

**To:** Lawrence City Commissioners  
**From:** The Sustainability Advisory Board  
**RE:** Sustainability Advisory Board Recommendations Pertaining to Recycling Survey

In March of 2008, in conjunction with the Sustainability Advisory Board(SAB), City Staff commissioned a survey to examine community interest in, and support for, City-sponsored curbside recycling.

The results<sup>1</sup> of this survey are compelling: the vast majority of Lawrence residents surveyed indicate that they currently recycle to some degree, and approximately 58% of citizens surveyed indicate that they support a City-wide, City-Sponsored Curbside recycling program and are willing to pay for it.

The SAB is fully cognizant of the challenging economic conditions faced by both City government and the citizenry at large, **and we are concerned that the status quo may represent a squandering of both fiscal and natural resources.** Every ton of waste that is collected and disposed in the landfill costs the City of Lawrence and its residents money. Conversely, each ton of waste not disposed, through either waste reduction or recycling, can help decrease the City's operational, trash collection and landfilling costs.

In order to encourage waste reduction and provide some measure of service equity while maximizing the recovery of recyclables and revenues therein, changes to the City of Lawrence solid waste disposal system are necessary.

**To that end, the SAB recommends the following:**

- 1. That the City commit to the goal of achieving a 50% reduction in materials sent to the landfill via increased recycling and waste reduction by the year 2015.**
- 2. That the City focus additional resources on long-range planning to maximize waste reduction.**
- 3. That the City conduct a broader examination of options for realizing City-wide curbside recycling;**
- 4. That the City consider implementation of variable-rate garbage collection services, also known as Pay As You Throw (PAYT).**

**Recommendation #1: Establish a goal for waste reduction and recycling.**

By 1996, some 42 states had established and codified numerical waste reduction and recycling goals.<sup>2</sup> We believe that the City should identify a specific goal of its own for reducing the amount of waste that is landfilled. Such a goal will give the City and its citizens a specific benchmark on which to focus, while allowing flexibility in methods and program implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/web\\_based\\_agendas/2008/06-17-08/06-17-08h/cm\\_report\\_recycling\\_survey.pdf](http://www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/web_based_agendas/2008/06-17-08/06-17-08h/cm_report_recycling_survey.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 3.10, Handbook of Solid Waste Management, George Tchobanoglous and Frank Keith, McGraw-Hill Professional, 2002

Our Community has a strong commitment to recycling. We believe that Lawrence can achieve a goal of 50% (landfilled waste reduction) by 2015, if citizens, businesses and students are able to access the necessary tools and opportunities.

**Recommendation #2: Engage in long-range planning to develop and implement waste reduction strategies and improve service efficiency and equity.**

The SAB agrees with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that “accepting responsibility for improving our environment means changing our habits, processes, and practices.”<sup>3</sup> Effective change requires planning.<sup>4</sup> Lawrence needs to plan for the long term, so that we may implement effective programs which encourage waste reduction, and seek efficiencies and equity in the collection and disposition of waste materials.

**We recommend that the City conduct a comprehensive review of the following areas of our solid waste management system, with the stated goals of developing waste reduction strategies, improving efficiency and equity, and equitably recovering costs for services rendered:**

**a) Waste Reduction Strategies**

A variety of tools<sup>5</sup> are available to assist communities in promoting and encouraging waste reduction. (Note that footnotes should go at the end of the sentence.)

Our City has good data on the origins of our waste. Through comprehensive solid waste planning, we need to build on this knowledge and target waste reduction.

**b) Collection Efficiencies**

The SAB is concerned that the systems currently in place for collection of landfill-bound solid waste and yard waste is unnecessarily labor<sup>6</sup> (move footnote to the end of the sentence) and fuel intensive. A variety of resources<sup>7</sup> exist, including research conducted by The Institute for Local Self Reliance<sup>8</sup> (ILSR), which illuminates opportunities for Lawrence to increase program efficiencies, maximize diversion and reduce labor and fuel costs. A reallocation of current system costs where inefficiencies are eliminated or reduced and program structures are modified could be used to fund in part a City-wide residential curbside recycling program.

