

What is Zero Waste?

Zero Waste derives from applying the principle of sustainability* to redefine the concept of “waste” in our society. The presumption that waste is a natural by-product of our culture and economic system, that is handled by end-of-the-pipeline waste management activities, programs, or technologies, is replaced with the presumption that:

- Products are designed and used so that they can be and are repaired, reused, or recycled
- Any output during the production, transportation, use, and disposition of these products that is destined for land, sea or air is not a threat to planetary, animal, or plant health

Core Zero Waste principles, as applied to discarded materials that may become municipal solid waste, are:

- Improving 'downstream' reuse/recycling of end-of-life products and materials to ensure their highest and best use
- Pursuing 'upstream' re-design strategies to reduce the volume and toxicity of discarded products and materials, and promote low-impact or reduced consumption lifestyles
- Fostering and supporting use of discarded products and materials to stimulate and drive local economic and workforce development

For more information on Zero Waste, goto:

<http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste/index.html>

<http://www.ecocycle.org/ZeroWaste/index.cfm>

* Sustainability was put on the public policy agenda in 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development formulated “sustainable development” as a public policy goal, defining it as development that *meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. An alternative description of sustainability is: *Diverse and rewarding lifestyles that many would want to emulate, and if they did, the earth’s living things (e.g., plant, animals) and natural systems that we rely on to provide basic ecological services (e.g. clean air and water) would flourish, increasingly, each generation.*