

ZERO WASTE STRATEGIC PLAN

The City of Burbank is committed to creating an economically dynamic, socially equitable, and environmentally sensitive future for Burbank and the world's populations. As part of that commitment, the City adopted a Sustainability Action Plan in January 2008, which included a goal to achieve zero waste by 2040.

Zero waste challenges the wasteful and inefficient system of "extract, consume, and discard," and helps preserve the earth's limited resources for future generations. Zero waste requires that existing recycling and reuse efforts are maximized, while ensuring that products are designed for the environment and have the potential to be repaired, reused, or recycled.

The success of zero waste efforts requires that the concept of "waste" is redefined. In the past, waste was considered a natural and unavoidable byproduct. Now, it is time to recognize that proper resource management, not just waste management, is at the heart of achieving sustainability. Valuable resources have been discarded instead of reused all in the name of consumer and manufacturer convenience. In addition, the amount of material discarded is just a portion of the waste that was created at the end of a product's life. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that for every ton of waste buried in a landfill, an average of 20 tons of waste are generated in its upstream production. Another study estimates that for every ton of waste that is landfilled locally, 71 tons of waste is generated upstream in mining, manufacturing and distribution processes.¹ Highly refined technical products, such as electronics, may generate 1,000 tons of waste upstream for every ton of finished product.

No single or simple strategy can achieve zero waste. This Zero Waste Strategic Plan includes four basic strategies, with a priority placed on "upstream" solutions to eliminate waste before it is created. The plan also includes actions to build on the City's traditional "downstream" recycling programs to fully utilize the existing waste diversion infrastructure. A strong public outreach, education, and participation program is an important element of all the strategies. The plan states each strategy, identifies which specific Sustainability Action Plan action items are tied to it, further describes the strategy, discusses why the strategy is important, and outlines the next steps to be taken to implement the strategy.

¹ Institute for Local Self-Reliance, *Wasting and Recycling in the United States*, page 13.

Strategy No. 1: Advocate for Manufacturer Responsibility for Product Waste and Support Elimination of Problem Materials

Related Sustainability Action Items:

- 4.1 Product Stewardship
- 4.11 Electronic and Universal Waste
- 4.12 Grocery Bags and Take-Out Plastics
- 5.1 Manufacturer Responsibility
- 6.1 Long-Range Sustainable Design

Description of Strategy: Work collaboratively with other zero waste and sustainability advocates to pursue Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and other “upstream” re-design solutions. Work toward shifting the responsibility for managing the end-of-life of products back on to the manufacturers. Work with businesses and regional, state, and federal governments to phase out single-use disposable consumer items such as plastic carryout bags and expanded polystyrene (EPS) packaging or single-use disposables.

Importance of the Strategy: Wasting is designed into the economy. Most products’ pricing is based on the cost to develop, produce, transport, and market goods; the ultimate disposal costs are borne by the consumer, or shifted to the local entity responsible for waste disposal. As a local government in a global economy, the City of Burbank has few opportunities beyond its ongoing educational efforts to bring about change in consumer habits, and even fewer opportunities on its own make a significant impact on product design. By joining with other governmental, non-profit, and private entities, and working together to enact well-structured EPR legislation, the City can have a meaningful role in moving society toward zero waste.

Next Steps:

- Participate in organized regional, statewide, national and international waste reduction and sustainability working groups.
- Become a member and actively participate in the Product Stewardship Institute, which is a national non-profit membership-based organization that works with state and local government agencies to partner with manufacturers, retailers, environmental groups, federal agencies, and other key stakeholders to reduce the health and environmental impacts of consumer products.
- Become a member and actively participate in the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC), which is coalition of local governments in California with an ambitious and straightforward mission: *To shift California’s product waste management system from one focused on government funded and ratepayer financed waste diversion to one that relies on producer responsibility in order to reduce public costs and drive improvements in product design that promote environmental sustainability.*
- Actively monitor and send letters in support of regional, state, and federal legislation and regulation that supports manufacturer responsibility.

