

City of Middletown Promotes “Zero Waste”

“Zero Waste” is a new way of looking at recycling. It considers recycling but goes beyond the traditional recycling methods. Instead of viewing materials as a waste in need of disposal, it recognizes waste materials as valuable resources and opportunities.

According to the [Zero Waste International Alliance](#) Zero Waste is defined as “Businesses and communities that achieve over 90% diversion of waste from landfills and incinerators...”

The goals for a Zero Waste Municipality include:

- Expanding recycling programs
- Increasing participation in those programs
- Improving regional recycling and composting operations
- Encouraging innovative and effective methods of waste reduction
- Developing incentives to move public and private entities towards Zero Waste
- Educating to encourage more positive behavior toward green purchasing, resource conservation and recycling.

In the Fall of 2011, the City of Middletown was chosen to participate in an EPA in a Zero Waste Pilot Program. Middletown is the only community in New England participating. Nineteen municipalities were chosen nationwide.

The program is designed to offer technical assistance to local communities to encourage them to develop Zero Waste programs and Initiatives. Since the implementation of the EPA program, the City of Middletown has achieved the following:

Outreach and Education

- Representatives from EPA have visited with the Middletown Resource Recycling Committee to introduce them to the Zero Waste concept and determine if members wanted to lead the City in such a direction.
- The City held an information meeting on Oct. 5 to introduce the idea of Zero Waste to the community. Representatives from EPA, DEEP and the Middletown Resource Recycling Advisory Council presented. Representatives from churches, non profit organizations, government, the mayor’s office and universities participated.
- The Recycling Coordinator has begun talking about Zero Waste in schools and at public events.

Greening City Government

- A waste audit was conducted by volunteers on July 16, 2011 at the Municipal Building. EPA drafted a report and offered suggestions for policy changes and actions to be taken.

Future Activities

- The City is working towards a more sustainable future. Future Zero Waste activities include:
- 2012 Green Business Initiative – The city will be working with certain sectors of the business and institutional community to help them achieve zero waste.
- Commercial Waste Audit – The Recycling Committee is planning a 2nd waste audit in a local administrative business.
- Community Pledge Drive – Residents will be able to take a Pledge in support of Zero Waste.
- City Resolution – the Recycling Committee will initiate and hopefully pass a “Zero Waste” Resolution through the Common Council.
- Continuing Efforts – the City will continue its efforts towards Zero Waste within its own buildings.
- Education Efforts – The City will host a 2nd community meeting in March and continue with its outreach efforts at public events. Zero Waste has to be community effort with many stakeholders participating.

If you are interested in joining the Zero Waste Efforts, contact the City Recycling Coordinator at 860-344-3526 or kim.orourke@middletownct.gov.