

**Waste Working Group**  
**Notes from Kick-Off Meeting**  
**November 29, 2011**

- The participants introduced themselves and described their interests related to waste.
  
- The following topics emerged as interest areas that will be further explored in future meetings:
  - Source reduction
  - Education
  - Collection
  - Recovery, including food recovery
  - What to do with the things you don't need anymore, but still have a useful life
  - Overlap with energy work group—waste is an untapped source of energy
  - Overlap with transportation—how do we transport waste
  - Product stewardship, industry take-back
  
- Hallie Clemm from the Department of Public Works gave a brief overview of solid waste management in the District:
  - There are no disposal facilities in DC
  - DC has no active landfills
  - We have 2 municipal transfer stations, 2 private sector transfer stations, and one construction and demolition (C&D) recycling facility in DC
  - 1 million tons/year of waste is collected each year
    - 25% is residential waste collected by the Department of Public Works (DPW)
    - 75% is generated by buildings and commercial enterprises (this includes the waste from some but not all federal government facilities; only some federal agencies have their waste managed in town)
  - DPW provides curbside collection and recycling
  - DPW collects leaves during the Fall; the leaves are collected for composting outside of DC
  - There is a challenge with getting and maintaining compliance—how do you get people to change behavior?
  - How do you package waste, at the collection point, for transport?
  - Hallie will serve as the “voice of operations” in the working group.
  - Concept of “flow control”: when a jurisdiction can ensure that all the waste generated in the city is disposed of within the city boundaries. We don't have that here in DC.
  
- The participants were asked to define what “sustainability” means to them. Responses included:
  - It means thinking about where is it going, and where did it come from? What is the life-cycle? What is the chain of handling from me forward? Waste has much more impact than I see.
  - Keeping things going, keeping things going well, developing habits.

- How do I take products that are traditionally seen as waste, and transform them into opportunities to create jobs?
  - The three aspects of sustainability are the economy, environment, and equity (image from the PowerPoint slide presented by Harriet Tregoning in the general session)
  - Don't push the harm around; consider the health impacts of what you do.
  - Use resources in a way that doesn't compromise how future generations will use resources.
  - If you're driving a car the wrong way, slowing down won't take you the right way (Bill McDonnough quote). We need to be crossing the line and having a positive impact, instead of having less of a negative impact.
- Hallie Clemm provided an overview of what will happen at the next meeting, and participants provided feedback on the suggested meeting structure and methods for sharing information among participants:
    - The next meeting will focus on vision and goals. Will come up with goals and ideas and group them into categories. Can submit ideas prior to the meeting as well.
    - Suggestion of breaking off into thematic sub-groups to hash out goals—either having separate meetings for the sub-groups, or starting the meeting together and then having break-out tables during the meeting.
    - Don't want to get into siloed discussions; don't want to lose the richness of the discussion that is gained by having everyone participate together.
    - There was a suggestion for enabling a blog posting function on the sustainable.dc.gov website to allow people to post their ideas and links to documents.
    - There was a suggestion to create a dedicated email address for the waste working group that people can send ideas to.
    - There was a suggestion to include topic headings on email subject lines to help us organize emails.
- Hallie Clemm discussed the need to think about short, medium, and long-term goals—it's important to thinking about the 3 planning processes. Need to think about immediate goals and steps that we can do. She provided examples of short-term goals, including swapping out the size of collection containers (giving people larger recycling containers and smaller trash containers) and charging people more for their second trash container.
    - A participant inquired about what are the timeframes we are talking about? Hallie Clemm suggested the following timeframes as guidelines.
      - Short-term: 2012-2015?
      - Medium-term: 2015-2020?
      - Long-term: beyond 2020
- A participant inquired whether the group has already defined the waste that we are talking about? Responses included:

- How we manage the waste generated in the city, including household hazardous waste, construction and demolition waste, waste from households, businesses, and multi-family units
- Need to address e-waste, batteries, lightbulbs
- The meeting concluded with a wide-ranging discussion of ideas and best practices to be further explored in upcoming meetings:
  - Need to balance regulation and education, the carrot and the stick.
  - Need to focus on both policy and how to change behavior
  - Ward 8 example: Summer youth employees ages 18 to 21 were taught sustainability and energy topics through the use of current events. This experience showed that young people can “get it”, and can teach others. Need to connect the dots, to train people from the communities who can then reach out to people in the communities. There is a career path. Have to educate and re-educate the front line, train the trainers.
  - How do we get advocates in the school system to educate about recycling.
  - DPW did a waste sort that shows what part of the waste stream is still recyclable; the study will be posted on [sustainable.dc.gov](http://sustainable.dc.gov)
  - Best practices from other jurisdictions will be posted on the [sustainable.dc.gov](http://sustainable.dc.gov) website, and will be sent via email to the working group members.
  - Need to come up with audacious ideas.
  - There are 5-6 zero waste plans from other cities that can be shared with the group
  - Part of being innovative means there won't be examples of what you're trying to do. Can't be afraid of being the first to try something. Don't be afraid to be out in front. It's important to take ideas that lead.

**The next waste working group meeting will be held on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 6pm in the Reeves Center (2000 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW), 8<sup>th</sup> floor break room.**