

Six-Month DROP-OFF RECYCLING REPORT

Why the Shift?

The City of St. Louis has long invested in a citywide recycling program with the goal of reducing landfill use, promoting environmental stewardship, and encouraging sustainable behaviors. Despite the many dedicated residents committed to recycling, extreme levels of contamination in alley recycling containers continued.

Between July 2024 and June 2025, over half of recycling collected was rejected at the Republic Services Material Recovery Facility (MRF). Rejected materials are rerouted to the landfill yet the City pays full recycling costs without receiving the environmental benefits or economic returns. This is especially detrimental as recycling costs the City almost five times more per ton than trash.

To ensure more clean recyclables, the decision was made to shift to drop-off recycling locations.

What is Happening Now?

Since the recycling shift in August 2025, the City has added 21 additional drop-off locations, nearly reaching the goal of at least one drop-off site within a mile of each resident.

In those six months, drop-off recycling locations have already proven to be a far more effective alternative than shared alley dumpsters.

Contamination from August 2025 to February 2026 is down 83% as compared to the same time period in 2024-2025. This significant shift is due to the dedicated recyclers using the 46 drop-off locations.

From August 2024 to February 2025, the City collected 4,620 tons of materials, of which 1,583 tons were recycled. Only 34% of the materials collected in that period were recycled. During the same period 2025-2026, the City collected 2,212 tons, with 1,714 tons recycled, meaning 77% of materials collected were recycled.

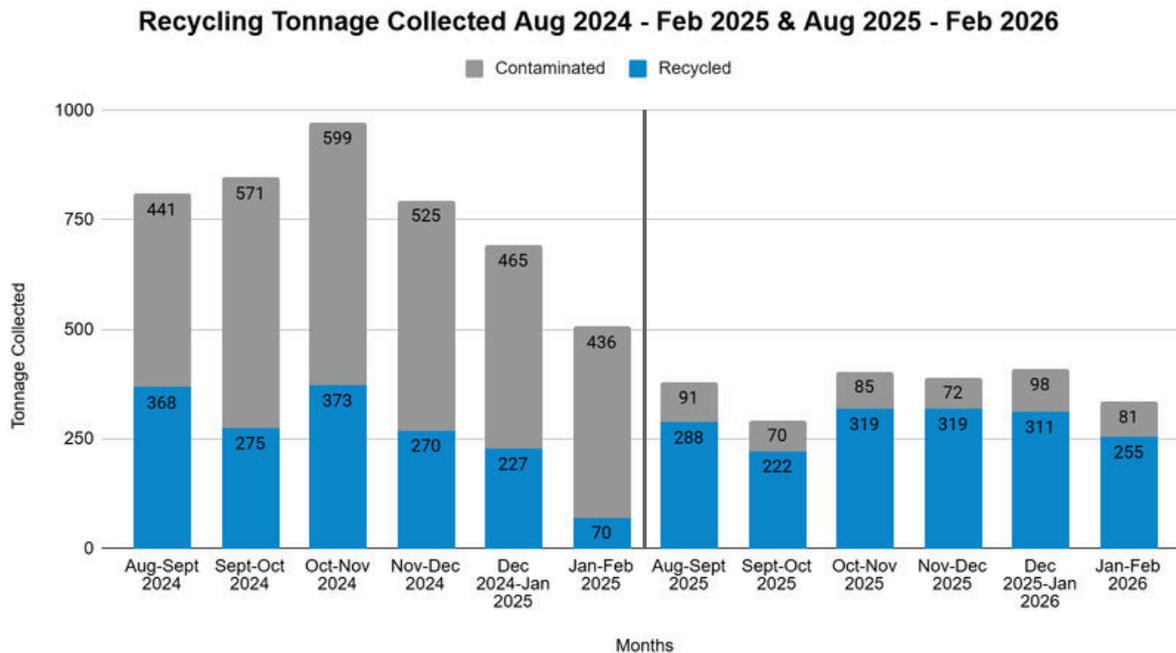


Figure 1. This graph depicts total tonnage of materials collected from recycling dumpsters, rollcars and drop-off locations from August 2024 - February 2025 and total tonnage of materials collected from rollcars and drop-off locations between August 2025 - February 2026. Total tonnage is broken down by materials recycled and materials contaminated and rerouted to the landfill.

The City is now collecting more recyclables than before alley recycling was discontinued, while also saving nearly 50% in recycling fees. From Aug 2025-Feb 2026, the City saved \$450,975 in recycling tipping fees, while *increasing* materials recycled by nearly 8% compared to the same period from 2024-2025. As recycling tonnage increases, costs decrease thanks to reduced contamination at recycling drop-off locations. When recyclers make the extra effort to ensure that only acceptable materials are taken to drop-off locations, contamination rates are lower, recycling improves, and city costs decrease.

Addressing Concerns

If recycling is working, why do I find some drop-off site dumpsters overflowing? The City continues to improve the process with more people recycling at the 46 drop-off locations by adding more dumpsters and increasing the number of collection days. Refuse now collects recycling from each drop-off site multiple times per week. The City is always assessing where there is a need for additional containers and for new locations.

How do I know drop-off site materials are being recycled? Drop-off sites are collected on their own routes and taken directly to the Republic Services Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) for processing.

What about my waste fee? City residents pay a \$14/month flat fee for comprehensive waste services. This provides recycling, trash, yard waste, bulk pick-up, and 12 annual drop-offs at a City Transfer Station. At this time, the fee will not change. It generates only a portion of what it costs to operate the Refuse Division annually.

I am unable to bring my recyclables to a drop-off site, what can I do? Please ask neighbors or family for help, and document your need for modified recycling services by calling 311.

Looking to the Future

Due to the efforts of dedicated residents, St. Louis continues to produce cleaner recyclable materials. Let's continue to increase our recycling in 2026!

A Recycling Task Force was created to explore how to improve recycling outcomes in the City of St. Louis. Through citizen engagement, education, and data-driven recommendations, the task force will draft recommendations for sustainable, equitable and economical waste management policies.

What Can You Do

- *Notice a problem with your drop-off recycling locations?* Report it to the Citizens' Service Bureau by calling 311. Your feedback helps the City work to improve its operations.
- Pick up a FREE in-home recycling bin to make transport to drop-off sites easier. 4646 Shenandoah Ave, 63110. M-F 8-5 PM
- Help neighbors in need get recyclables to a drop-off site.
- Share @STLCityRecycles information on your social media pages and neighborhood groups.
- Confused about what to recycle? Download Recycle Coach in your app store.

Thank you, St. Louis, for recycling responsibly!



CONTACT SAINT LOUIS CITY RECYCLES:

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