



WEST MICHIGAN
STRATEGIC
ALLIANCE

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Study of Recycling in West Michigan Reveals Good Programs But Lack of Resident Awareness

WEST MICHIGAN—September 22, 2009—A new study released by the West Michigan Strategic Alliance (WMSA) shows that most residents in the region have access to curbside recycling programs but not all are aware about the programs or are confused about how they work.

The “Recycling Resources Study of West Michigan” was completed this past summer by David Dyer, an intern with WMSA. It has been sent to municipal leaders across the 8-county West Michigan region.

“Recycling activity was presented as an indicator of the region’s performance in the environmental and economic aspects of recycling in our first “Vital Signs” report in 2007,” explains Greg Northrup, WMSA President. “This indicator was based on a 2001 statewide study conducted by the Michigan Recycling Coalition in conjunction with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality’s Waste Management Division with data from local communities.”

The 34-page report is based on interviews with business, government and other community leaders and focuses on:

- The availability of curbside recycling
- Whether recycling programs are universal/municipal or based on individual contracts
- The number of drop-off facilities
- Which materials are and are not accepted for recycling by different waste haulers

The report includes a recycling profile for each county in the region. Weaknesses identified include lack of resident awareness about recycling programs or confusion about details of programs in their area, the fact that small businesses are excluded from curbside recycling programs, and a lack of support for sustainable manufacturing.

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In addition, the report identifies numerous best practices locally and outside the region and makes several recommendations for improving the recycling process in the region.

“West Michigan is gaining a reputation for its collaboration culture,” Northrup said. “There is strong collaboration among our local units of government. WMSA is convening local units to encourage them to evaluate opportunities for collaboration that achieve improvements in systems or services they provide. Recycling is one example of an area where working together could bring better results.”

Among the recommendations are a regional recycling Web site to inform and educate residents about recycling options. The report also advocates a regional recycling strategy that would include collaboration of municipalities and businesses on recycling programs to lower costs and improve participation to extend economic and environmental benefits of recycling.

The Recycling Resources Study o West Michigan is available on the WMSA Web site:
http://www.wm-alliance.org/documents/publications/Recycling_Report_v10_FINAL_-_9-21-09.pdf

About the West Michigan Strategic Alliance

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance serves as a catalyst for regional collaboration among the businesses, institutions and governmental units serving more than 1.4 million people living in a eight-county region including: Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo and Ottawa. WMSA works to encourage a regional mindset, which will foster collaboration on critical issues that impact how we live, learn, work and play. Additional information is available at www.wm-alliance.org

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