

Spotlight on Green Communities

Whether they're purchasing renewable energy, recycling construction debris, or installing permeable paving, communities in northeastern Illinois are getting greener. On this page we're highlighting communities and park, conservation, and forest preserve districts willing to share their experiences with selected green practices.

Case Study: Village of Addison Recycling Program

When the Village of Addison and Allied Waste Services distributed free recycling bins to home owners and began a campaign to educate and promote their use, recycling in the community skyrocketed. Within a couple months, participation in the recycling program increased by 70 percent compared to the previous year.

In Addison's previous recycling program, residents paid six dollars for a recycling bin without guidance as to what could and could not be recycled. Participation rates were low. According to Leslie Beullé of Addison's Environmental Services Department, the Village was inspired to improve the program by the promising results of a study conducted by local junior high school students on recycling in their neighborhood.

About Recycling

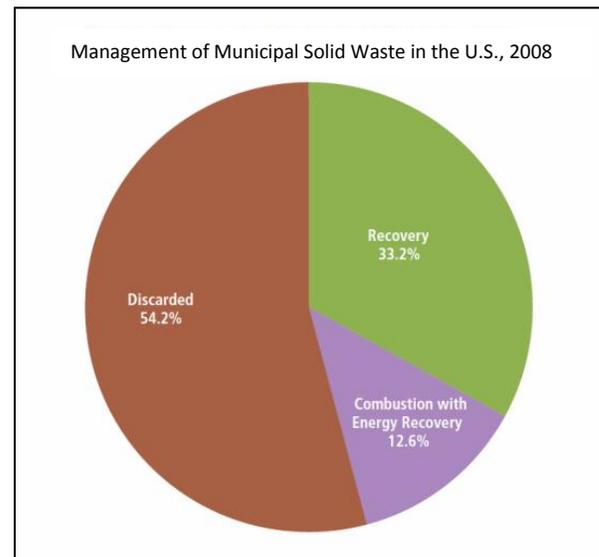
A few statistics illustrate the issues surrounding our consumption of resources and waste. According to a 2009 [sustainable materials management report](#) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), in the past 50 years, humans have consumed more resources than in all previous history. The U.S. consumed 57 percent more materials in the year 2000 than in 1975. In 1900, 41 percent of materials used in the U.S. were renewable (e.g., agricultural, fishery, and forestry products). However, by 1995, only six percent of materials consumed were renewable. The majority of materials now consumed in the U.S. are nonrenewable, including metals, minerals, and fossil-fuel derived products.

This rapid rise in material use has led to serious environmental problems such as habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, overly stressed fisheries, and desertification, when plant life, vegetation, and soil are changed and impoverished.

Furthermore, the way we produce, consume, and dispose of our products and our food accounts for 42 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions according to a 2009 [emissions report](#) by U.S. EPA.

Benefits

Recycling turns materials that would otherwise become waste into valuable resources. It has environmental benefits at every stage in the life cycle of a consumer product. Aside from reducing GHG emissions, which contribute to global warming, recycling also reduces air and water pollution associated with making new products from raw materials. Learn more in a U.S. EPA [report on municipal waste and](#)



Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency

[recycling data](#) from 2008. Recycling also conserves natural resources such as timber, water, and minerals; saves energy; and reduces the need for landfilling and incineration.

The Process

As noted previously, the results of a student project inspired the Village to change their recycling program. Students did a seven block test to research the best method to increase recycling in the neighborhood. They found that the key elements to driving behavior change were giving residents recycling bins with information on how to use them and promoting recycling in the community. The students shared the results of the study with the waste hauler and Village officials.

According to Beullé, the Village was so impressed by the results of the study that they decided to apply for a recycling grant from an Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) recycling grants program. The grant was received in June 2009, and with additional support and participation by Allied Waste Services, the Village delivered free 25 gallon recycling bins to homeowners for curbside collection in September 2009. The recyclable material is accepted along with regular refuse on normal garbage days. Stickers describing acceptable and not acceptable items were affixed to the bins. Residents can place paper, metal, plastic, and glass all in one recycling bin.

The Village also conducted a promotional campaign to communicate the importance of recycling and rules for the new program. The campaign included letters, public service announcements, news articles, and a library recycling class.

Results

For the year that followed the distribution of approximately 8,000 bins, 768 additional tons of material was recycled compared to the previous year. Beullé said they were pleasantly surprised at the level of participation in the community. Within a couple months, 70 percent more of the community's residents were recycling.

The junior high students went on to win awards in several national science contests and met with President Obama in May 2010 to receive the President's Environmental Youth Award.

Costs and Funding

DCEO's recycling program grant amounted to \$60,000. Allied Waste supported the initiative with a contribution of \$34,000, which included money allocated for informational stickers/flyers.

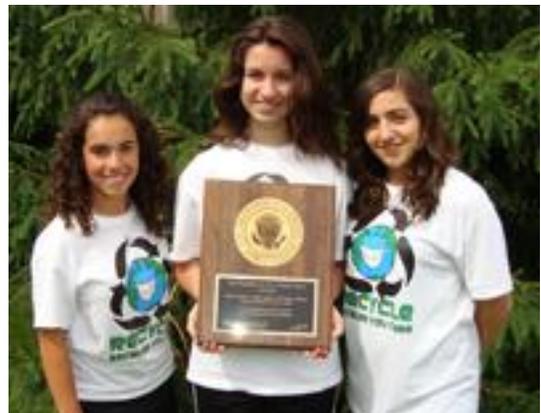
Advice to Other Communities

Beullé said that simply providing the free bins with instructions on what could and couldn't be recycled in the bins was key to success of the new program. She said the promotional campaign, which included high-energy public service announcements that feature the junior high students responsible for the study, contributed to making the program popular in the community.

Next Steps

Due to the success of the program, the Village has been looking into the possibility of extending it to the commercial sector. There are, however, some complicated issues involved, such as space for the large roll-off containers on the property.

The Village continues to promote recycling at community events, such as Taste of Addison, and periodically runs public service announcements on recycling in the community.



Junior High students accept President's award

Resource

DCEO's [Illinois Recycling Grants Program](#) provides technical assistance and grants to governmental entities, private businesses, and not-for-profit organizations. Funds are awarded to support projects that will develop or expand recycling collection and processing efforts in Illinois.

Contact

For more information on the Village of Addison's recycling program, contact Leslie Beullé (630-279-2140 or lbeulle@addison-il.org).

Are there other green practices case studies you'd like to see? Is your community interested in being in the spotlight? Please contact Lori Heringa (312-386-8621 or lheringa@cmap.illinois.gov).