

*Humans are an acquisitive species
with a longstanding pattern
of wanting more things
rather than less.*

—Chaz Miller, *Is Frugality the New Green?*
March 1, 2010



Cities Keep the Garbage from Piling Up

Collection and disposal of garbage is one of the most recognizable and widely used city services. This vital service protects the public health and the environment. A city can choose to operate its own garbage collection and disposal system or grant a franchise to a private company or companies to handle those tasks.

Waste generation is a function of two variables: the population and the economy—both of which are growing in Texas. According to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texans in 2009 disposed of approximately 32.26 million tons of municipal solid waste. Municipal solid waste includes everyday items, such as grass clippings, household garbage, newspapers, food scraps, clothing, bottles,

paint, batteries, and many other types of residential, commercial, and construction waste.

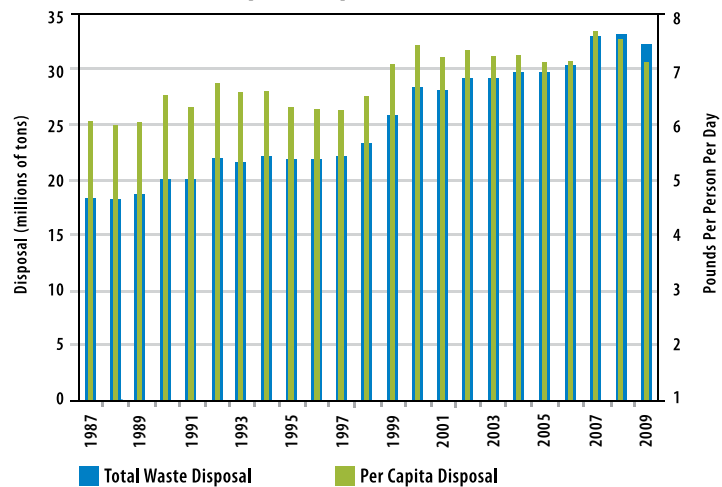
Cities also have statutory authority to offer recycling programs to their citizens. These programs provide valuable resource and energy conservation benefits. TCEQ reports that recycling programs are partially responsible for the decrease in the per capita disposal rate, which went down from 7.5 pounds per person per day in 2008 to 7.1 pounds per person per day in 2009.

The benefits of recycling programs are twofold. First, they help reduce the production of solid waste that must be disposed of by a city. Second, they help to significantly reduce the costs of operating a municipal solid waste disposal system. Encouraging residents to participate in municipal recycling programs is an ongoing educational process. Of course, statewide recycling

Did You Know?

Cities have been authorized to provide, or contract with a private company to provide, garbage collection services within city limits since 1971. Texas law recognizes that this authority is important to preserve the public health and safety of all the residents of a city. Uncollected garbage can easily result in various health problems. This law routinely comes under attack from certain groups, but the bottom line is that timely, efficient, and effective garbage collection through municipal service prevents problems from occurring. Open piles of garbage attract disease-carrying rodents and insects and often wash into drainage systems, where they contribute to floods and waterborne disease.

**Solid Waste Disposal And
Per Capita Disposal Rate In Texas**



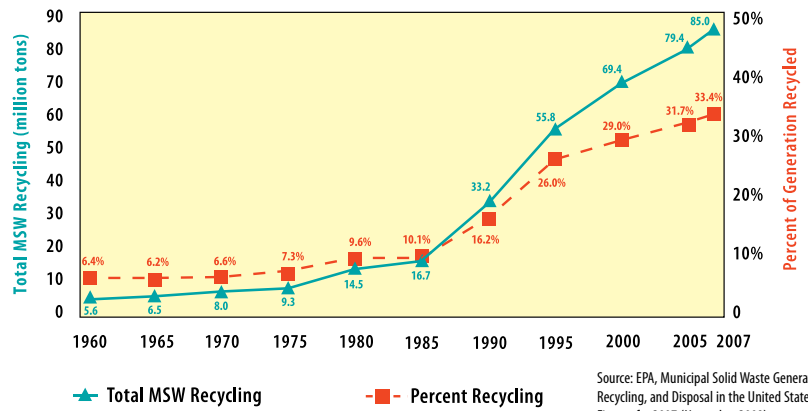
Disposal refers only to solid waste received by permitted landfills. Source: TCEQ, *Municipal Solid Waste in Texas: A Year in Review - FY2009 Data Summary and Analysis* (October 2010)

mandates wouldn't take into account the various factors that make different parts of Texas unique. Recycling should be implemented locally in a way that is appropriate for each city. ★