**c) Multi-Family Dwelling (MFD) Services**

Very few multi-family dwelling units in Lawrence collectively recycle. Most generate significant quantities of trash during "move-out" periods. The SAB is concerned that, currently, the full cost of seasonal “move-out” disposal events is not being paid for by waste generators or landlords. It is our recommendation that the City research options to ensure that the full cost of

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conservation/resources/msw.htm>

<sup>4</sup> For an example of comprehensive solid waste planning, see Johnson County’s plan:

[http://jced.jocogov.org/solid\\_waste/swmc/sw\\_newplan.htm](http://jced.jocogov.org/solid_waste/swmc/sw_newplan.htm)

<sup>5</sup> [www.epa.gov/wastewise/wrr/prevent.htm](http://www.epa.gov/wastewise/wrr/prevent.htm)

<http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/airwaste/wm/RECYCLE/facts/reduce.htm>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/study\\_sessions/07-16-07/07-16-07h/solid\\_waste\\_rate\\_study\\_2008.html](http://www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/study_sessions/07-16-07/07-16-07h/solid_waste_rate_study_2008.html)

*Labor costs account for 55% of the City’s Solid Waste Budget.*

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ilsr.org/pubs/pubsalist.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.stopwaste.org/home/index.asp?page=518>; <http://www.ilsr.org/pubs/cuttingwaste.pdf>

removal of these mountains of "move-out" wastes are paid by the generators: the landlords and/or multi-family dwellers using the system. MFDs should be the focus of targeted education which encourages recycling, donation, reuse and waste reduction.

**d) Construction and Demolition (C&D) Debris and Commercial Dumpster and Roll-off Services**

The SAB asserts that the pricing structure for commercial dumpsters and roll-off services offered by the City of Lawrence does not provide sufficient incentive to reduce waste or recycle high-volume recoverable materials, particularly those present in the construction and demolition waste stream. Development and implementation of a business and C&D waste reduction plan is desirable. Where possible, the City should seek to divert recyclable components (such as cardboard, metal and clean wood) of the C&D waste stream from the landfill.

**Recommendation #3: Broaden the City's Examination of City-wide Curbside Recycling**

Budget projections for the implementation of City-sponsored curbside recycling currently consider only one option: a City funded and operated Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). We do not believe that this cost assessment is adequate.

**We recommend that the City expand the current cost estimate for curbside recycling to include examination of the following alternative options:**

- a) Outsourcing collection of curbside recyclables to the private sector via a competitive and selective bid or RFP process
- b) Franchising City-wide recycling by neighborhood or area, to one or more current local curbside providers
- c) Development of a jointly funded public-private Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) or an inter-regional MRF
- d) Solicitation of open and creative proposals from the private sector which might include one or more of the following components: collection; processing; transportation
- e) Development of cost estimates for a recycling transfer facility instead of a MRF

**Recommendation #4: Consider implementation of Pay As You Throw (PAYT)**

**That the City research options for the implementation of Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) variable rates for solid waste services and collection efficiency opportunities.**

To encourage waste reduction and ensure some measure of equity in service, we believe that single family households should be charged for trash in the same way that they are billed for electricity, gas, and other utilities. When residents pay a variable rate for waste disposal, they have a financial motivation to reduce their waste through recycling, composting, and source reduction.<sup>9</sup> PAYT offers residents both incentive to reduce and recycle, and fairness; households who generate less trash would pay less than households generating more.

**Conclusion:**

Waste management is an increasingly challenging business that must respond to growing fuel and waste disposal costs, tightening municipal budgets, and dynamic landfill industry conditions.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/payt/topics.htm>

As a result of these factors, changes to the City's system of waste management are inevitable. The City of Lawrence Sustainability Advisory Board recommends changes that will benefit our environment, our economy and the community at large.

The City of Lawrence can best create and maintain sustainable waste management services by encouraging waste reduction and recycling, maximizing efficiencies and equitably assigning costs. A reconsideration of the City's solid waste management goals and methods are necessary to achieve true sustainability.

Attached to this memo and also within the footnote references, you will find a select waste management-related internet resources.

**We respectfully request the City Commission's consideration of the aforementioned recommendations and welcome questions, comments and suggestions.**