



For Immediate Release
Thursday, June 17, 2004

Contact: LCG Communications: 718.853.5568,
917.412.1025, info@lcgcommunications.com

**REACHING FOR ZERO:
THE CITIZENS PLAN FOR ZERO
WASTE IN NEW YORK CITY**

NYC Zero Waste Campaign Announces Release of Community-Based Plan for Zero Waste in NYC

The New York City Zero Waste Campaign, speaking for over 40 organizations, today released a community-based plan which outlines how the City of New York can begin to reduce the amount of waste it produces, freeing up more City funds for other uses and reducing the City's dependence on landfilling and incineration. The release of the report, at the offices of the Municipal Art Society, comes just before the City Council is to vote on a zero waste resolution. The Campaign also released an Executive Summary of the plan, which is included below. Your coverage is invited.

Executive Summary

With close to 8 million residents and over 12 million people during a workday when commuters are in the City, New York City produces enormous amounts of waste. New York has thousands of businesses, hundreds of institutions like museums, colleges and universities, and a large number of City, state and federal agencies. So when NYC generates waste it is not just at home, it is on the way to work or school, in public transportation, while visiting government agencies, while shopping at stores and supermarkets, or while at work or play at many of New York City's recreational facilities, such as parks, zoos, and sports venues.

The City generates 13,000 tons per day of trash and recyclables from the residential and institutional sectors and 9,900 tons per day of putrescible trash—food scraps, dirty paper, and recyclable containers—from the commercial sector. Commercial construction and demolition debris and fill material are generated in even larger quantities.

Since the announcement in 1997 that the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island, which had previously taken all the City's waste, would be closed, the City has maintained almost an exclusive focus exporting waste out of the City to distant landfills and incinerators as the solution to its waste management problems. The costs of waste export to the City are enormous and have risen 91% since 2000 so that they are now over \$100 a ton. Following the announcement of the Fresh Kills closure, the City Council and planning committees in the offices of each Borough President made extensive recommendations about how the City should handle its

waste. The recommendations, while differing on details, spoke to the need for the City to reduce or prevent waste, to recycle more, to create a larger reuse network and to compost organic waste. To a large extent these recommendations have been ignored.

Reaching for Zero: The Citizens Plan for Zero Waste seeks to alter New York City's current course. *Reaching for Zero* proposes a plan for reducing New York City's waste exports to very close to zero in 20 years, through a combination of waste prevention, reuse, recycling and composting. This is not only a plan that will reduce and ultimately eliminate the crushing expense of waste exports from the City, but it will also keep dollars spent on waste management circulating within the City's economy, creating industry and jobs here rather than shipping our dollars along with our waste to out of state locations.

The Central Elements of The Citizens Plan for Zero Waste in New York City

- Establish a zero waste goal for NYC in 2024.
- Strengthen the existing recycling program.
- Build or contract for the needed infrastructure.
- Establish viable ongoing waste prevention, reuse, and composting programs to address parts of the waste stream that bottle, can and plastic recycling cannot.
- Change our focus from export and disposal to encompass economic development: build industry and create jobs with materials that are recovered from our waste stream.
- Minimize environmental impacts and ensure that the burdens and benefits of the zero waste system are equitably distributed.
- Achieve the following milestones of increased waste diversion for each of three time periods: Near Term--30% diversion, Intermediate Term--50% diversion, and Long Term--100%, for all waste sectors- residential, institutional and commercial.

Recommendations to the City

This report recommends that the City Council and Mayor Bloomberg act immediately on the following priorities:

1. Pass the City Council Resolution #174 establishing a Zero Waste Goal for New York City.
2. Ensure that top level management in the City is committed to Zero Waste and to provide adequate funding for the necessary programs needed to reach our goals.
3. Ensure that key staff have adequate authority to be able to work across agencies and establish the necessary programs.
4. Require detailed Zero Waste Program Plans to be the major part of the 20 year Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan.
5. Think economic development, while investing in and developing zero waste programs.
6. Utilize all of the Pieces of Zero waste prevention, reuse, recycling and composting to achieve zero waste (or close to it) in 2024.
7. Ensure that all the necessary support programs are in place: Economic Development, Education, Enforcement, Transportation, Legislation and Regulation, Research and Data-gathering and Financing.