TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS
DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2004 CMR:398:04

SUBJECT: CITY OF PALO ALTO’S CURRENT WASTE REDUCTION ACTIVITIES

This is an informational report on the current waste reduction activities that are performed in the City of Palo Alto, compiled at Council’s request. No Council action is required.

BACKGROUND
At the City Council meeting on August 2, 2004, Council asked that staff prepare a Waste Reduction Strategic Plan for the City. Staff will return to Council in Spring 2005 to present an outline of the Plan. This report highlights current waste reduction activities within Palo Alto. Refer to the Recycling Program’s Annual Report for 2003 (Attachment A) which documents waste reduction, reuse, recycling and buy-recycled efforts and programs.

DISCUSSION
According to the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, waste reduction (or prevention) is at the top of the waste management hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle, and buy recycled content. Waste reduction is the preferred approach to waste management because waste that is never created does not have any associated waste management costs. Waste reduction can also conserve resources and energy and reduce land, air and water impacts. For true waste reduction to be effective, world-wide industrialized systems will have to require change to address design, extraction of resources, production and distribution. Few of these changes can be implemented at the local level; such changes require actions at a state or national level. However, factors than can reduce waste such as behavioral changes and consumption practices begin locally and are an effective strategy to reduce waste.

It is difficult to quantify the effectiveness or success of individual waste reduction programs because one is being asked to measure waste that has not been produced. Waste reduction programs are often quantified utilizing random sampling survey data, performing calculations, and then extrapolating those results to the community. Data and records for waste reduction programs are often limited.
According to the 1997 Palo Alto Waste Generation Study, Palo Alto businesses were surveyed on their waste generation and diversion practices. Most businesses responding to the survey reported they were practicing some type of waste reduction, including purchasing material/products with recycled content, purchasing durable materials, and purchasing reusable and recyclable materials.

The City of Palo Alto has achieved a high level of success in diverting waste from landfills. The following waste reduction activities are among those that have contributed to this success:

**Economic Incentives**
- Implemented a variable garbage rate utilizing volume-based pricing for residents and businesses.
- Increased disposal fees at the Palo Alto landfill to encourage waste reduction and recycling over disposal.
- Eliminated the Palo Alto Landfill Dump Pass Program, discontinuing free disposal to Palo Alto residents.

**City of Palo Alto Sustainability Plan:** Identification of indicators, setting goals, and annual review of plan to reduce the amount of solid waste generated within the City of Palo Alto. Results reported to City Council annually.

**Waste Audit Program:** Recycling Program staff provides on-site auditing services to Palo Alto businesses at no additional cost. The audit is designed to evaluate a business’ potential for waste reduction, reuse, recycling and buying-recycled, and to assist with program implementation.

**Programs/Activities/Events**
- **Junk Mail Reduction Program:** The program educates and provides residents, city employees, and businesses with tools to reduce unwanted mail. Residents can request a kit with pre-addressed post cards and phone numbers to call for reducing unwanted mail. Businesses can request a plan outlining how to implement a junk mail reduction program for their business.

- **Green Business Program:** The City of Palo Alto is a partner city of the Bay Area Green Business Program. Recycling Program staff work with businesses enrolled in the Program to audit and implement waste reduction programs.

- **Recycling Wizard:** The Recycling Wizard provides waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting education in assemblies at Palo Alto schools, grades K-5, and at community events to adults and children of all ages.

- **Home Composting Workshops:** In addition to composting, the waste reduction practice of grasscycling is taught at compost workshops. Grasscycling is the natural
recycling of grass by leaving clippings on the lawn when mowing, eliminating the disposal of the clippings.

