
2.0 Background Information

2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC, GEOGRAPHIC & REGIONAL INFORMATION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Olmsted County's total population was 144,248 in 2010. The county seat and largest population settlement is the city of Rochester with a total population of 106,769. Dover is the smallest city with a population of 735.

Township population also varies, from 339 in predominantly rural Quincy Township to 3,653 in suburban Marion. Population and employment growth is expected to continue with the majority of the growth expected to occur in the City of Rochester.

The County Planning Department and the State Demographers office project the population of Olmsted County to grow by about 13% through 2020. Estimates of regional growth, population, employment and waste generation are important factors in developing effective strategies to manage the waste effectively and reduce its generation. A comprehensive Community Profile was recently completed by the Rochester Olmsted Council Of Governments (ROCOG) as part of their Long Range Transportation Plan. It provides a thorough evaluation of local population distribution, population projections, employment and wages, and economic conditions. It can be found in "**Chapter 2 – Community Profile**" through this link:

<http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/planning/rocog/lrtp/Pages/chapters.aspx> or in Attachment C of this document.

Population in rural townships is declining and is expected to continue declining (See Attachment C - ROCOG Community Profile Table 2-1: Population Trends 1980 – 2008 and Table 2-2: ROCOG Population Projections). While the rural population is declining, backyard or on-site disposal is still a concern. The County currently has little control over the disposition of solid waste collected by self-haulers. The Solid Waste Division will address this concern through educational outreach and by providing access to services.

A significant portion of the labor force is filled by commuters from throughout the region. It is estimated that approximately 25% of local jobs are filled by workers from the surrounding area (See Attachment C - ROCOG Long Range Transportation Plan – Chapter 2 - Community Profile -Figures 2-8 and 2-9). The economy in Olmsted County is primarily centered around health care, high technology and education, with the major employers including the Mayo Medical Center, IBM-Rochester, and the Rochester School District. Rochester and Olmsted County continue to grow and remain economically viable even with the difficulties in the U.S. economy. According to the U.S.

Census Bureau, the median household income (in 2009 inflation adjusted dollars) was \$64,840.

Visitors to the Rochester area average 1.5 million per year, primarily seeking medical care at the Mayo Clinic, according to Rochester Area Economic Development Inc. (RAEDI). This creates the need for a large service industry. Rochester is also home to IBM, and other electronic manufacturers as well as medical and management software developers and service providers.

With the number of commuters, and visitors, Olmsted County faces significant challenges in waste management over the next 10-20 years. Rochester and the surrounding communities in Olmsted County are expected to continue to experience growth and development. As growth increases, subsequent increases in municipal solid waste increase the need for effective solid waste management solutions and facilities.

Because Olmsted County operates in a zero tax subsidy environment, tip fees have been the primary source of financial support for the Solid Waste Division. Waste flow assurance continues to be a driving force to the success and viability of Olmsted County's integrated Solid Waste Management System due to the proximity to less expensive landfills in other counties. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency approved Olmsted County's Designation Plan in June of 2011, and Olmsted County is moving forward to implement designation.

Other ongoing challenges facing the Solid Waste Division include customer and employee satisfaction, economic sustainability, risk reduction, environmental protection, regulatory compliance, waste abatement education and community outreach and new technology integration.

As Olmsted County's demographic makeup changes, services need to adapt. As the rate of technological change increases, Olmsted County needs to respond diligently. As regulations come and go, the County must maintain compliance and flexibility. As the environment in which Olmsted County must operate becomes more complex, staff must be more effective and responsive in providing waste management services.

2.2 GEOGRAPHIC

Olmsted County is located approximately eighty miles south of the Twin Cities and forty miles west of the Mississippi River. The County has a land area of 660 square miles, or 422,400 acres.

Arterial access to the region is provided by several major highways: U.S. 52 with access to the Twin cities, Interstate 90 with access to Wisconsin and South Dakota, U.S. Highway 14 with east-west access through southern Minnesota, and U.S. Highway 63 leading north towards northern Wisconsin and south to central Iowa. In addition to

an excellent roadway system, the region also has a commercial aviation system. Jet gateways at the Rochester Municipal Airport provide the region with commercial, passenger and freight service from throughout the United States.

The area included in this Plan covers the entire county, including the 18 townships and 8 incorporated cities: Byron, Chatfield (partial), Dover, Eyota, Oronoco, Pine Island (partial), Rochester, and Stewartville.

2.2.1 Current & Projected Land Use

The most recent U.S. Census information indicates that there were 296,039 acres of farmland comprised of 1,385 farms with an average size of 214 acres in 2007. This amounts to approximately 71% of the land area of Olmsted County. In terms of land use, agriculture is by far the most important land use in Olmsted County. Residential, Commercial, and Public and Open Spaces make up the remainder. (See the ROCOG Long Range Transportation Plan –Chapter 2 - Community Profile - pages 2-16 through 2-28 or Attachment C for more detailed information on projected land use plans for the City of Rochester and surrounding communities).

Like most of southeastern Minnesota Olmsted County lies on karst bedrock. This fractured limestone allows surface water to easily filter into the aquifers which provide drinking water. Because of this karst geology, very little land in Olmsted County is suitable for landfills.

Following extensive geological study, the Kalmar Landfill was permitted and developed on one of the few sites that is suitable for a landfill in Olmsted County making the need for waste abatement and alternatives to landfilling critical to the existing system.

2.3 REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Dodge and Olmsted Counties formed a Joint Powers Board in 1986, to manage mixed municipal solid waste through a Solid Waste Management Agreement for processing and disposal. Olmsted County and Dodge County each operate integrated solid waste management systems that provide solid waste services as directed by Minnesota statutes: Chapters 115A, 400, and 145. In 2004, the Dodge/Olmsted Solid Waste Management Agreement was updated and extended to June 30, 2028. In 2009, specific sections of the Agreement were updated to reflect current operations between the Dodge-Olmsted solid waste management systems.

Olmsted County is also a Joint Powers Board member of the Southeastern Minnesota Recyclers Exchange (SEMREX), consisting of nine government agencies. SEMREX cooperatively markets Olmsted County's recyclable materials. Educational resources and experience are shared among the participating government agencies making the most of educational dollars, reducing costs, and providing more uniform regional

messages. Recycling facility staff shares experiences, and technical advice on processing challenges. Olmsted County provides professional administrative services and fiscal management by contract to SEMREX. SEMREX provides marketing, reporting and administrative services for the participating members eliminating redundancy. Other regional programs include waste pesticide, household and Very Small Quantity Generator hazardous waste programs.

2.4 CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Olmsted County has a long history of regional partnerships. Barriers and impediments for such projects have been able to be worked out to mutually beneficial outcomes. Olmsted County views regionalization as an opportunity for growth, and is currently exploring options to work with Winona County on a regional program to provide them with solid waste processing services. Olmsted County is also looking for ways to partner with other entities to eliminate duplicative efforts and to be more efficient.