



City of Lawrence

Solid Waste Task Force Draft Recommendations January 2012

The Solid Waste Task Force Draft Recommendations:

- Continue to collect residential trash and yard waste weekly;
- Increase automation of services by using city-provided carts for residential solid waste disposal;
- Implement pricing options that charge residents for the collection of trash based on the amount they throw away;
- Implement curbside recycling program for all residential customers; and
- Implement or continue the following programs to increase waste reduction: glass recycling program, organic material composting program, household hazardous waste disposal and large-item pick-up.

Making these changes requires good communication with residents and explains changes in the programming and educates residents about municipal services.

Making these changes should result in a convenient, safe, cost-effective and fair system for our residents. Ultimately, the changes will help the community reduce the total amount of waste and increase recycling of other materials.

The task force does not make any specific recommendations regarding commercial or household hazardous waste services. However, the city should plan for sustaining the household hazardous waste program and be alert for opportunities to improve commercial services that parallel residential solid waste goals.

Based on public feedback and individual experiences as customers, the Solid Waste Task Force believes the city staff provides a high level of customer service. The task force members are confident that staff can implement these recommendations while maintaining the current high level of customer satisfaction.

To develop these recommendations, the Solid Waste Task Force read and listened to feedback from residents, reviewed other communities' programs and discussed ideas with staff and professionals in the solid waste industry. The task force held 17 meetings between April and December 2011.

Satisfaction with Services

The Solid Waste Task Force heard from customers who complimented the city staff and their quality customer service:

"The City of Lawrence Solid Waste employees have always provided excellent service....Furthermore, their customer service skills are unmatched by any other city service or private trash service. They always make it a point to wave at neighborhood children, answer customer questions, help the elderly and disabled, and return the container to the proper position."

"[City staff]...know the city streets, they care about the residents, and have proven that they are willing to work on logistically difficult areas without causing a major disturbance."

"The city personnel who pick up the solid waste are very pleasant and professional."



Continue to collect residential trash and yard waste weekly

The city should continue to provide weekly collection of residential trash and yard waste. Weekly residential collection plays an important role in protecting the public health, safety and environment in Lawrence.

Respondents to the 2011 Citizen Survey expressed a high level of satisfaction with residential trash collection; 93% of the respondents expressed an opinion rating their satisfaction as “very satisfied” or “satisfied.”

Increase automation of services by using city-provided carts for residential solid waste disposal

The city should provide customers with trash carts and use automation to collect the trash. Trash carts provide a consistent, simple way for customers to store their trash and place it at the curb or alley for collection.

The city can use semi-automated and automated trucks to collect trash from carts. This makes collecting trash easier and safer.

Collecting solid waste is a dangerous job. The task force reviewed the city’s workers compensation expenditures for recent years and found that Solid Waste Division expenditures, over the last two years, were almost \$4,000 per position, which is more than three times the expenditures for the next highest department, the Police Department.

Increased automation helps reduce the risk to city employees. Automated collection is associated with fewer injuries than manual collection, lower portion of severe injuries and less physical burnout. The City of Olathe noted an over 50% decrease in workers’ compensation costs after transitioning to automated collection.

All vehicles in the solid waste fleet are already equipped with cart-tippers, so the benefits of using standard containers would be felt immediately from a worker safety perspective.

Increased automation helps reduce and manage collection costs. Collecting trash with a three person crew on a rear loader, while flexible, costs almost twice as much as fully automated collection and about 50% more than semi-automated collection.

Implement pricing options that charge residents for the collection of trash based on the amount they throw away

The city should move toward offering residents pricing options that take into account the amount of trash thrown away. By offering carts in different sizes and charging extra for additional carts, the city can reward customers who generate less trash and recycle more materials.

Carts provide a convenient way to place large amounts of trash at the curb for collection. Common cart sizes hold 5 or 7 large kitchen trash bags.