*Waste is a terrible thing to mind —
Recycle*

—U.S. bumper sticker

Recycling of Municipal Solid Waste in the United States 1960-2007



Source: EPA, Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2007 (November 2008)

Where Does It Go After I Place It at the Curb? How Much Does this Service Cost?

After household garbage is collected, it often goes to a facility known as a transfer station, where waste is consolidated into larger loads for shipment to its ultimate destination: a local or regional landfill or a waste-to-energy plant. Recyclables go to processing facilities, where they become raw materials for new products.

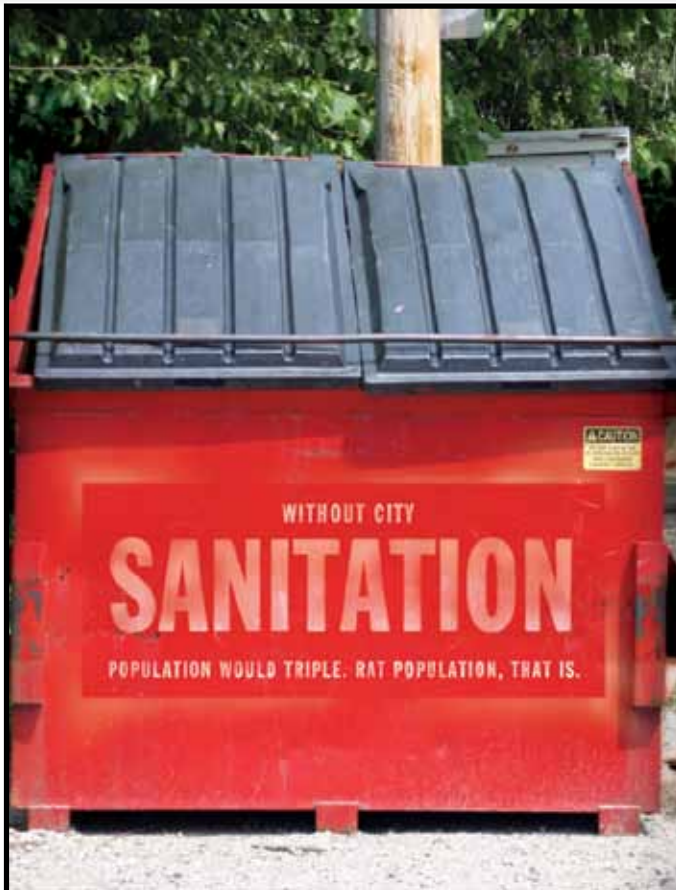
In 2007, 54 percent of municipal solid waste generated in the

U.S. was disposed of in landfills. Twelve-and-a-half percent was disposed of through waste incineration with energy recovery, and 33.4 percent was recovered for recycling or composting, which diverted 85 million tons of material from landfills and incinerators.

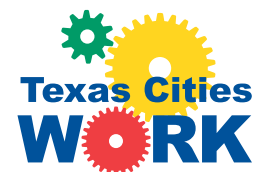
According to data collected by the National Solid Wastes Management Association, the typical U.S. monthly household bill for waste collection

in 2003-04 ranged between \$12 and \$20 per month. In contrast to the average monthly bill most people pay for utilities and non-essential services, residential trash collection is a bargain for U.S. consumers.

Sources: National Solid Wastes Management Association, Residential Trash Collection: An Essential Service at a Bargain Price. Center for Sustainable Systems, University of Michigan 2009. "Municipal Solid Waste Factsheet." Pub. No. CSS04-15.



The things you don't think about, cities provide. Like streets, parks, utilities, and safety. But cities can't function with their hands tied by restrictive laws or unfunded state and federal mandates. Cities need options to build a better future. It's in everybody's best interest.



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