

## **BOULDER COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE**

In May 2005, Boulder County Commissioners identified three priority initiatives that each commissioner would oversee to improve county operations and effectiveness. They are:

- Improving public service excellence.
- Increasing interoffice communication and effectiveness.
- Ensuring environmental sustainability.

These initiatives have led to the formation of several task forces and committees to ensure progress in these priority areas.

The Sustainability Task Force has established a process by which guiding principles and goals, cost-benefit analyses, and detailed action plans are being developed for key environmental impacts such as energy use, waste generation, and transportation. The guiding principles are set forth for energy use and waste generation in the attached resolutions. These resolutions call for the development of detailed action plans, the analysis of existing practices and opportunities to achieve the goals identified, and an assessment of the plans' environmental, operational, community, and budgetary impacts.

### **A Resolution Adopting Zero Waste as a Guiding Principle and Supporting the Creation of a Zero Waste Plan**

WHEREAS, Article 30-11-107 of the Colorado Revised Statutes enables the Board of County Commissioners to make orders concerning the property of the County; and

WHEREAS, Article 30-28-115 of the Colorado Revised Statutes enable the Board of County Commissioners to promote the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the county; and

WHEREAS, 30-28-201 of the Colorado Revised Statutes enable the Board of County Commissioners to adopt ordinances and building codes; and

WHEREAS, Boulder County is committed to protecting and enhancing environmental quality in the county now and for future generations; and

WHEREAS, Boulder County Commissioners are focusing on environmental sustainability as one of three major Commissioner goals; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 300,000 tons of waste is generated in Boulder County each year by residents, businesses, and institutions, and approximately 75% of this amount is sent for landfill disposal; and

WHEREAS, the placement of materials in landfills can cause damage to human health, wastes natural resources, and wrongly transfers liabilities to future generations; and

WHEREAS, waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting are material management options that conserve resources while reducing environmental impacts; and

WHEREAS, increased recycling and composting will increase the cost-efficiency of local, publicly-supported recycling facilities and programs; and

WHEREAS, increased recycling saves energy, water, natural resources, reduces air and water pollution, reduces the damage caused by extracting resources from the environment, and reduces the need for landfill facilities; and

WHEREAS, consumers are currently forced to assume the high financial cost of collecting, recycling, and disposing of materials; and

WHEREAS, tax subsidies for waste and virgin materials send the wrong economic signals to both consumers and producers; and

WHEREAS, a resource recovery-based economy will sustain, on a per-ton basis, up to ten times more jobs than landfilling or incineration, and these jobs will be more productive and meaningful; and

WHEREAS, increasingly, U.S. and international governments and organizations are adopting the policy that the financial responsibility of collecting, recycling, and disposing of materials belongs with producers; and

WHEREAS, producers should design products to ensure that they can be safely recycled back into the marketplace or nature; and

WHEREAS, most types of waste streams can be eliminated through across-the-board minimum recycling content laws, the use of non-toxic alternatives in product design, and local composting facilities; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that some presently non-recyclable materials are necessary for public health and national security, and

WHEREAS, recognizing that voluntary recycling goals have not, and in all probability cannot, achieve waste elimination; and

WHEREAS, with the understanding that government is ultimately responsible for leading by example and establishing criteria needed to eliminate waste, so that manufacturers produce and businesses sell materials that can be safely recycled or composted; and

WHEREAS the Zero Waste philosophy accepts that the earth's ability to support life is finite and that natural resources must be used in the most efficient and sustainable way possible; and

WHEREAS, the guiding principles of Zero Waste are: managing resources instead of waste; conserving natural resources through waste prevention and recycling; turning discarded resources into jobs and new products instead of trash; promoting products and materials that are durable and recyclable; and discouraging products and materials that can only become trash after their use.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO:**

The Boulder County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) hereby adopts Zero Waste as a guiding principal for all county operations and for outreach and actions within the community. BOCC hereby directs staff to develop a Zero Waste Plan for Boulder County.