- Continue the City's permanent recycling program for electronics and universal wastes, and support product take back programs and policies that reduce or eliminate product toxic contents.
- Develop an outreach plan in partnership with local businesses and others to reduce the use and disposal of plastic bag and food service plastics.
- Consider local bans on plastic peanuts and expanded polystyrene disposables.

Strategy No. 2: Adopt New Rules and Incentives to Reduce Waste

Related Sustainability Action Items:

- 4.4 Mandate Recycling for Residents and Businesses
- 4.7 Waste Hauler Recycling Mandates
- 4.14 Green Purchasing
- 5.2 Buy Green
- 6.2 Local Waste Reduction
- 6.3 Waste Reduction Policies

Description of Strategy: Review and adjust the City's waste collection and disposal system to provide meaningful incentives for all parties who "reduce, reuse, and recycle" to the maximum extent possible.

Importance of the Strategy: Like most cities, the City of Burbank's current waste management system actually works in conflict with the zero waste goal of producing less waste; because our City's recycling and waste disposal is convenient and easy to use, it tends to dampen the need to change consumer habits that would produce less waste in the first place. Furthermore, while the City's refuse rates are designed to fully cover all costs of material collection, recycling, and disposal (including the costs for maintaining the landfill after it is closed 50 years from now), future generations will likely be faced with staggering costs as more local disposal sites close and waste must be transported to distant desert landfills. Artificially low costs today for waste collection are even more amplified in the business sector, which are primarily served by competing private waste haulers who are licensed by the City (these haulers are not allowed to dump at the City-owned landfill). The need to compete for customers and the relatively low cost to use landfills outside of Burbank keep prices artificially low, and in effect, subsidize the cost of end-of-life product management for manufacturers. This strategy of developing new rules and incentives is intended to create an economic engine that drives the system to zero waste.

Next Steps:

- Increase public education, outreach, awards and recognition of exemplary waste diversion efforts.
- Develop a policy to mandate a minimum recycling rate for businesses and residents if stepped-up educational and incentive programs do not lead to an increase in waste diversion.

- Require a plan from each private refuse hauler to increase commercial recycling as a condition of the hauler's license renewal. Require haulers to achieve a minimum recycling rate, such as the state-mandated 50% presently required of cities; and provide haulers with an incentive, financial or otherwise, to do so.
- Develop an environmentally friendly purchasing policy addressing "green" services and products (repairable, long life, recycled content, sustainability-produced, non-toxic).
- Build on the City's "cultural shift," when it issued an Administrative Procedure to minimize the use of bottled water for City functions by developing similar, official procedures requiring the purchase of "green" products and the minimization of the use of disposables such as expanded polystyrene cups and plates, plastic ware, and procurement of hazardous chemicals or materials.
- Develop procedures that further restrict readily recyclable materials such as yard trimmings, clean cardboard, and office paper from disposal at the City landfill.

Strategy No. 3: Expand and Improve Local and Regional Recycling and Composting

Related Sustainability Action Items:

- 4.3 Construction and Demolition Wastes
- 4.5 Multi-Family and Commercial Recycling
- 4.6 Business Recycling Plan
- 4.8 Reuse Opportunities
- 4.9 Food Waste Program
- 4.10 Backyard Composting
- 4.13 Manure
- 4.15 Landfill Material Restrictions
- 4.17 Material Recovery Facility for Refuse

Description of Strategy: Maximize waste reduction from programs and opportunities that are already in place to make full use of the existing waste management infrastructure, and develop new programs as needed.

Importance of the Strategy: The City's well-established existing recycling programs require continuous nurturing to sustain and enhance participation and effectiveness. Recent waste characterization studies in Burbank have indicated that nearly 20% of the material placed in residential curbside black refuse carts for disposal could have been recycled, and over 20% of the material that residents place in their blue recycling carts is actually *not* recyclable. The curbside program yields about 9,000 tons per year of recycled paper, metals, glass, and plastic, but the program seems to have reached a slow-growth plateau and residents are using only about 50% of its capacity. Furthermore, data from the City's licensed private haulers, which serve the commercial and large multi-family residential sectors, indicate a recycling rate of only about 25%.

