Landfilling is Not a Sustainable Planning Approach

Landfills are the largest source of human-caused methane, a greenhouse gas 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

The EPA admits all landfill liners will eventually leak and their toxic leachate, or garbage juice, can seep into and contaminate soil and groundwater supplies. Roughly 20% of the sites on the Superfund list (the nation's most hazardous sites) are solid waste landfills, including Marshall Landfill in Boulder County.

What happens to recyclables?

» Glass bottles become new glass bottles.

» Aluminum cans are turned back into aluminum cans, and can be recycled almost indefinitely.

• Steel cans are used in other steel products such as car parts and construction materials, and can also be recycled over and over again.

» Plastic bottles are recycled into carpet, clothing, auto parts, and new bottles.

» Paper is recycled into new paper. Some grades of paper can be recycled up to seven times.

Did you know…

» nearly 90% of what we throw away could potentially be recovered through reuse, recycling or composting.

» more Americans recycle than vote.

» there are roughly 9,000 curbside recycling programs and 12,000 drop-off centers across the country.

» some communities currently recycle and compost more than 60% of their waste.

Sources
» City of Fort Collins, 2006. "Why Recycling Matters." http://fcgov.com/recycling/why_recycle.php
» Container Recycling Institute, 2002. "Trashed Cans: The Global Environmental Impacts of Aluminum Can Wasting in the U.S." http://www.container-recycling.org/alum_rates.htm.
» Deneen, S., 2006. "Recycling Has Come a Long Way." http://www.sustainablebusiness.com/features/feature_template.cfm?ID=1338
» Eco-Cycle. 2006. www.ecocycle.org.
» EPA, 2005. "Energy Impacts of Waste Management." http://yosemite.epa.gov/OAR/globalwarming.nsf/content/ActionsWasteToolsReports.html
» ILSR, 2005. "Recycling Means Business." http://www.ilsr.org/recycling/recyclingmeansbusiness.html
» Lee, Dr. G. Fred, 2004. "Flawed Technology of Subtitle D Landfilling of Municipal Solid Waste." www.gfredlee.com
» MIT Dept. of Facilities. 2006. "Environmental Initiatives." http://web.mit.edu/facilities/environmental/recyc-facts.html
» Morris, J. 2004. "Comparative LCAs for Curbside Recycling Versus Either Landfilling or Incineration with Energy Recovery." International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment.

eco·cycle
Working to Build Zero Waste Communities
303.444.6634 • www.ecocycle.org

Why Recycle?

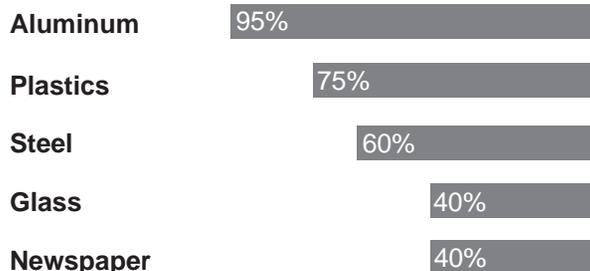The facts on why recycling makes sense for you and your community.

Why recycle?

Recycling is a daily activity for more than 100 million Americans and a great way to protect our environment and stimulate our economy. Recycling saves resources, prevents pollution, supports public health, and creates jobs. It saves money, avoids landfills, and best of all, it's easy.

To understand the value of recycling, we must look at the entire lifecycle of a product — from the extraction and processing of raw materials, to the manufacture of the product, to its final disposal. Recycling creates a closed-loop system where unwanted products are returned back to manufacturers for use in new products. This prevents the pollution and destruction that occurs when virgin materials –like trees and precious metals– are extracted from the earth.

Recycling Saves Energy

By recycling about 30% of our waste every year, Americans save the equivalent of 11.9 billion gallons of gasoline and reduce the greenhouse gas equivalent of taking 25 million cars off the road.

Percentage of energy saved by recycling compared with raw materials usage

Material	Percentage
Aluminum	95%
Plastics	75%
Steel	60%
Glass	40%
Newspaper	40%

Source: "Environmental Benefits of Recycling," National Recycling Coalition, 2005

Recycling Prevents Pollution

When recycled materials are used in place of virgin materials during manufacturing, we avoid the environmental damage caused by mining for metals, drilling for petroleum, and harvesting trees.

» Producing recycled white paper creates 74% less air pollution and 35% less water pollution than producing paper from virgin fibers.

» Using recycled cans instead of extracting ore to make aluminum cans produces 95% less air pollution and 97% less water pollution.

» Recycling and remanufacturing are 194 times more effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions than landfilling and virgin manufacturing.

Recycling Creates Jobs

For every one job at a landfill, there are ten jobs in recycling processing and 25 jobs in recycling-based manufacturing. The recycling industry employs more workers than the auto industry.

Process	Jobs created (per 10,000 tons per year)
Landfilling	☻
Recycling processing	☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻
Recycling-based manufacturing	☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻ ☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻ ☻☻☻☻☻

Recycling Saves Money

Selling recyclable materials offsets the extra costs of collecting and processing recyclables, making recycling the cheaper option for the community.

	Trash	Recycling
Collection	$60/ton	**$70/ton**
Landfill fees	$20/ton	—
Processing at recycling facility	—	**$45/ton**
Sale of material	—	**($90/ton)**
NET COST	$80/ton	**$25/ton**

Plus, all the environmental benefits of recycling, such as reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, have economic value as well— more than $55 per ton compared to landfilling.