

Introduction

A portion of the 60,000 plastic bags used in the US every 5 seconds.



Partial zoom.



Detail.



Click on thumbnail to view larger image.
Click on larger image to close.

CHRIS JORDAN

Running the Numbers
An American Self-Portrait

Plastic Bags, 2007
60"x72"

Olympia's Waste ReSources utility (Utility) is responsible for ensuring that ALL the City's waste is properly managed, and is directly responsible for providing collection services for residential and commercial garbage, residential recyclables and residential yard debris. Private companies collect commercial recyclables, and Olympians may also self-haul waste to Thurston County's Waste and Recovery Center (WARC). This Plan will guide the Utility over the next six years in moving towards the City's ultimate vision of "Zero Waste."

The Plan has been prepared by Waste ReSources staff, with direction from the City Council's Land Use and Environmental Committee and input from the citizens' Utility Advisory Committee (UAC). Operations and maintenance staff and many citizens also contributed their ideas and suggestions.

To ensure adequate funding, a financial analysis was undertaken in tandem with the Plan. The analysis carefully evaluated the Utility's current funding sources and the financial implications of implementing the Plan.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In developing this Plan, Waste ReSources has sought public input in a variety of ways: focus groups, an open house, a meeting with neighborhood association presidents, a utility bill insert, online posting of the Draft Plan and a public hearing.

- **Focus groups.** In the summer and fall of 2006, several focus groups were organized to gather feedback and ideas for the Plan and future programs. Facilitated by Jones & Stokes, Inc., these groups represented groceries and restaurants, offices and retail companies, and the construction industry. They were chosen because the three largest components of the waste stream are potentially recyclable or compostable food debris, paper and construction debris.

Focus group participants generally supported Olympia's Zero Waste initiative and gave valuable suggestions for developing new services responsive to their needs, including potential obstacles and opportunities. See **Appendix 1** for a summary of the focus group sessions.

- **Open house.** At the City's open house on September 28, 2006, about 15 Olympia residents joined a Zero Waste session. After hearing a brief presentation about Olympia's waste generation, they provided valuable feedback about the social, environmental and economic opportunities and hurdles of waste reduction. This group of Olympians understood the urgency of waste reduction and appeared ready for change.

- **Neighborhood associations.** Waste ReSources staff met with neighborhood association presidents, and presented the Zero Waste vision and what it might mean to Olympians at several association meetings.
- **Utility bill insert.** Information was distributed to all customers in a utility bill insert to solicit early comment and participation in the planning process.
- **Online access.** To provide an opportunity for public comment, the Draft Plan was published online.
- **Public hearing.** Prior to Plan adoption, City Council held a public hearing on October 23, 2007.

ONGOING PLAN REVIEW

Strategies and programs can be revised based on evaluation of effectiveness.

Waste ReSources will manage the programs described in this Plan following the principles of adaptive management, which require routine review of effectiveness and course correction as needed. Bi-annual evaluations of program performance will be provided to the Olympia community and elected officials. This process will provide an opportunity to consider whether to revise strategies or programs.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

Part 1 provides the context and background information for the 2008-2013 Plan.

Chapter 1 defines Zero Waste, the strategic issues confronting the City in managing waste, the economic and environmental benefits of moving toward Zero Waste, and the State and City commitment to this approach. **Chapter 2** outlines trends in Olympia's population, employment and waste generation. **Chapter 3** gives the legal and policy framework for waste management. **Chapter 4** describes services and facilities currently provided by Thurston County, Olympia and private companies. **Chapter 5** reviews how Waste ReSources is organized and how City government "walks its talk" in its own waste reduction, reuse and recycling policies and practices. Each of these background chapters identifies challenges and opportunities that guided preparation of the Plan.

Part 2 presents the Plan goals, strategies, planned actions and financing. **Chapter 6** gives the City's mandate for the Plan, describing how it implements Olympia's vision of sustainable community and the missions of the Public Works Department and Waste ReSources. It also reviews the process of developing Plan recommendations. **Chapter 7** and **Chapter 8** describe the options considered and planned for waste reduction, reuse and increased diversion of recyclables and compostables. **Chapter 9** outlines planned actions for improving effectiveness and efficiency.

Chapter 10 describes the Utility's funding sources, expenses, cost of program implementation, anticipated revenue requirements and rate impacts.