

# *Solid Waste Services*

## *Nine-County Community Survey*

December 2008

Re • think



Re • do



Re • new



Mid-America Regional Council  
Solid Waste Management District

Prepared by

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# Mid-America Regional Council Solid Waste Management District

## Metropolitan Nine-County Community Survey of Residential Solid Waste Services

During fall 2008, the MARC Solid Waste Management District, in partnership with Leavenworth, Johnson, Miami and Wyandotte Counties, conducted a follow-up survey of residents in the nine-county Kansas City metro area. The survey compares changes in citizens' values, behavior and awareness levels to 2005 survey data and assesses citizens' desire for solid waste services. Funding partners on the project include the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Johnson and Miami Counties in Kansas.

### How important is recycling and how satisfied are residents?

Of the 978 residents surveyed, 96% think it is either "very important" (79%) or "somewhat important" (17%) to recycle. Those who think recycling is "very important" increased from 66% to 79%.

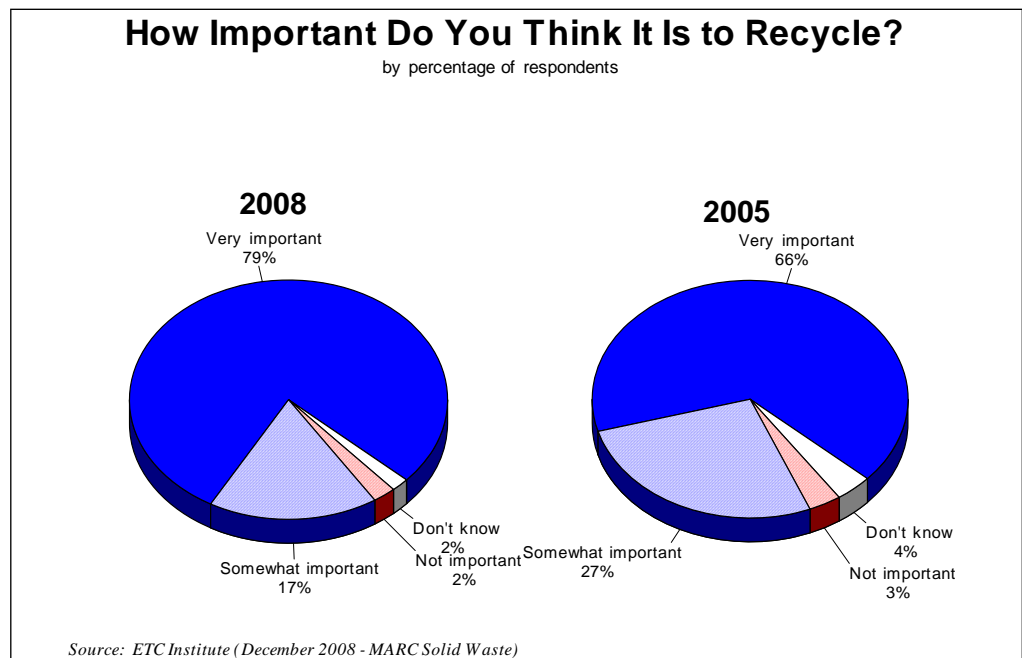
Most residents (98%) selected at least one type of 12 activities listed in the survey. The most frequent activities are reusing items like grocery sacks or plastic cups instead of throwing them away (82%) and using durable cups, plates and utensils instead of disposables (75%). Over 30% percent of residents selected all 12 activities.

When asked for the three recycling activities that they do MOST frequently, residents top four activities are: reuse items such as grocery sacks or plastic cups instead of throwing them

away (50%), recycle household items like newspaper, bottles, cans or magazines curbside (46%), use durable cups, plates and utensils instead of disposables (44%) and recycle household items like newspaper, bottles, cans or magazines at drop-off center (32%). Recycling household items like newspapers, bottles, cans or magazines curbside was selected by 39% as #1 most frequent activity.