The Zero Waste Plan will be completed by December 2006, and will address Boulder County, "the organization," and Boulder County, "the community and geographic area." Boulder County is committed to promoting, facilitating, and modeling Zero Waste in the community. The Plan will be designed to achieve the initial goal of: increasing waste diversion for Boulder County government and for the county as a whole, to 50% or better by the year 2010. The ultimate goal of Boulder County's Zero Waste Plan is to eliminate waste (i.e. achieve Zero Waste or "darn near") by 2025.

The Plan will assess the county's current levels of resource use and wastage; identify objectives; and recommend short-, medium-, and long-term actions to reach these goals. The Plan will, within budget constraints, seek to effectively, efficiently, and quickly address the issues identified as well as allow for a public process to address recommended actions.

- A. BOCC hereby directs staff to consider, for inclusion in the action plan, green purchasing and waste reduction measures targeting county facilities. The BOCC directs staff to consider the costs and costs savings associated with these actions; their impact on waste reduction and environmental purchasing practices; their educational value to the community; their operational feasibility; and the

appropriate phasing of such actions. Actions to be considered include, but are not limited to:

1. Standardizing county purchasing practices to reduce cost, reduce unwanted surplus items, and increase operational and delivery efficiencies.
  2. Revising the county Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) policy to clarify the county's intent to purchase environmentally friendly products whenever and wherever fiscally possible.
  3. Changing procurement instructions to vendors requiring that bids and proposals do not waste paper or reduce paper use and plastic bindings or other packaging.
  4. Using "take back" language in procurement documents to require that equipment suppliers take back old equipment for reuse or recycling.
  5. Encouraging utilization of re-useable packaging.
  6. Making waste reduction and diversion a priority through policies, improving in-house equipment and collection services, and urging employees to conserve energy and save money.
  7. Quantifying the county's mass balance of inputs (products and services) to outputs (solid wastes, hazardous wastes, recyclables, compostables).
  8. Determining current waste diversion levels for county government and countywide.
  9. Assessing construction practices and facility operation and maintenance practices for opportunities to reduce the quantity and toxicity of wastes produced and to increase diversion.
  10. Assessing waste reduction opportunities at county meetings and events through the use of durable, recyclable, and compostable food service items.
  11. Including in the action plan a requirement for an annual report to the BOCC that evaluates waste reduction efforts, progress in achieving Zero Waste and other efforts as identified in the plan.
- B. BOCC hereby declares its intent to pursue green purchasing and Zero Waste countywide through education, regulatory measures, and public policy. The county will consider the impact of these measures on residents, businesses, and communities, and will conduct inclusive public processes incorporating affected parties. Measures to be considered include, but are not limited to:
1. Requiring volume-based residential trash collection and recycling in unincorporated Boulder County and determining opportunities for municipalities and the county to work together to pursue this countywide.
  2. Requiring increased diversion of organic waste streams generated in unincorporated Boulder County for beneficial reuse (as wood mulch) or composting into soil amendments and other products; supporting the efforts of public, private, and nonprofit entities in providing infrastructure for organics recovery.

3. Supporting and promoting increased traditional and non-traditional recycling through modification of the recycling center to accept and process single stream materials, education and outreach, and support of facilities providing supplementary recycling opportunities.
  4. Supporting increased diversion of construction and demolition waste streams.
  5. Requiring new development to provide adequate indoor and outdoor space for recycling and other waste diversion containers.
  6. Instigating and supporting legislation at the state and local level that supports Zero Waste.
  7. Seeking public and private partnerships to leverage limited public resources to accomplish our Zero Waste goals.
  8. Incorporating these principles into updates of the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan.
- C. BOCC hereby directs members of the Sustainability Task Force to draft an action plan as outlined in this document, recommend actions for consideration in the upcoming budget cycle, and identify additional activities that merit consideration.

This resolution shall become effective upon adoption.