



“Waste and Resource Management” Workshop Summary

September 28, 2018

Workshop Overview

The “Our County” Stakeholder Engagement Team invited nonprofit, public, and private organizations throughout Los Angeles County to provide input on the topics of Waste and Resource Management for the County’s first Sustainability Plan. The “Waste and Resource Management” workshop, held on September 28, 2018 at the Los Angeles Trade Technical College, attracted attendees from nonprofit organizations, private companies, as well as several public agencies. The 5-hour workshop engaged 46 individuals representing 19 nonprofit organizations and 22 public or private organizations who participated in several key sessions to provide input on Waste and Resource Management goals and strategies the “Our County” plan should emphasize. Approximately a third of the groups stated that their primary or secondary organizational focus was “waste/resource management”, and another 25% represented “environmental justice” or “public health” as one of their primary concerns. The remaining participants cited climate, jobs, transportation and housing as their primary or secondary organizational interests.

The workshop provided an explanation of how the “Our County” plan will be developed and an overview of waste and resource management issues the County faces. After introducing the Draft Goals from the Waste and Resource Management Briefing document, attendees were broken up into three different groups according to their organization’s sector (Non-Profit, Public & Private A, and Public & Private B), with each section led by a discussion facilitator, along with a butcher paper scribe and computer note taker. Participants in each section were asked to provide comments on the Draft Goals, and were then reconvened in a short plenary session to hear brief “report backs” from breakout group representatives on the key insights and recommendations from their discussions.

In the second session, participants were given a list of Draft Strategies and divided into six focus groups to allow for more in-depth discussion around a specific topic and draw out participants’ expertise on specific policy areas:

- Organic Waste
- Manufacturing and Remanufacturing
- Worker Safety, Green Economy, and Jobs
- Environmental Impacts
- Public Health
- Source Reduction and Natural Resources



As part of the interactive discussion, participants from every sector were encouraged to propose alternative or additional priority recommendations to those contained in the Briefing document. Throughout the exercise, facilitators were present to help spur discussion while note takers transcribed comments. After summarizing discussion and recording their proposals on butcher paper, participants then rotated to a different focus group topic to provide additional comment. Afterward, everyone gathered in the main room for a plenary session where they had the opportunity to vote for their priority recommendations via dot stickers on all the focus groups' priorities.

The following compilation represents a synthesis of more than 350 comments that the Stakeholder Engagement team was able to capture through butcher paper notetaking, computer laptop transcription, as well as written comment cards received throughout the workshop. While each stakeholder brought their own unique set of recommendations and input for the "Our County" plan, there was general support for the proposed Waste and Resource Management Goals as presented in the Briefing document. Additionally, several common themes emerged throughout the workshop that either seek to address missing issues or enhance the Waste and Resource Management Goals. The following are the top themes identified:

Key Themes

- Improving **waste and resource management governance** for more inclusive decision-making, better accountability, stronger coordination and more modernized operations.
Stakeholders repeatedly cited governance as a key issue to effectively tackling any goals related to waste and resource management. They advocated for several measures that would ensure the participation of vulnerable communities, increase transparency, and modernize archaic processes.
- Launching comprehensive education initiatives that reach residents and business owners alike to **increase literacy and environmental-consciousness around waste**.
There was significant support from both nonprofit, public, and private groups for improving general understanding on the environmental and economic impacts of poor waste management. From school curriculums to better bin labeling, attendees offered a variety of culturally-relevant strategies that would promote reducing, reusing, and recycling.
- Protecting vulnerable residents and eliminating disparate **health impacts from waste-related facilities and practices**.
Participants advocated for better land use and zoning practices that reverses a long history of discriminatory siting of toxic facilities near low income residents and schools of color, particularly in unincorporated areas. Many called for the incorporation of environmental justice principles that would guide the future development and regulation of organic waste and recycling facilities, and that would create greater accountability for current industries producing hazardous waste.