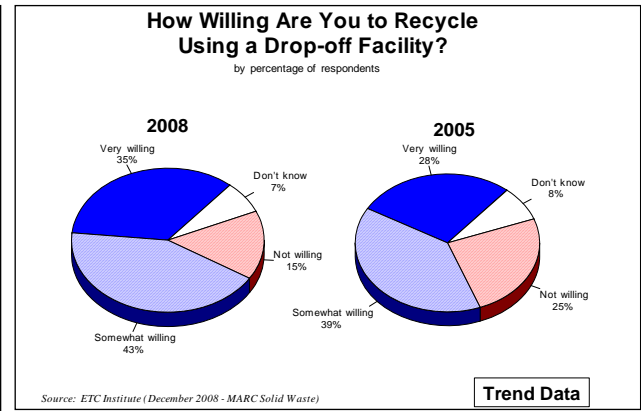
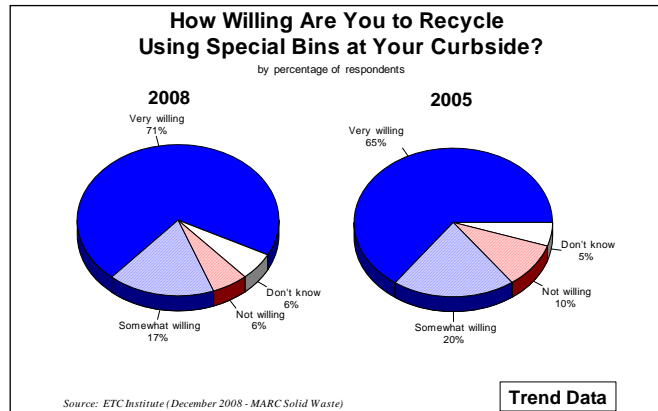
Compared to three years ago, 59% described their frequency of waste reduction activities as either "more frequent" (38%) or "somewhat more frequent" (21%).

Residents are most satisfied with trash collection services, curbside recycling services, and school or place of worship recycling sites. All services have some level of dissatisfaction with some major differences by county. All but two of the 13 services had one out of five residents dissatisfied with the service. Many residents are neutral with respect to satisfaction on many recycling services.



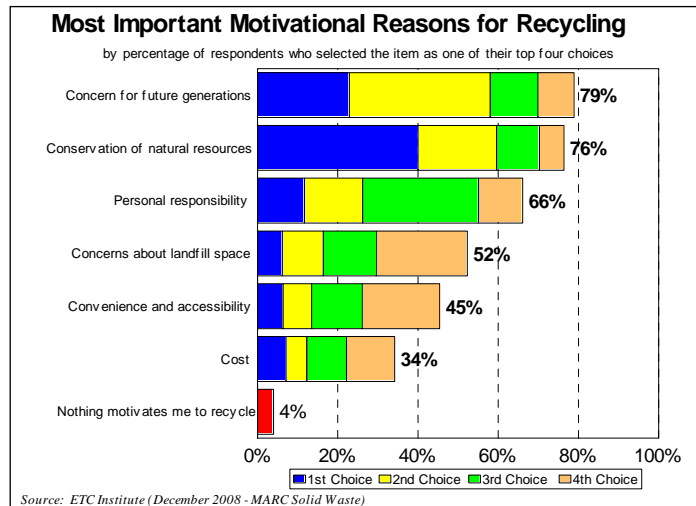
## How willing are residents to recycle?

Eighty-eight percent are either “very willing” (71%) or “somewhat willing” (17%) to recycle using special bins at their curbsides; 78% are either “very willing” (35%) or “somewhat willing” (43%) to recycle using a drop-off facility.

