

Village of Oak Park, IL

Case Profile

Population:

52,524

Square miles:

5

Median household income:

\$59,183

Form of government:

Council-manager

Performance Indicator

- **Tons of recyclable material collected as a percentage of all refuse and recyclable material collected**

For FY 2006, the village of Oak Park's refuse division reported that recyclable material constituted 31.9 percent of its solid-waste stream. The mean and median proportions for all jurisdictions reporting were 13.6 percent and 10.1 percent, respectively.

Village efforts boost recycling tonnage by 24 percent

The village points to two major factors in its recycling success:

- Financial incentives to encourage residents to recycle
- Effective communication with residents about recycling opportunities.

Furthermore, the village reports that because of these efforts it boosted recycling tonnage by 24 percent and reduced refuse tonnage by 21 percent between the years 1999 and 2007.

Incentives encourage recycling (money talks!)

To encourage residents to recycle as much waste as possible, the village offers a number of incentives:

- **Free collection of recyclable material**—The village collects for free as much recyclable material as is left at the curb each week by any resident.
- **Wide variety of material accepted for recycling**—To make recycling as convenient and fruitful as possible for residents, Oak Park accepts an exceptionally wide variety of materials (for example, all plastics except type 6). The village does not require residents to sort their recyclables and assists them in disposing of tricky, hazardous items like unused paint—even facilitating swaps of reusable items between residents.
- **Container size choices allow residents to save**—Nonrecyclable material is collected for a fee, but those who choose a smaller container save money. Residents may choose from a 96-gallon container for \$18.20 per month or a 64-gallon container for \$15.34 per month—resulting in a savings of 16 percent for users of the smaller container. Twenty-six percent of Oak Park households take advantage of the smaller-container option.
- **Sharing containers is an option**—In some cases, residents can save even more if they choose to share a refuse container with a neighbor and split the cost.

Residents learn about options for reducing nonrecyclable waste

The village seeks to keep recycling in the forefront of residents' minds through frequent communication. Oak Park has published a general interest newsletter for the past seven years, switching in 2001 from bimonthly to monthly distribution in order to communicate more often the benefits of recycling (and other city programs).



For additional information about the practices described in this case study, please contact Karen Rozmus at 708/358-5707 or rozmus@oak-park.us.

Each newsletter includes at least one feature about recycling. Recent stories have addressed

- Materials that can (and can't) be recycled
- What happens to recycled materials
- Alternatives to products that come in nonrecyclable packaging.

Tracking and reporting recycling performance

The village of Oak Park tracks recycling performance quarterly, sharing the data with its nine-member Environment and Energy Citizen's Advisory Commission, residents, village board, and village manager. The village supplements this quarterly reporting with an annual review of the village's performance as compared with prior years; for this it uses data gathered by the ICMA Center for Performance Measurement™ (CPM).