household with 10 tags which could be attached to extra containers of trash. The weekly collection cost of a 64-gallon container was an extra \$34.68 per year and a 95-gallon container was an additional \$60.96 annually. Additional tags for trash bags cost \$1.50 each at local retail stores.



Cost-Effectiveness

Fitchburg's net solid waste management budget rose from 1992 to 1996, but so did the city's population and number of households served. When the cost of inflation is taken into account, average per household costs for waste management services have decreased from \$126 in 1992 to \$108 in 1996. During the same period, landfill tip fees increased by



Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 1999.

17% in real dollars. On a per-ton basis, trash cost \$100 and waste reduction cost \$101 (recycling cost \$117 per ton and yard debris recovery \$78). Fitchburg's low-cost drop-off composting program helps the city contain costs. In 1996, residents delivered 534 tons of yard debris (13% of their waste stream) to the city drop-off site. City staff land spread the material over city land, avoiding higher cost processing of the material.



MATERIALS RECOVERED

CURBSIDE:

- newspaper, magazines and catalogs, corrugated cardboard
- mixed paper (including mail, white paper, brown paper bags, paperboard, and phone books)
- cans
- glass containers
- all plastic containers and #4 plastic container lids
- rigid and foam polystyrene
- reusable household items (e.g., clothing, books, small appliances, housewares, and toys)
- white goods
- grass clippings, leaves, brush, holiday trees, and other yard and garden debris

DROP-OFF:

all materials accepted at curbside except:

- cans
- glass containers
- plastics
- reusable items
- white goods



Recycling collection truck in Fitchburg

Tips for Replication

Listen to your line employees. Workers know the system and its strengths and weaknesses.

Get your hands dirty.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Talk with other recyclers when faced with problems. Most likely someone else has encountered a similar problem and can offer advice.

Optimize. Never stop striving to improve; there's always room for improvement.

Contact

Kevin Wunder
Project Manager
Public Works Dept., City of Fitchburg
2377 South Fish Hatchery Road
Fitchburg, WI 53711
PHONE: 608-270-6343
FAX: 608-275-7154