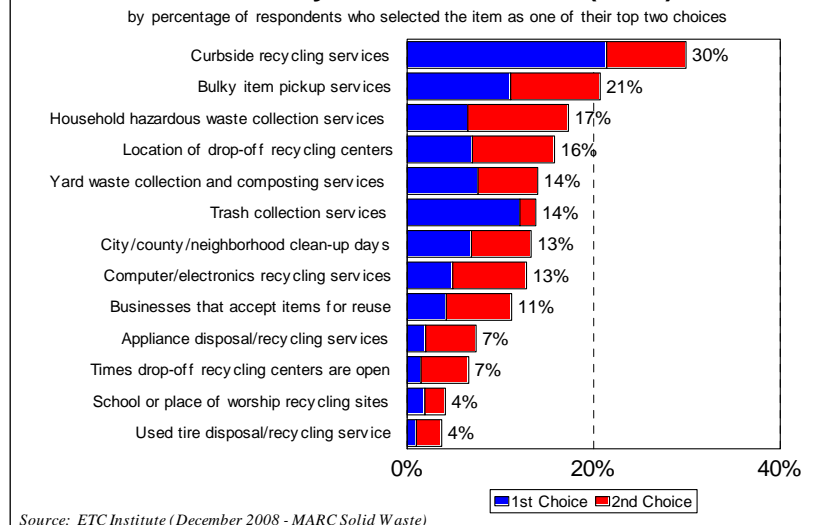


## What are the primary motivations for recycling?

Concern for future generations was selected by 79% of the residents as one of their top four motivations for recycling. Conservation of natural resources (76%) and personal responsibility (66%) were other motivations selected by at least 65% of the residents as one of their top four motivations.



## Most Important Services to be Offered or Expanded in Community Where You Live (2008)



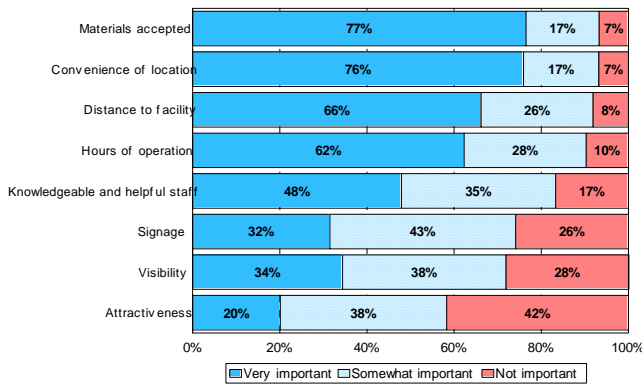
## What are services to offer or expand?

Curbside recycling was again selected by residents as one of their top two preferred services to expand (30%). Bulky item pickup was selected by one out of five residents (21%) as the second top service to expand.

Trash collection service was the second most frequently mentioned top choice (12%).

### How Important Various Factors Are When Using a Recycling Drop-Off Facility

by percentage of respondents who rated the item as a 1 to 3 on a 3-point scale (excluding don't knows)



Source: ETC Institute (December 2008 - MARC Solid Waste)

### How important are various factors when using a recycling drop-off facility?

The most important factors for residents in using a drop-off facility are: materials accepted (94%), convenience of drop-off locations (93%), distance to the facility (92%), and hours of operation (90%).

### What are sources of information about recycling?

Forty-five percent have seen or heard some type of advertisement, public service announcement, brochure, billboard, radio or other promotional media about recycling or

the disposal of solid waste in the Kansas City Area during the last year. The four most frequent sources of information cited are: television, articles in newspapers or other print media, information provided by resident's city or county, and direct mail or notices from trash provider.

Preferred sources of information: utility bill (41%), city newsletters (38%), internet source that is easy to find (34%), able to call a specific telephone number for information (27%), television (24%) and local newspaper (24%) or The Kansas City Star (21%).

Four percent visited [www.RecycleSpot.org](http://www.RecycleSpot.org) and 90% rated the Web site as "very good" or "good" on meeting needs, easy to use and information was accurate.

### What are barriers to recycling?

Over one-third (39%) recycle everything possible and see no barriers. The barriers most cited are: do not know where to take materials (21%), inconvenient times and locations (20%), curbside recycling is not available (19%), do not know what I can recycle (15%), and takes too much time (14%).

### What are levels of agreement with recycling issues and paying for recycling?

Seventy-nine percent either "strongly agree" (40%) or "agree" (39%) that they would support public policies that lead to improved waste reduction, reuse and recycling programs.

Illegal dumping is a problem for 22% of the residents with nearly one out of four agreeing that the problem exists in their neighborhood.