Clearly, there is room for improvement to make full use of existing waste diversion infrastructure that the City has built over the past two decades.

Next Steps:

- Monitor the implementation of the now-mandatory Construction and Demolition (C&D) ordinance that requires 50% recycling of construction materials.
- Continue to assist contractors and builders in locating C&D materials recovery facilities (MRFs); materials exchange opportunities, and other reuse and recycling sources.
- Consider increases to the minimum C&D recycling rate as C&D processes and markets improve.
- Review and strengthen the policy to ensure that all new multi-family and commercial buildings not only provide adequate space for both refuse and recycling containers, but also require recycling programs and/or for private haulers to provide proof that a minimum percentage of waste is taken to a materials recovery facility to be recycled.
- Evaluate the waste streams of City-serviced commercial accounts to establish increased recycling opportunities, and create and implement a plan to increase recycling at City-serviced commercial accounts.
- Conduct a reuse campaign for both businesses and residents establishing partnerships with and promoting consignment shops and other reuse stores.
- Analyze the City's bulky item program to identify additional ways to divert residents' unwanted materials from the landfill and promote the use of established materials exchange opportunities such as FreeCycle, Craig's List, eBay, L.A. Shares, and the California Materials Exchange (CalMAX).
- Study the feasibility of implementing a food waste recycling program for large restaurants, studios and other large venues within the City.
- Continue and increase residential backyard composting programs, including grass cycling, mulching and zero waste yard care.
- Continue to promote landscape educational programs that address energy and water conservation, waste reduction and organic food production and consumption.
- Maximize the beneficial re-use of City-generated materials such as shredded tree trimmings.
- Work with the Los Angeles Equestrian Center and other horse stables to identify options for the collection and diversion of manure from landfilling, and consider developing a fee-based program for the separate collection and management of this material.
- Consider the development of a sorting system for trash to recover an increased amount of recyclable materials if education and mandates fail to improve public participation.

Strategy No. 4: Educate, Promote, and Advocate a Zero Waste Sustainability Agenda

Related Sustainability Action Items:

- 4.2 Green Business
- 4.16 Green Business
- 5.3 Disposable Materials Usage

Description of Strategy: Increase waste diversion through greater engagement with residents and the business community. Educate, motivate, and inspire diverse audiences with simple, positive, clear, and consistent messages about zero waste and sustainability actions. Champion, highlight, and celebrate successes, and “lead by example.”

Importance of the Strategy: Although the City has been conducting environmental education for decades, there are still those who do not participate in recycling and composting programs, even when convenient opportunities are provided. Fresh, new messages and positive communication styles are needed that are tailored to different circumstances, different cultural contexts, and different generational audiences. The zero waste message must encourage participation in the larger strategy to achieve sustainability. The overall goals of sustainability, which includes myriad quality of life elements – healthy communities, healthy people, and healthy ecosystems, are supported by the focused zero waste message. As public awareness of large-scale global environmental issues like climate change increases, zero waste is a well-positioned target for spreading the word that individual actions, taken collectively, can have a big positive impact. Since businesses in Burbank are among the largest waste producers, a high priority needs to be placed on better two-way communication with them about waste diversion. Working with the Burbank Chamber of Commerce, staff can create opportunities for businesses to come together and share information about zero waste, especially the good news that waste reduction can actually save these businesses money.

Next Steps:

- Implement the various educational and outreach efforts that accompany this plan’s other strategies.
- Initiate a green business forum that provides opportunities for information exchange and promotes business practices that balance environment, equity, and economy.
- Conduct a focused community meeting to discuss the concept of zero waste with residents and businesses and receive input on the types of additional services and policies that are needed to effectively implement zero waste in Burbank.
- Complete the ongoing effort of refreshing the Recycle Center’s marketing efforts by completing the comprehensive re-branding effort that includes website re-design, and brochure, flyer, and pamphlet updating.

- Develop a volunteer “Master Recycler” program open to the public where trained and motivated volunteers can promote conservation and recycling throughout the community by example and through outreach projects.
- Work to find more ways for City government to “lead by example” and eliminate unnecessary waste-producing practices.