

A Perspective about Dubuque’s Comprehensive Curbside Collection Program History and Future by Paul Schultz

	<u>Refuse Tons</u>	<u>Yard Debris</u>	<u>Recycling</u>	<u>Recyclables Revenue</u>	<u>Beneficial Use</u>	<u>Lbs. Refuse</u>	<u>Lbs. Recycle</u>
FY13	10,535	1,060	3,595	\$ 99,252 = \$27.60/ton	30.6%	18.8 /week	6.4 / week
FY14	10,311	1,179	3,524	\$112,440 = \$31.91/ton	31.3%	18.2 / week	6.2 / week
FY15	10,690	1,218	3,451	\$ 87,380 = \$25.32/ton	30.4%	18.7 / week	6.0 / week

Dubuque’s foundational vision is Sustainability, which we are now framing as “Resiliency”: **Ecological** Integrity and a path toward zero wasting of discarded assets and climate mitigation/adaption, Social **Equity** transparency and timely inclusion in data-driven decision making, and smart **Economic** innovation with community wide benefits including jobs.

Important components include:

- Year-round curbside food scrap co-collection with yard debris from residential, schools and commercial,
- Eliminating glass from curbside recycling,
- Soft enforcement to eliminate unacceptable materials and their hidden costs from recycling collection,
- A Revenue/Cost Sharing Recycling Processing contract,
- Pay As You Throw and volume-based refuse collection fees to incentivize recycling,
- The potential negative impacts of supplying all Dubuque recycling customers with large tipper carts,
- The requirement to keep no-charge, appropriate size, recycling containers adequately supplied to all customers,
- Continual fresh promotion/marketing of recycling and beneficial use diversion leading to behavior change,
- Strong community participation and empowerment in establishing goals, objectives and timelines, reporting trends, recognizing accomplishments, and providing rewards and incentives within an adequate budget.

The following insights are from the 18-month IBM/Dubuque Smarter Discards Research Project

Table 2. Incentives that would best motivate you to recycle and compost more

Agree	Neutral	Disagree	...would motivate me to recycle more:
77%	18%	5%	A better understanding of the benefits to the community and the environment
75%	20%	5%	Paying less or receiving a financial rebate
73%	17%	10%	Seeing how my performance compares with that of similar households
65%	26%	9%	Donation of a percentage of the City’s savings to a non-profit organization

Table 3. Reasons why more people do not fully participate in curbside recycling

Agree	Neutral	Disagree	...is a reason why more people don’t participate in curbside recycling
59%	18%	23%	There is uncertainty about which types of items can be recycled
53%	19%	29%	There is concern about the attracting pests – flies, mice, etc. – by keeping recyclables around
52%	17%	30%	There is concern about cleanliness – odors, mold, etc. – related to keeping recyclables around
44%	17%	39%	It takes too long or is too much trouble
44%	19%	37%	There isn’t convenient storage space for to-be-recycled items
20%	28%	52%	It’s too physically difficult to set out the bin

Table 5. Frequency of non-ideal discarding practices by Smarter Discards Voluntary Participants

Weekly or more	Monthly	Rarely or never	...how often do the following discarding practices occur in your household
34%	11%	65%	The food scraps are too messy or smelly, so I put them in the garbage
33%	16%	51%	It’s something I’d have to take somewhere to drop off (glass; batteries; electronics), so I put it in the garbage
16%	15%	70%	I’m not sure if something is recyclable, so I put it in the garbage
10%	7%	83%	I don’t want to clean a recyclable item, so I put it in the garbage
5%	5%	90%	I don’t have a nearby container for a recyclable item, so I put it in the garbage
7%	4%	89%	I run out of space for recyclables, and so I begin putting them in the garbage
4%	4%	91%	I forget to put the recycling bin out

“Because there are clearly financial advantages to the city (and therefore the ratepayers) to reducing refuse and/or increasing recycling, the general recommendation that the City expand the citizen engagement activities and increase access to recycling.” *From the 48 page study report that tracked discard practices of 1,100 of the 21,500 city customers.*