- Incentivizing an innovative and responsible waste industry to accelerate towards a Zero Waste future, with special attention to promoting **entrepreneurship and local business development**.

In response to China's policy restricting imports of U.S. waste and recyclables, there were numerous suggestions on incentivizing the private sector to advance technology and science that would create significant changes in waste and resource management. Some called for leveraging the County's purchasing and regulatory power through mechanisms such as extended producer responsibility and take-back policies, environmentally preferred purchasing and local suppliers, and increasing the tipping fees charged at landfills to help subsidize the expansion of new infrastructure capacity.

- Building an **inclusive, safe, and dignified waste and resource management workforce** through effective workforce development programs and enhanced workplace protections.

Many participants voiced their support for more inclusive waste-related economic development that trains and hires local residents with family-supporting incomes. Further, there were several suggestions to reducing workplace hazards, such as requiring improved standards through the County-issued certification/licensing process.

Draft Goals

- Goal A: Pave the way toward a circular economy that encourages reuse, repair, and regeneration, while minimizing waste and pollution.
- Goal B: Eliminate the use of and exposure to toxic substances.
- Goal C: Reduce organic waste generated across L.A. County with the target of 75% diversion of organics by 2025.
- Goal D: Accelerate a waste free future by targeting the highest priority waste streams in a comprehensive approach that includes reduction, reuse, and resource recovery.
- Goal E: Address special waste streams with broad impact on county residents and ecosystems.

Nonprofit stakeholders, although generally supporting the intent of several of the Draft Goals from the Waste and Resource Management Briefing document (listed above), commented on unaddressed issues and suggested stronger, more explicit language around certain topics including: inclusive decision-making processes, disproportionate cumulative environmental impacts, and culturally-appropriate education initiatives. Dozens of comments, for instance, requested goal language around waste and resource management literacy, particularly as it relates to environmental and economic impacts on communities of color. Others expressed the need for better policies around food procurement and waste as a way to advance food justice.

Public and private sector stakeholders were critical of nearly all the Draft Goals, noting that the goals themselves are not consistent in their structure. Participants found Goals A and D too broad, felt the wording of Goals B and E rendered them too vague, and noted that Goal C reads as an already currently-mandated target. Stakeholders pointed to various terms they felt were not well defined, sharing that: 1) toxicity may not include broader negative impacts of waste on community health; 2) the term “circular economy” might mislead the public to think that there are no opportunities for economic growth; 3) the concept of “special” waste streams is vague; and 4) “targeting the highest priority waste streams” left participants unclear as to what is being targeted, who is involved, and what targeting actually means in terms of developing strategies and actions.

Nonprofit, private, and public sector participants requested additional goals or proposed ideas that should be incorporated into goals. They proposed adding goal language around public education and outreach, climate change as it relates to waste’s environmental impact (i.e. reduce emissions from waste sites), and use of materials to their best and highest use. Many noted that high waste collection costs and current lack of infrastructure are impediments to meeting the goals, and encouraged L.A. County to focus on funding/financing and facility improvement opportunities. In focusing on equity, stakeholders also raised the intersection of land use, concerned about where waste facilities are located as to not further impact frontline communities. A key area of agreement amongst stakeholders was that L.A. County’s resource management improvement should start with the County developing better purchasing practices to ensure that the products they purchase meet stricter environmental standards, are less toxic, are recyclable, and are more durable.

Detailed Strategies

The following are the top themes with detailed strategies from input received:

