

CITY OF OAKLAND
AGENDA REPORT

TO: Office of the City Administrator
ATTN: Deborah Edgerly
FROM: Public Works Agency
DATE: February 28, 2006

RE: **RESOLUTION ADOPTING A ZERO WASTE GOAL BY 2020 FOR THE CITY OF OAKLAND AND DIRECTING THE PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY, IN CONCERT WITH THE MAYOR'S OFFICE, TO DEVELOP A ZERO WASTE STRATEGIC PLAN TO ACHIEVE THE CITY'S ZERO WASTE GOAL**

SUMMARY

The Mayor's Office requested a resolution be prepared establishing a goal of zero waste disposal by 2020, and directing staff to prepare a Zero Waste Strategic Plan for the City of Oakland. Zero Waste is a sustainability philosophy and design principle that goes beyond recycling, taking a whole system approach to the vast flow of resources and waste through society and moving in logical increments to eliminate waste. A graphical depiction of Zero Waste principles is shown in Attachment A.

The City of Oakland has taken steps toward promoting sustainable use of resources and materials, including programs and policy goals to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials that would otherwise be disposed as waste. However, Oakland will not be able to meet its 75% waste reduction or sustainability goals solely through traditional downstream recycling programs, which seek to divert from disposal materials that have already been consumed and discarded. Zero Waste strategies are required to achieve both goals. By establishing a Zero Waste Goal, the City of Oakland would join a growing global movement of local governments that have adopted Zero Waste goals and polices. This report recommends that the City take an important step forward in acting on its commitment to sustainability by adopting a Zero Waste Goal, and developing a Zero Waste Strategic Plan to achieve that goal.

FISCAL IMPACT

This resolution establishes a Zero Waste Goal for the City of Oakland, and directs the Public Works Agency (PWA), in concert with the Mayor's Office, to develop a Zero Waste Strategic Plan to achieve that goal. It does not suggest specific programs or projects for funding. Staff will return to City Council with a Strategic Plan and funding options for proposed strategies that

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can be used to achieve the Zero Waste Goal. Funding for technical assistance to staff in developing the Zero Waste Strategic Plan is currently available in the FY 2005-07 Adopted Policy Budget Fund (1710) Recycling/Solid Waste Program (30682) Project P275210.SC17 in account 54919 for contracts approved during adoption of the FY 2005-07 Budget.

BACKGROUND

A series of state, county, and City waste reduction, health, environmental protection, and sustainability legislative and policy initiatives over the past 15 years provide the framework for Oakland's adoption and pursuit of a Zero Waste Goal:

- California AB 939 (1989) and Oakland Resolution #66253 C.M.S. (1990) set initial goals for reducing waste disposal to landfills by 2000, and developing markets for recyclable materials
- Oakland Resolution #68780 C.M.S. (1992) authorized establishment of a state-designated City Recycling Market Development Zone
- Alameda County Ballot Measure D (The Alameda County Waste Reduction and Recycling Initiative Charter Amendment, 1990) and Oakland Resolution #77500 C.M.S. (2002) expanded waste reduction goals to 75% by 2010

Beyond solid waste disposal reduction and recycling market development, the following actions by Oakland included:

- Resolution 74678 C.M.S. (1998) adopted sustainability goals
- Resolution 74773 C.M.S. (1999) established a policy and task force to reduce dioxin emissions
- Oakland FY 2005-07 Mayor and City Council Goals include: Develop A Sustainable City
- In June 2005 Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown signed the United Nations World Environment Day Urban Environmental Accords, pledging that Oakland would implement 21 action steps toward sustainability. Cities, councils, counties, and states worldwide have adopted a goal of achieving zero waste. The adopted Accords are shown in Attachment B.
- Staff from PWA-Recycling and CEDA-Recycling Market Development Zone are participating in a newly-formed Bay Area Zero Waste Communities working group which includes representatives from the Cities of San Francisco, Berkeley and Palo Alto, and Santa Cruz County - all of whom have adopted Zero Waste goals and seek to join with other communities to partner, share, and leverage efforts to pursue Zero Waste strategies and actions.

More comprehensive background information is provided in Attachment C.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

What is Zero Waste?

Zero Waste derives from applying the principle of sustainability to redefine the concept of “waste” in our society. The presumption that waste is a natural by-product of our culture and economic system, that is handled by end-of-the-pipeline waste management activities, programs, or technologies, is replaced with the presumption that:

- Products are designed and used so that they can be and are repaired, reused, or recycled
- Any output during the production, transportation, use, and disposition of these products that is destined for land, sea or air is not a threat to planetary, animal, or plant health

Core Zero Waste principles, as applied to discarded materials that may become municipal solid waste, are:

- Improving 'downstream' reuse/recycling of end-of-life products and materials to ensure their highest and best use
- Pursuing 'upstream' re-design strategies to reduce the volume and toxicity of discarded products and materials, and promote low-impact or reduced consumption lifestyles
- Fostering and supporting use of discarded products and materials to stimulate and drive local economic and workforce development

Attachment A provides a more detailed description of Zero Waste principles.

