

CA ZERO WASTE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY¹

Statement of Purpose

Zero Waste is a philosophy and a design principle that goes beyond recycling by taking a whole system approach to the flow of resources and discarded materials. Zero Waste tries to mimic natural systems where there is no such thing as waste. In nature, everything is a resource or home for something else. **Zero Waste** systems strive to eliminate waste, or get darn close. **Zero Waste** focuses on reducing consumption and ensuring that producers takeback products and packaging for reuse, repair or recycling back into nature or the marketplace.²

The CA Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) promotes a zero waste California in partnership with local government, industry, and the public. This means managing the estimated 76 million tons of waste generated each year by reducing waste whenever possible, promoting the management of all materials to their highest and best use, and protecting public health and safety and the environment.³ The CIWMB urges all to participate in these efforts, with its slogan on all communications: "**Zero Waste: You Make It Happen!**"

Zero Waste Communities

Communities around the world have begun to adopt Zero Waste goals and Zero Waste Plans to implement those goals. The first community Zero Waste Plan was adopted by the Australian Capital City of Canberra in 1996.⁴ Over half of the communities in New Zealand have adopted Zero Waste as a goal. Seattle, Washington adopted Zero Waste as a guiding principle in 1998.⁵ In California, the following communities have adopted Zero Waste goals: Del Norte County, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo County, Santa Cruz County. Other communities in California have adopted goals beyond 50%, such as: Alameda County (75%) and the City of Los Angeles (75%). Where best practices for eliminating waste, reusing and recycling discarded materials, and composting discarded organic materials are used, some businesses have diverted over 90% of their wastes from landfills.⁶ Communities could adopt policies and programs to help their residents and businesses achieve similar results. If many communities adopted policies and programs to go beyond 50% waste diversion, the statewide waste diversion rate would rise significantly.

Barriers to Zero Waste

1. Government subsidies favor wasting and extraction
2. The true costs of wasting are hidden, borne by the public and not factored into today's prices
3. Producers ignore responsibility for their products and packaging
4. Environmental and social costs of current system are not effectively addressed

¹ Initial Strategy prepared by Gary Liss, Ruth Abbe and Toni Stein, and adopted on September 3, 2004 by the Zero Waste Task Force of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, California

² Based on discussion at: http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste/zerowaste_faq.html

³ <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/>

⁴ <http://www.act.gov.au/nowaste>

⁵ <http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/util/solidwaste/SWPlan/default.htm>

⁶ http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste/articles/companies_zw.html

5. Inertia of existing viewpoints and practices
6. Perception that land and natural resources are unlimited
7. Perception that technology will solve all problems
8. Perception that small individual efforts will have minimal impact on solving the overall problem.

Key Policies and Programs for Zero Waste Communities

Know Your Waste and Design It Out

1. Evaluate materials discarded according to the Urban Ore 12 Master Categories of discarded materials⁷, determine how and where materials are discarded, and identify alternatives. Establish a monitoring and tracking database system that uses the Urban Ore categories to evaluate performance of diversion and source reduction programs by material type.
2. Design waste out of the system by holding producers responsible for their impact. Ask product designers and marketers to consider Zero Waste to be a critical design criterion. Establish environmentally preferable purchasing guidelines to reduce resource use and cut air and water emissions.⁸

Adopt a Zero Waste Goal and Plan for It

3. Adopt a community-wide Zero Waste goal via resolution (see attached GRRN model) or an ordinance defining objectives and statements of policy.
4. Involve residents and businesses actively in the development of a Zero Waste Plan, including extensive education, outreach and input on the Plan's proposed policies and programs. Establish interim goals for 2010 and a target year to achieve Zero Waste goal (or darn close). Prioritize policies, incentives and programs to eliminate wasting and reduce the toxicity of discarded materials. Identify current waste elimination, reuse, recycling and composting policies and programs and select additional policies and programs from a menu of best practices around the world.
5. Work with other local governments and businesses to build useful alliances and share successes. Support state and federal policy that will enhance Zero Waste policies and programs. Support citizen actions to encourage businesses to change their policies and practices to move towards Zero Waste.

Hold Producers Responsible

6. Hold businesses financially or physically responsible for their products and packaging manufactured and sold. For retailers, ask them to takeback products and packaging for problem materials not included in residential recycling programs, as in Ottawa, Canada.⁹ For contractors and developers, adopt requirements for LEED-certified Green Buildings¹⁰, encourage adaptive reuse and deconstruction, and require recycling of construction, demolition and land-clearing debris.