- Community Events: Recycling Program staff organizes and attends community events and provides educational information on waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, and buying recycled content products. Events include: employee fairs at Palo Alto businesses, Earth Day, America Recycles Day, Community Services Department special events (Moonlight Run, May Fete Parade, Chili Cook-off, Festival of the Arts, Twilight Concert Series, Dog’s Best Friend Run, Halloween Haunt and Winterfest). Additionally, depending on the event, a children’s activity, using used materials, is often included in the outreach effort (e.g. newspaper hat making, “Recycle” Twister®, kaleidoscopes)

Campaigns
- Local: Periodic promotions are created to target a specific strategy to reduce waste in the community. In these campaigns, a tool is distributed to encourage a behavioral change. Recycling Program staff has targeted grocery stores in Palo Alto as locations to distribute reusable shopping bags to shoppers as they enter the store, eliminating the need for paper or plastic shopping bags. Staff has also targeted coffee shops within Palo Alto to distribute reusable commuter mugs to customers entering the coffee shop, eliminating the serving of the beverage in disposable cups.

- Countywide: Recycling staff collaborate with other public outreach educators on various waste reduction education campaigns. The campaigns include newspaper, movie theatre screen, and radio advertising. Past campaigns include:

  “Paperless…It’s Better for Business”- campaign promoting paper waste reduction in the business sector. The campaign promoted double-sided copies and electronic editing and distribution versus printed copies.

  “Give An Experience”- holiday campaign encouraging the gift of an “experience” (ex. a concert, museum membership, etc.) versus wrapped, packaged material goods that will ultimately become part of the waste stream.

- Regional: Recycling staff collaborates with the Bay Area Recycling Outreach Coalition (BAYROC) on regional waste reduction campaigns. Outreach includes newspaper, radio, printed shopping bag, and in-store advertising. Campaigns have included Shop Smart/Save Money and the Environment Too- Bay area wide educational awareness campaigns that promoted buying the largest size possible to reduce packaging waste and Junk Mail- Reduction of unwanted mail.

City Staff/Facility Waste Reduction
The following is a partial list of waste reduction practices employed by City facilities and staff:
Leasing equipment versus purchasing (i.e. copiers) to reduce equipment replacement
Copiers with scanning and duplexing features to reduce printed copies
City Council packet policy of double-sided copy requirement to reduce paper
Electronic mail, editing and distribution of documents to reduce paper
Providing reusable coffee mugs to employees to reduce disposables
Junk Mail Reduction Program in all departments to reduce unwanted mail
Sharing publications to reduce the number of subscriptions
Use of less toxic maintenance products
Mulching mowers and grasscycling practices in use in landscape maintenance
Electronic fingerprinting at Police Department
Fleet services systems that recirculate cleaning fluids to reduce the generation of hazardous waste
Conversion of less toxic methods in printing and maintenance services to reduce hazardous waste
City of Palo Alto Golf Course equipment, Landfill heavy equipment and PASCO collection vehicles are currently using B-20 biodiesel to reduce carbon dioxide, particulate matter emissions, hydrocarbon emissions, and carbon monoxide emissions.

The Recycling Program disseminates waste reduction information to the public primarily through printed materials. The methods used for distributing the waste prevention message include:

- Community Recycler Newsletter- distributed to all Palo Alto residents via the Palo Alto Weekly
- Business Recycler Newsletter- distributed to all Palo Alto businesses via US Mail
- Utility Bill Inserts and Announcements--distributed to all Palo Alto Utility Account Holders
- Newspaper Advertising--Palo Alto Weekly, Palo Alto Daily, San Jose Mercury News
- Recycling Program Brochures--available upon request, distributed at events/libraries/Civic Center, and Recycling Center kiosk
- Trash Busters--monthly waste-related segment on “City Beat” cable channel program
- Movie Theatre Screen Advertising--slides shown prior to showing of the feature film at Palo Alto Square Cinema and Century Theatres
- Chamber of Commerce publications--print ads in Palo Alto Chamber Map, Festival of the Arts Guide, Chamber of Commerce Newsletter
- Info Palo Alto--annual guide of the City distributed to all Palo Alto residents
- Presentations--Recycling Program staff deliver presentations, on request, to community and business groups, businesses, schools
• Recycling Center Tours--tours, on request, of the Palo Alto Recycling Center, composting and landfill facilities
• Recycling Program Web Site--information on City programs and links to other resources

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A: 2003 Annual Report

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