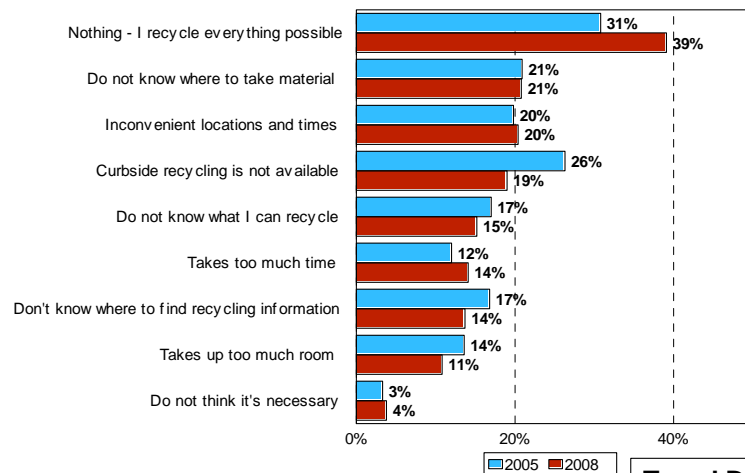
Nearly half (49%) either are "very willing" (22%) or "somewhat willing" (27%) for having their community charge for trash pick up based on the amount of trash set out for disposal.

### What roles should local government take concerning solid waste services?

Nearly half (46%) of the residents surveyed thought their community was performing either "extremely well" or "somewhat well" in terms of its commitment to sustainability or "green" planning.

### Which Barriers Prevent You From Recycling or Recycling More Than You Currently Do? 2005 vs 2008

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



Source: ETC Institute (December 2008 - MARC Solid Waste)

Trend Data

There is more support for a city to arrange residential trash and recycling services than for the county to provide the service. For a city provided service, 70% were “very supportive” or “supportive” for their city to provide the service while 54% were “very supportive” for their county to provide the service. There were differences by county.

The top three reasons for supporting city or county arranged solid waste services were: 1) additional services, 2) cleaner and quieter neighborhoods, and 3) lower costs.

Local government should support the building of new landfills (38%) and take a leadership role to inform residents and businesses about existing programs and services (59%); support the development of comprehensive reuse and recycling (51%); educate residents and businesses about the importance of waste reduction (54%); reduce the illegal dumping in my neighborhood (52%).

There is mixed support for their county or city to implement policies to help reduce waste from landfills with more support for policies less apt to impact residents directly.

- Mandatory recycling for businesses and institutions (55% very supportive and 27% somewhat supportive).
- Mandatory recycling for construction & demolition projects (61% very supportive and 26% somewhat supportive).
- Mandatory recycling for residents (39% very supportive and 28% somewhat supportive).
- Pay-As-You-Throw--each resident pays for amount of trash set out at curb for disposal (24% very supportive and 37% somewhat supportive).

Eighty-six percent support climate protection and broad-based “green” strategies (39% very supportive and 47% somewhat supportive.) Fifty percent support a regional goal of at least 40% to minimize and divert waste from landfills with 79% supporting a regional goal of at least 20% to minimize and divert waste from landfills.

## Trends

Trends from 2005 to 2008 are shown in the charts and graphs section of this report. The most significant increases and decreases are listed below.

### Top Increases

- ◆ Recycling is “very important” increased to 79 percent (+13%).
- ◆ Familiarity with computer/electronics recycling services increased to 41 percent (+16%).
- ◆ Familiarity with businesses that accept items for reuse increased to 37% (+13%).
- ◆ Make household purchases based on environmental benefit increased to 40% (+13%).
- ◆ Buy in bulk, buy with less packaging, or buy used items instead of new increased to 44% (+12%).
- ◆ Seen or heard any advertisement, public service announcements, etc. about recycling or the disposal of solid waste in the Kansas City area during the past year increased to 45% (+12%).
- ◆ Willingness to recycle using a drop-off facility increased to 78% (+11%).

### Top Decreases

- ◆ Seen or read recycling information via direct mail/hauler notices decreased to 28% (-14%).
- ◆ Prefer getting information via neighborhood newsletter decreased to 13% (-13%).
- ◆ Willingness for community to charge for trash pick up based on the amount set out for disposal decreased to 49% (-12%).
- ◆ Seen or read recycling information provided by the city or county decreased to 37% (-11%).
- ◆ Seen or read recycling information articles in newspapers decreased to 44% (-10%).
- ◆ Prefer getting information on solid waste services via telephone number decreased to 27% (-10%).