



## LOCAL SELF-RELIANCE

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<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Modern-Homesteading/1977-09-01/Collect-and-Recycle-Solid-Waste.aspx>

*The Mother Earth News editors*

*For the past several years, the good folks at the Institute for Local SelfReliance in Washington, D.C. have worked to help urban residents gain greater control over their lives through the use of low-technology, decentralist tools and concepts. We strongly believe that more people (city dwellers and country folk alike) should be exposed to the Institute's efforts ... which is why we're now making this "what's happening where" report by ILLSR staffers a regular MOTHER feature.-The Editors.*

The solid waste crisis in America is real . . . make no mistake. In a recent survey of mayors, solid waste disposal surfaced as the Number One municipal headache.

One reason is sheer cost: Garbage collection and disposal constitutes the single largest expenditure in most local budgets. Another (perhaps even greater) cause for concern, however, is simply the fact that, increasingly, there are fewer and fewer places to put trash once it's been collected. Experts predict that in two years' time, fully half our cities will run out of landfill area.

High-technology resource recovery plants-using complicated and expensive machinery-were supposed to have solved the country's wastedisposal problem by now . . . but hightech solutions have already failed in Baltimore and Nashville and have been canceled in Seattle and St. Louis. Many city officials are at a loss for what to do: They see no answer in sight.

Perfectly viable solid waste collection and recycling systems have been established, however, in over 100 cities and towns across the U.S. These systems-which are based on the presorting of recyclables and on curbside collection-not only reduce solid waste disposal costs, but are environmentally sound and maintain jobs threatened by high-technology solutions. Publicly owned, privately owned, subsidized, or profitmaking, these innovative programs point the way toward permanent relief of the country's municipal waste disposal problem.

In Santa Barbara, California, a recycling program is responsible for collecting half of the 110 tons of newsprint delivered to the city (i.e., discarded by residents) each week. Although it began with a number of convenient drop-off sites, the program has expanded to include an experimental pickup system in the city's

flat areas. Now more than 170 different participating organizations make some money for themselves by collecting recyclable paper and delivering it to the city's recycling center. (For more information, contact the Community Environmental Council, 109 E. De La Guerra, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93101.)

Solid waste planners in Hillsborough County, Florida have gone one step further and prepared a county wide recycling strategy. At present, workers sort recyclables by hand from the county landfill. Soon, however, color-coded plastic bags will be given to each household so that glass, paper, and metals can be presorted before the garbage is collected and taken to the landfill. (The person to get in touch with here is Len Jeoris, Solid Waste Control Department, Hillsborough County, P.O. Box 1110, Tampa, Fla. 33601.)

A third program that promises both to alleviate garbage problems and improve community life is that of Residents' Recycling, Inc., a recycling operation associated with four public housing projects in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Residents' Recycling a non-profit corporation owned by the tenant councils of the four projects-not only collects and recycles aluminum, glass, and paper, but also provides after-school employment (at \$2.30/hour) for thirty young workers.

Resident participation at the four Cambridge housing projects averages about 80%. (At one project Lincoln Way it's a remarkable 99%.) Since July 1976, when the recycling program began, the volume of wastes going to the city has been cut in half. When you consider that the city figures its trash removal cost at \$69.50 per ton, it's apparent that Residents' Recycling, Inc., is saving the city a tidy sum. (Write: Residents' Recycling, Inc., 56 Washington Elms, Apt. 562, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.)

As these examples clearly show, low-technology programs for the collection and recycling of solid wastes represent a viable option . . . if only city dwellers (and municipal officials) will avail themselves of it.

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