<p>IMPROVE WASTE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FOR BETTER ACCOUNTABILITY AND COORDINATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the active participation of vulnerable residents through a variety of methods that are meaningful and accessible • Make government permitting processes more clear and transparent so that the industry knows what is expected and can innovate accordingly • Amend policies and practices that conflict with environmentally-conscious procurement and waste production goals (e.g., school-mandated food disposal) • Finance the major changes implied by the Goals so that they are actionable • Collect and make waste facility and health-related data readily available
<p>INCREASE WASTE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LITERACY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund community based organizations to conduct outreach and trainings for residents on best waste management and recycling practices • Require clear, understandable labeling on items and waste disposal bins • Institute technical assistance and small business improvement programs that help facilitate the transition towards a zero-waste economy • Educate County residents and businesses on the social equity and environmental impacts of waste production • Implement household incentives for less waste production, more recycling and composting, and better source separation
<p>ELIMINATE HEALTH IMPACTS FROM WASTE-RELATED FACILITIES AND PRACTICES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the creation of community-based air monitoring programs, beyond the requirements of Assembly Bill 617 • Ban the expansion of toxic industrial facilities near sensitive populations and disproportionately burdened communities • Implement Green Zones policy countywide, beginning with installing natural buffer zones for the short term • Strengthen regulatory efforts towards toxic and hazardous waste facilities and institute a phase out timeline, particularly for those near environmental justice communities
<p>BUILD AN INNOVATIVE AND RESPONSIBLE WASTE INDUSTRY FOR A ZERO WASTE FUTURE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivize businesses that are at the forefront of environmentally sustainable methods to reduce, recycle, and re-use waste, especially organic waste • Partner with non-profits, private industries to maximize multiple community benefits from expanded recycling and waste management facilities • Leverage L.A. County's procurement power to shift local economy through green purchasing policies • Reform tipping rate structure to discourage the creation of more waste • Create certification programs that require zero reduction metrics and goals for businesses

**CREATE AN
INCLUSIVE, SAFE,
AND DIGNIFIED
WASTE WORKFORCE**

- Partner with higher education institutions and other entities to construct a pipeline for waste and resource management jobs that address employment barriers for hard-to-employ populations
- Require local hire and prevailing wages
- Strengthen industry workplace standards and practices through the County licensing system to eliminate hazardous occupational risks
- Train and retrain workers for new technology

Other themes, although not as prominent, also emerged, including:

- Advancing climate change adaptation by dramatically reducing the **waste industry's emissions profile** through ambitious waste reduction targets and repurposing methane into renewable energy.
- Creating an **equitable, environmentally sustainable food system** that eliminates food waste and insecurity, promotes local farming and food production, and is toxic-free.
- Developing **innovative financing mechanisms** that will fund necessary infrastructure upgrades, soil remediation, and other initiatives that will lead to a zero-waste future.
- Protecting the **natural environment and resources** through proactive planning and regulations around storm water runoff, illegal dumping, proper siting of facilities, and ongoing monitoring of activities.
- Increasing **localized access** for e-waste diversion, composting, and other environmentally responsible waste management practices through targeted, ongoing programming for residents and small locally owned businesses.

Appendix A: “Waste and Resource Management” Workshop Attendee List

Non-Profit Sector

- Aquarium of the Pacific
- Bioplastic Recycling (at LACI)
- Communities for a Better Environment*
- Conservation Corps of Long Beach
- Day One*
- Del Amo Action Committee
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice*
- Homeboy Recycling
- LA Alliance for a New Economy
- LA Food Policy Council
- Pacoima Beautiful*
- Physicians for Social Responsibility - LA
- SCOPE LA*
- Sierra Club - Central Group
- So Cal COSH (Committee of Safety & Health)
- Social Eco Education
- Surfrider Foundation
- TRUST South LA
- US Green Building Council

*Community based organization anchor

Public and Private Sector

- Athens Services
- California Product Stewardship Council
- California Waste and Recycling Association
- CalRecycle
- City of Beverly Hills
- City of Carson
- City of Los Angeles
- City of Palmdale
- City of Pasadena
- City of Santa Clarita
- City of West Hollywood
- Gibson-Dunn
- Go2Zero Strategies



- J&J Consulting Group
- LA County Sanitation Districts
- Law Office of Gideon Kracov
- Meridian Consultants
- NASA Services
- SoCalGas
- University of Southern California
- Ware Disposal
- Watts Neighborhood Council