⁷ http://www.grn.org/zerowaste/twelve_categories.html

⁸ <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/about/about.htm>

⁹ http://www.grn.org/resources/ottawa_take_it_back.html

¹⁰ http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp

End Subsidies for Wasting

7. Adopt policies and economic incentives¹¹ in Ordinances, contracts, franchises, permits, zoning, General Plans and garbage rate structures so that it is cheapest to stop discarding materials, and reusing, recycling or composting discarded materials is cheaper than landfilling or incineration.

Build Infrastructure Beyond Recycling

8. Ask local businesses to adopt Zero Waste goals, to develop Zero Waste plans, to adhere to Zero Waste Business principles,¹² to meet waste diversion targets, and to source separate designated materials that can be reused, recycled or composted.
9. Support existing reuse, recycling and composting businesses and nonprofit organizations and help them expand. Develop locally owned and independent infrastructure, on an open, competitive basis.¹³

Create Jobs and Sustainable Communities

10. Develop regional resource recovery parks to provide locations for expansion of reuse, recycling and composting businesses.¹⁴
11. Fund community Zero Waste initiatives with fees levied on the transport, transfer and disposal of wastes and by leveraging the investments of the private sector.

Strategies to Encourage Zero Waste Communities

1. Encourage communities to go beyond AB939's goals to adopt a Zero Waste goal for their community, and develop a Zero Waste Plan to implement that goal.
2. Encourage communities to get educated and network with organizations that plan and promote Zero Waste issues and opportunities, including the GrassRoots Recycling Network, Zero Waste International Alliance, CA Resource Recovery Association (CRRA) and its Global Recycling Council, Northern CA Recycling Association (NCRA) and the CA Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB).
3. Encourage the CIWMB to issue a Zero Waste Challenge to both California communities and businesses to help implement the CIWMB's Zero Waste goal.¹⁵
4. Encourage communities that are working to adopt Zero Waste as a goal and to develop or implement Zero Waste Plans, to network and share information through the Global Recycling Council of the CRRA statewide and through NCRA and BayROC in the San Francisco Bay Area.
5. Encourage the CIWMB to develop state support for development of Resource Recovery Parks.¹⁶
6. Ask the CIWMB and regional planning agencies (such as ABAG) to encourage local governments to adopt zoning for siting of Resource Recovery Parks.
7. Request opportunities to present concept of Zero Waste to communities to local elected officials and staff, including Council study sessions, Technical Advisory Committee meetings and meetings of statewide organizations (e.g., League of CA Cities, County State Association of Counties, Local Government Commission, CRRA, and SWANA).

¹¹ http://www.grn.org/zerowaste/articles/loc_gov_zw_incentives.html

¹² <http://www.grn.org/zerowaste/business/>

¹³ <http://www.crra.com/irc/guide.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/Innovations/RecoveryPark/>

¹⁵ <http://www.crra.com/grc/articles/ciwmb.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.crra.com/grc/articles/rparks.html>

Resolution for Zero Waste¹⁷

WHEREAS:

- ◆ The placement of materials in waste disposal facilities, such as landfills and incinerators, causes damage to human health, wastes natural resources and/or inappropriately transfers liabilities to future generations, and
- ◆ The elimination of specified types of waste for disposal, also known as disposal bans, will protect states from waste importation from other states and nations, and
- ◆ Consumers are currently forced to assume the high financial cost of collecting, recycling, and disposing of materials, and
- ◆ Tax subsidies for waste and virgin materials send the wrong economic signals to both consumers and producers, and
- ◆ A resource recovery based economy will create and sustain more productive and meaningful jobs, and
- ◆ Increasingly, U.S. and international governments and organizations are adopting the policy that the financial responsibility of collecting, recycling, and disposing of materials belongs with producers, and
- ◆ Producers should design products to ensure that they can be safely recycled back into the marketplace or nature, and
- ◆ Most types of waste streams can be easily eliminated through across-the-board minimum recycling content laws, the use of non-toxic alternatives in product design, and local composting facilities, and
- ◆ Recognizing that some materials are necessary for the public health and national security, in which case, storage is the only safe alternative, and
- ◆ Recognizing that voluntary recycling goals have not achieved waste elimination, and
- ◆ Government is ultimately responsible for establishing criteria needed to eliminate waste, so that manufacturers produce and businesses sell materials that can be safely reused, recycled or composted,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT

[City/ County/ Organization] hereby adopts a Zero Waste goal and supports the creation of a Zero Waste Plan in order to eliminate waste and pollution in the manufacture, use, storage, and recycling of materials.

For More Information, Contact Michael Closson, Acterra¹⁸ at 650.962.9876 ext. 303, <michaelc@acterra.org>, Toni Stein at 650-853-0314, <tweil@igc.org> or Gary Liss at 916-652-7850, <gary@garyliss.com>

¹⁷ Based on Model Resolution from: <http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste/zwmodel.html>

¹⁸ Acterra: Action for a Sustainable Earth, Palo Alto, CA