

## **WASTE PREVENTION: COST EFFECTIVE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND**

The most cost-effective way to deal with garbage is to produce as little as possible to begin with. Waste that never exists, obviously, costs nothing to dispose of and does not harm the environment. The City's policy should be to prevent the production of waste to the greatest extent possible and to promote reuse and composting.

Waste prevention, reuse and composting would save the City millions of dollars in avoided waste collection and management costs. Here are just a few suggestions to achieve a goal of 10-20% waste prevention (and much more could be done).

- Target organic residential waste (20% of the waste stream), through:
  - "Leave it on the lawn" programs for grass clippings (modeled after the many successful programs elsewhere); and
  - Home composting: Expand the successful work of the Botanical Gardens to promote onsite composting (food and yard waste) and organic waste prevention;
- Reduce unwanted direct mail and catalogs ("junk mail"); expand the Materials for the Arts exchange program citywide and allow all residents, institutions and businesses to participate
- Target bulk items such as computers, bicycles, and furniture (15% of the waste stream): (1) Work with businesses and communities to develop community-based private repair/reuse businesses; (2) expand, rather than de-fund, the award-winning Waste Match program; (3) expand the successful "Recycle-a-Bicycle" program for city students to repair computers, furniture and other durable products;.
- Promote business waste audits and durable/multi-use products; according to the Fresh Kills Task Force report, the Baxter Health Care Corp. eliminated 6.5% or 11.6 million pounds of packaging by implementing waste audit recommendations, saving over \$5.9 million;
- Target agency/institutional waste: (1) implement the 1996 Mayoral Directive in Waste Prevention for City Agencies (a DOS consultant reported that waste prevention could save the City millions of dollars); (2) Establish waste prevention incentives for institutions that get free collection from the City; (3) Establish a modern computer tracking system/website for better redistribution of agencies' reusable equipment and supplies; (4) collect returnable items in City waste to redeem deposits, such as pallets (\$8) and drums (\$20)
- "Go national" with a campaign to stop waste -- target national businesses to reduce wasteful packaging (also mixed media packaging that makes recycling difficult), and production of nondurable goods that inevitably end up in the municipal waste stream;
- Use the City's lobbying resources to press for State laws to:
  - Expand New York's highly successful bottle bill to include non-carbonated beverages (DOS's 2000 SAIC report found that states with bottle bills recycle 80% of their plastic soda bottles while states without it recycle only 10-20% of theirs); and,
  - Prevent packaging waste.