Adopting a Goal for Zero Waste by 2020 is important for Oakland because it is:

- Needed for Oakland to achieve sustainability and 75% waste reduction goals
- Needed to reverse growing local/regional health and financial liabilities from waste disposal
- A key element of local economic and workforce development
- Needed in a worldwide effort to reverse damage to the planet’s natural systems

Achieving City’s 75% Waste Reduction Goal

Zero Waste strategies will be necessary for Oakland to reach its sustainability and 75% waste reduction goals. The City has successfully reached the state-mandated 50% waste reduction goal, primarily through voluntary participation in a Public Works-driven residential recycling collection program, and free market recycling services available to businesses (supported in some instances with technical assistance from City, County, or State government waste reduction programs)

A separate report to the Public Works Committee of February 28, 2006 identifies proposed strategies to accomplish the City’s 75% goal focuses on expanding and adding traditional end-of-the-pipeline recycling programs. The report acknowledges that the proposed strategies without

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the supplement of Zero Waste are unlikely to result in greater than 65% waste reduction toward the 75% goal.

Ecological Footprint

The global economy's current unsustainable system for materials use is an important problem that is compromising the planet's natural systems that we rely on for basic ecological services such as clean water, clean air, and safe food. The combined and coordinated efforts of individuals, businesses, cities, states, and countries will be required to solve or mitigate this problem. Attachment D describes and illustrates ecological footprint measurement.

Rapid Increase in Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Volume and Toxicity

The nature of waste has changed fundamentally over the last 100 years, increasingly so since 1960. Attachment E illustrates changes in waste generation volume and composition. Local waste management systems have become the end-of-the-pipeline repository for disposal of an increasingly complex, disposable, and toxic stream of products and packaging. Yet, local governments have little or no direct control over the volume, composition, toxicity, or health impacts of the discarded materials for which they must assume the responsibility of recycling or disposal. Most experts agree that toxics will eventually seep into the groundwater under every landfill, the eventual and inevitable leakage of which portends potential future legal and financial liabilities for local governments, garbage franchisees, and/or landfill owners. Similarly, mass-burn incineration and other high temperature thermal processing technologies produce an array of toxic, health-threatening solid, liquid, and gaseous by-products and outputs. As with landfill disposal, they destroy their input materials, and are thus at odds with Zero Waste sustainability principles of highest and best use of materials, resource conservation, and protecting public health.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

Moving toward a Zero Waste Goal will provide an enhanced and concrete pathway toward achieving existing goals of the City of Oakland:

- To develop a Sustainable City
- To Achieve 75% Waste Reduction by 2010

A Zero Waste Strategic Plan for Oakland would include:

- Improving 'downstream' reuse/recycling of end-of-life products and materials to ensure their highest and best use
- Pursuing 'upstream' re-design strategies to reduce the volume and toxicity of discarded products and materials, and promote low-impact or reduced consumption lifestyles

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- Fostering and supporting use of discarded products and materials to stimulate and drive local economic and workforce development

Possible elements that may be included in Oakland's Zero Waste Strategic Plan are:

- Partner with other Zero Waste local, regional and international communities and sustainability advocates to advance product and materials management and system re-design strategies, and promote low-impact or reduced consumption lifestyles
- Expand Green Building design and construction
- Disposal or product use bans
- Expand use of discarded materials for local economic and workforce development
- Structure creative new financial incentives to reduce waste and maximize recycling
- Adopt Zero Waste practices in City government operations and activities
- Enact an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing policy for City procurement

A more detailed description of potential Strategic Plan elements is provided in Attachment F.

The Mayor's Office will assist PWA in convening a Zero Waste working group to develop Oakland's Zero Waste Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan will provide guidance in the planning and decision-making process to achieve the City's Zero Waste Goal. Staff will return to City Council before the end of FY 2006-07 with the Zero Waste Strategic Plan, and once adopted staff will provide periodic status updates to the Mayor and City Council on progress toward the Zero Waste Goal. Consideration and pursuit of specific strategies may lead to proposed programs or projects requiring funding as part of the budget development cycle for FY 2007-09 and in subsequent biennial budget cycles.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: Zero Waste strategies help Oakland businesses reduce waste, thereby increasing operating efficiency and reducing costs. Expanding and actively supporting use of discarded materials drives local economic and workforce development with 'green collar' jobs and value added production. It also supports the export of recyclable materials - one of the dominant mechanisms for returning empty export containers to Pacific Rim countries, which is an important consideration for the expected doubling of import activity at the Port of Oakland by 2020.

Environmental: Zero Waste strategies promote sustainability, conserve natural resources, reduce air and water pollution, and protect habitat.

Social Equity: Zero Waste strategies can provide new living wage jobs for the community, as well as preserve and enhance natural systems that provide basic ecological services such as clean water, clean air, and safe food.

DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS

This project will not have any direct impact on disability and senior citizen access.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

Staff recommends that City Council approve the Resolution adopting a Zero Waste Goal and directing staff to develop a Zero Waste Strategic Plan as an explicit validation of Oakland's Sustainable Development Initiative and Sustainable City Policy Budget Goal.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the resolution.

Respectfully submitted,

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**APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

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