

Wasteshed Survey Report

Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to better understand Larimer County residents' waste habits, assess waste service adequacy and the relative importance of possible waste related initiatives. It is anticipated that the Larimer County Landfill will reach capacity within the next 10 years. As such, government officials from across the county wanted to gauge the community's pulse around waste related topics to inform future planning efforts. Also to note, this survey represents only one initiative of many, in which the community will have the opportunity to participate by sharing input and providing feedback as plans evolve.

Survey and Participant Location Profile

From June 24 until July 31, 2016, citizens from across Larimer County were solicited to participate in an online survey posted by city and county officials promoted through various media outlets. During this time, over 1200 residents responded. Participants reported living in Fort Collins (42%) and Loveland (35%) with the remaining 23% living in outlying communities and rural areas. Estes Park residents represent a significant (70%) portion of the outlying/rural population respondents. The top five most frequently referenced zip codes by participants were 80537, 80538, 80517, 80525, and 80526, respectively. Residents from almost all zip codes participated.

Household Waste Profile

A majority (82%) reported living in a single family home, with 83% using a curbside garbage service. Multi-dwelling unit residents (MDUs – i.e. apartments, condos, townhomes, and duplexes) represent 13% with 8% of all respondents taking their garbage to a dumpster that is five miles away or closer. Many report taking garbage to a dumpster within their complex or neighborhood, if they do not have curbside service. For Estes Park respondents, 18% report taking garbage to a transfer station or garbage collection area outside of their immediate neighborhood. For those who report hauling their garbage over 10 miles away (9.8%), comments suggest that many may take their garbage to another residence with curbside service or to work for disposal.

Recycling Habits and Service Adequacy

Most (93%) report recycling at home. Of those that don't recycle (7%), 38% of this subset report living in Estes Park, 22% in Fort Collins, and 22% in Loveland. Approximately 22% report living in a MDU with 40% report taking garbage to a dumpster, transfer station, or making other arrangements. While the waste infrastructure may be overall less convenient or unavailable for this subset compared to the general respondent population, the highest ranked item by non-recyclers for reducing landfill waste was to 'promote recycling and composting to minimize landfill waste'. This view aligns with the general participant population. Over 66% of non-recyclers indicated that either recycling services were unavailable and needed or available but inadequate.

For those that do recycle, many (84%) agree that recycling is an automatic habit, however, 45% are not in full agreement that they are knowledgeable about all the types of materials that can be recycled. Most (76.9%) report using a curbside pick-up service to dispose of their recyclable waste. For those without a curbside recycling service, 25% report taking recyclable waste to a transfer station or recycling center within the community, followed by taking it to a neighborhood recycling center.

Food Scraps / Yard Waste Habits and Services

In terms of food scraps, many dispose of them into the garbage can (42%) and down the sink into the garbage disposal (34%). Approximately 19% put scraps into a composting bin and a few may use food scraps to feed chickens, use in the gardens, feed dog(s) or other animals.

For those with a curbside collection service, most (66%) report paying \$30 or less per month, with 24% not knowledgeable of what they pay. In terms of the adequacy and availability of waste options, garbage collection services were rated as being adequate by most (92%), while food scrap waste collection services were viewed as being unavailable and needed by over 35% of respondents. Recycling options were considered available but inadequate by 20%. Also to note, particularly since 82% of respondents live in single family homes, 35% rate yard trimming waste options as unavailable and needed or available but inadequate. Comments include a range of issues – the added expense of yard collection services that do not provide value, lawn service providers mitigating the need, and the timing of pick-ups not coinciding with need. Others mention using Hageman Earth Cycle or other establishments to dispose of yard waste.

Rank order of solutions associated with reducing landfill waste

When asked to rank the importance of factors associated with possible solutions to address limiting landfill waste, focusing on solutions that promote recycling and composting ranked #1 by over 42% of respondents, followed by focusing on solutions that minimize environmental impact (27%). There were no significant differences among the three communities (Estes Park, Fort Collins, and Loveland) regarding rank. Detailed responses by community are provided in the appendix of this report.

Respondent Profile

Compared to the actual population in Larimer County, respondents skewed older with 57% reporting to be 51 years of age or older and female (58%). Most (48%) reported living in a two person household, with 14% living alone, and the remaining 18% representing households with three or more people. Over 63% reported living in Larimer County for over 10 years, followed by 15% for five to 10 years, and 21% less than five years.

Insights/Areas for future investigation

While different communities have different waste infrastructures, a significant proportion of survey respondents across all communities believe it is important for government to focus on the promotion of recycling and composting to reduce landfill waste. While many report recycling is an automatic habit, agreement about the knowledge of all materials that can be recycled was not as strong. Examining means of promoting this information that would be helpful to citizens may be beneficial. Survey results suggest that citizens would like to do their part more fully – and

with informational and/or infrastructural support, that may help. Identifying specific gaps for specific communities through community forums may be one approach.

While many survey participants report living in Larimer County for over 10 years, new residents are contributing to the county's growth and population mix. As such, understanding how new residents seek and find information may help in identifying effective means of communication to reach them so they can become informed about what can be recycled. If residents live in an MDU that does not support recycling, then promotion of alternative recycling facilities nearby may help support desired behaviors.

Regarding food scraps, a portion of Fort Collins respondents report composting, which is significantly higher than in the other two communities segmented (see Appendix Table 2). Further examination of the factors associated with those that do compost may provide insights that may be viable for other communities.

Regarding the actual use of curbside collection for yard scraps, Loveland residents differ significantly from their Estes Park and Fort Collins counterparts. Examining infrastructure and pricing differences among service providers across the communities may yield informative insights as well.