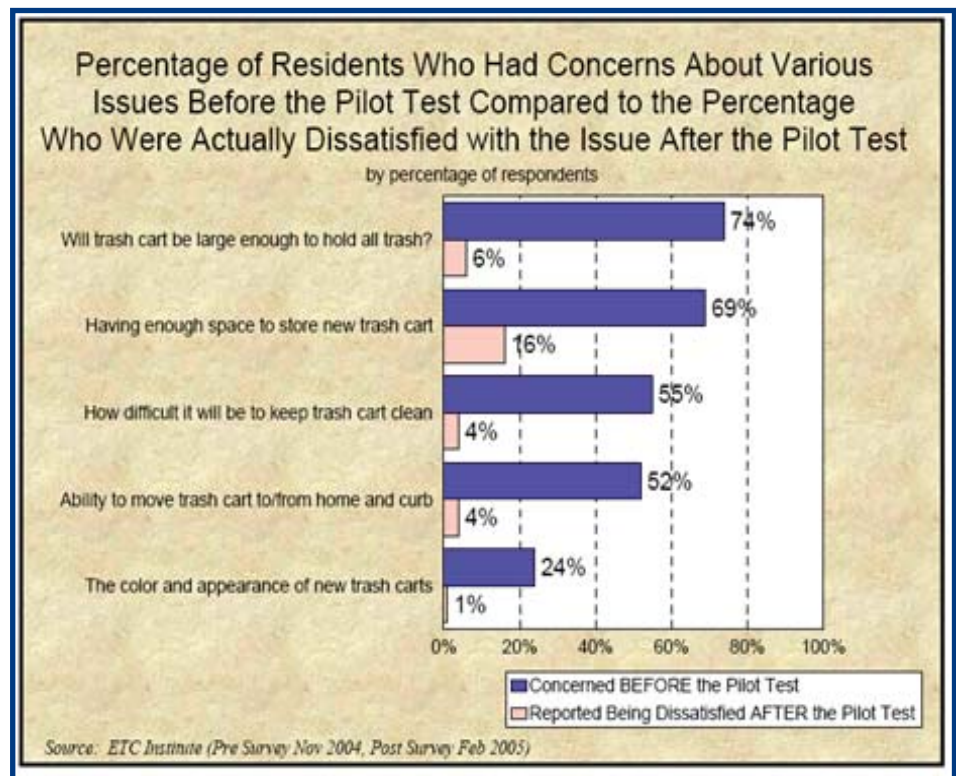
Photo courtesy of City of Olathe



Addressing Concerns About Trash Carts

Some of the feedback received focused on concerns from some customers about using carts, including that the carts are ugly, moving and storing carts can be difficult, and many customers have already bought their own trash cans. We believe that staff should communicate with residents and work to make a transition.

The task force reviewed the experiences from Olathe when they switched to city-provided trash carts. Olathe surveyed customers in a part of the city before and after implementing trash carts. They found that after providing trash carts, satisfaction with trash services improved and concerns about using the carts decreased. After the test, a majority (79%) were very supportive of moving to automated collection and carts city-wide. (Information provided courtesy of City of Olathe)



Recommendations for accomplishing this are:

1. The City of Lawrence provide one roll-out cart for single-family customers as part of the standard monthly fee.
2. If customers want more capacity, provide additional carts at a monthly fee to cover the cost of an additional cart and landfill fees.
3. Collect bulky-items (and up to 5 tires/year) from residential customers at no additional charge.

With these recommendations in place, the city can collect trash from most customers without any additional charges, but occasionally a customer will

place trash that requires more than 5 minutes for a single loader to collect. In those rare occasions, the city should charge the customer an additional fee. It is recommended that the city evaluate the program after implementation and make necessary adjustments.

Pricing options for customers who generate less trash are common. In Johnson County, residents pay more if they throw out more than 95-gallons of trash in a week. To make it easier to reduce the amount of trash thrown out each week, every household is provided unlimited curbside recycling on a weekly basis.



Implement curbside recycling program for all residential customers

The city should provide curbside recycling to make it easier and more convenient for residents to recycle. Communities that implemented curbside recycling increased their recycling. Currently, customers pay for drop-off recycling locations throughout the city and individual customers may subscribe to curbside recycling through several private businesses. Respondents to a 2008 survey of Lawrence residents showed support for city-provided curbside recycling.

The Solid Waste Task Force recommends the city request proposals for providing curbside recycling. This provides an opportunity to evaluate the costs and opportunities for curbside recycling and takes advantage of competition.

We recommend seeking proposals for two alternatives:

1. Curbside collection and processing by a private vendor
2. Vendor-provided materials processing only (collection by the city)

Implement or continue the following programs to increase waste reduction

- Glass recycling program
- Organic material composting program (fruits, vegetables, etc.)
- Household hazardous waste disposal
- Large-item pick-up

For more information

The city's website provides more information including the feedback and presentations received, summaries of the city's current solid waste services, and information on the task force's work at www.lawrenceks.org/swtf.

