

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF RECYCLING**

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**An Abstract of a Thesis**

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**by**

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## ABSTRACT

The field of recycling is expanding by leaps and bounds, yet it is a very new concept to most. At this time because of the newness of recycling there are many questions as to what recycling is all about. Recycling is a productive means of reducing our waste stream, while at the same time creating many environmental benefits. However, there is much more to successful recycling than meets the eye.

This thesis reports on what makes up the needs for recycling such as environmental benefits, reducing numbers of landfills, legislative mandates, progressive material marketing, and a belief by most individuals that recycling is a worthwhile venture. These factors are examined at a national level and at the state (Illinois) level.

In order to examine recycling closer, a study was done involving the development of recycling in the state of Illinois. This involved examination of the growth pattern and successful participation rates of the communities in Illinois. This was accomplished by using October, 1990, data gathered by the Illinois Department of Energy and Natural Resources. To better understand recycling at the local level, a case study was done in Macomb, Illinois. This case study was twofold. First, a visual survey was conducted to gather data on the number of households participating in Macomb's curbside collection program for the week of February 11 - 14, 1991. Secondly, a sample survey was conducted to determine the characteristics of Macomb recyclers in order to find trends among the recyclers. The city was then separated into quadrants to more closely examine trends. Lastly, a report was done using recent data from many sources to develop guidelines for a successful recycling program.

The major findings from this thesis include the following: citizens, and governments at all levels appear in favor of recycling; markets are opening for waste materials as technology continues to expand the uses for materials; the number of Illinois communities recycling is growing rapidly, with the greatest participation rates coming from the Chicago suburban area; communities in Illinois with newer recycling programs have the best participation rates; the Macomb study demonstrated that perhaps some social factors such as education, income, age and family size do affect community recycling success; and there are many steps to account for in developing a good community recycling program including background analysis, promotion and education, collection methods, market opportunities, and processing and overhead costs.