[Limitations/Disclosures](#)

Survey participants represent a convenience sample. Thus results do not necessarily represent what the communities as a whole feel, think, or do regarding waste practices and beliefs. Responses and comments collected suggest that participants represent active and involved community members who care about this topic. Future outreach efforts may want to make concerted efforts to engage younger residents and/or those who live in MDUs, as well as connect with those who live in outlying areas and collect their feedback on these topics.

Appendix

Table 1 - Rank Order of potential factors associated with possible landfill related solutions

Estes Park Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	Total					
Minimize environmental impact	21.28%	40	18.62%	35	26.06%	49	18.09%	34	15.96%	30	188
Minimize user fee increases for future waste options.	16.49%	31	15.43%	29	14.89%	28	35.11%	66	18.09%	34	188
Promote recycling and composting to minimize landfill waste.	44.15%	83	25.53%	48	15.43%	29	10.11%	19	4.79%	9	188
Provide educational programs to reduce waste.	6.38%	12	25.53%	48	30.85%	58	13.30%	25	23.94%	45	188
Minimize tax increases for future waste options.	11.70%	22	14.89%	28	12.77%	24	23.40%	44	37.23%	70	188
Fort Collins Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	Total					
Minimize environmental impact	30.14%	151	22.95%	115	27.15%	136	9.58%	48	10.18%	51	501
Minimize user fee increases for future waste options.	10.78%	54	12.57%	63	13.97%	70	34.73%	174	27.94%	140	501
Promote recycling and composting to minimize landfill waste.	42.12%	211	32.93%	165	14.57%	73	7.19%	36	3.19%	16	501
Provide educational programs to reduce waste.	9.38%	47	20.96%	105	37.13%	186	13.77%	69	18.76%	94	501
Minimize tax increases for future waste options.	7.58%	38	10.58%	53	7.19%	36	34.73%	174	39.92%	200	501
Loveland Respondents	1	2	3	4	5	Total					
Minimize environmental impact	27.87%	114	22.49%	92	27.14%	111	10.27%	42	12.22%	50	409
Minimize user fee increases for future waste options.	11.98%	49	14.67%	60	16.63%	68	33.25%	136	23.47%	96	409
Promote recycling and composting to minimize landfill waste.	41.08%	168	29.58%	121	11.98%	49	11.49%	47	5.87%	24	409
Provide educational programs to reduce waste.	7.58%	31	19.07%	78	28.36%	116	20.29%	83	24.69%	101	409
Minimize tax increases for future waste options.	11.49%	47	14.18%	58	15.89%	65	24.69%	101	33.74%	138	409
Highest % of respondents ranking item as #1											

Table 2 – Community Segmentation

Home type	Estes Park	EP%	Fort Collins	FC%	Loveland	L%	Total	O%			
Apartment/Condo	22.73%	20	10%	64.77%	57	11%	12.50%	11	3%	88	8%
Townhome/Duplex	18.92%	14	7%	40.54%	30	6%	40.54%	30	7%	74	7%
Single Family Home	16.24%	152	79%	44.34%	415	81%	39.42%	369	87%	936	83%
Mobile home	0.00%	0	0%	33.33%	3	1%	66.67%	6	1%	9	1%
Ranch/farm	9.09%	1	1%	45.45%	5	1%	45.45%	5	1%	11	1%
Other (please describe)	37.50%	6	3%	31.25%	5	1%	31.25%	5	1%	16	1%
		193	100%		515	100%		426	100%	1134	100%
Method used to dispose of garbage	Estes Park	EP%	Fort Collins	FC%	Loveland	L%	Total	O%			
I use a curbside pick-up service.	12.70%	122	63%	44.85%	431	84%	42.46%	408	96%	961	85%
I take it to a dumpster in my neighborhood/building.	25.00%	24	12%	63.54%	61	12%	11.46%	11	3%	96	8%
I take it to a transfer station/ garbage collection area outside my neighborhood.	79.55%	35	18%	13.64%	6	1%	6.82%	3	1%	44	4%
Other (please describe)	38.71%	12	6%	48.39%	15	3%	12.90%	4	1%	31	3%
		193	100%		513	100%		426	100%	1132	100%
Recycle at home?	Estes Park	EP%	Fort Collins	FC%	Loveland	L%	Total	O%			
Yes	15.12%	161	84%	46.57%	496	96%	38.31%	408	96%	1065	94%
No	46.27%	31	16%	26.87%	18	4%	26.87%	18	4%	67	6%
		192	100%		514	100%		426	100%	1132	100%
Method used to dispose of food scraps (all that apply)	Estes Park	EP%	Fort Collins	FC%	Loveland	L%	Total	O%			
Down the sink into the garbage disposal	18.10%	101	40%	42.11%	235	33%	39.78%	222	37%	558	35%
Into the garbage can	18.36%	121	48%	39.30%	259	36%	42.34%	279	46%	659	42%
Into a separate bin for composting.	6.53%	19	8%	66.67%	194	27%	26.80%	78	13%	291	18%
Other (please describe)	14.49%	10	4%	49.28%	34	5%	36.23%	25	4%	69	4%
		251	100%		722	100%		604	100%	1577	100%
Curbside Collection for Yard Waste	Estes Park	EP%	Fort Collins	FC%	Loveland	L%	Total	O%			
No	18.62%	92	77%	59.51%	294	69%	21.86%	108	27%	494	52%
Yes, but I don't use it.	5.88%	8	7%	41.91%	57	13%	52.21%	71	17%	136	14%
Yes and I use it.	6.23%	20	17%	23.05%	74	17%	70.72%	227	56%	321	34%
		120	100%		425	100%		406	100%	951	100%