



## Green Event Guidelines

### Study: Los Altos Community Picnic 2008/2009

In 2008, Los Altos Community Picnic organizers focused on one aspect of sustainability for the event: waste diversion. To accomplish this goal, GreenTown Los Altos set up three-bin stations to separate compost and recycling from the trash. GreenTown volunteers successfully diverted 75% of the waste generated at the 2008 event to composting and recycling facilities and away from the landfill.

In 2009, Los Altos Community Picnic organizers set a goal to green all areas of the event, working with GreenTown Los Altos and using the Greening Your Event tips outlined below. In addition to establishing new green goals, with help of GreenTown Los Altos volunteers, 76 percent of event waste was diverted from the landfill

Working together, we can benefit the environment, save money, and improve the overall efficiency and sustainability of every event. Follow the guidelines below to plan your own successful green event.

### Greening Your Event

Planning ahead is the most effective tool to making events environmentally friendly. Encourage, educate, and involve your committee members as you plan how to green your event. Decide on the green goals for your event, so that you can enlist vendors to help you achieve your goals and so that volunteers understand the objectives. Publicize your green goals before and during the event to raise awareness of the environment. Add to the lists below. Be creative!

#### Reduce

- Send memos and information electronically to save paper.
- Use large, easy-to-read display boards and signs instead of distributing multiple copies of maps.
- Buy picnic items with the least amount of packaging to reduce trash.
- Use the smallest size napkins to reduce paper use.

#### Reuse

- Choose containers that can be reused instead of thrown away.
- Use plastic tablecloths that wipe clean and are re-usable.
- Use cloth rags, sponges, and soap and water for cleaning instead of paper towels and heavy-duty chemical cleaners.

#### Recycle

- Buy picnic products made of recycled materials.
- Use compostable or biodegradable food service ware.
- Use recycling stations to separate your compostable and recyclable food and beverage containers from your trash.

### Transportation

Most people come by car. Encourage other options, below, for getting to the event. Collect data, if possible, on how many attendees use each of these options. For example, ask your volunteers to track the number of bicycles that park in a bicycle parking area.

- Walk.
- Carpool (3 or more riders per car): Restrict one or two rows of the parking lot for carpool parking only.

- **Bike:** Provide a secure bike and helmet storage area staffed with volunteers. Check and publicize the best bike routes from different directions to the event.
- **Bus:** Check and publicize bus routes to the event.

### **Add Convenience for Attendees and Vendors**

- Create a carpool drop-off spot, using volunteers to help with seniors/wheelchairs/walkers or equipment for younger children (strollers, playpens.)
- Provide golf carts to help vendors get their booth materials to assigned spaces in order to reduce traffic congestion near the venue.
- Consider offering raffle prizes for people using a green transportation option.

### **Water**

- Encourage people to bring their own refillable water bottles to the event.
- Encourage people to drink tap water by including drinking fountains on the site map.
- Display a poster over each drinking fountain to educate attendees about the advantages, including dollars saved, of drinking tap water. Include statistics on the problems created by bottled water (60 million plastic water bottles per day consumed in U.S. according to container-recycling.org.)
- Find a sponsor or company to provide a water dispenser so people can help themselves or refill their reusable bottles. If free water is available, encourage drink vendors not to sell bottled water.
- Offer paper cups, perhaps in a variety of sizes. Encourage people to pour only as much water as they need (to save water) and put used cups in the compostables bin.

### **Waste**

#### **Plan Ahead**

- Choose a garbage company and vendors who are willing to work with you to achieve your green goals.
- Order 3-bin recycling stations by ClearStream (color coded frames and lids for trash, recycling, and compost) from your waste contractor as soon as the event date is confirmed.
- Determine all types of waste likely to be generated at the event to ensure its proper disposal. For example, the ice cream vendor empties many 5-gallon cardboard/metal tubs (the cardboard can be composted, and the metal may be removed and recycled.)
- Do a walk-through of the event venue to plot on the event map the location of garbage cans, portable restrooms, and a staging area for full garbage bags and flattened cardboard boxes.
- Order portable restrooms and hand-washing stations if needed. Provide a compostable bin for used paper towels.
- Provide a bucket at each recycling station so beverage containers can be emptied before they are put in the recycling bin. Encourage bin volunteers to pour used liquids on a plant rather than down the drain.
- Find out what waste was collected the prior year and aim for a reduction.

#### **Educate During the Event**

- Schedule a coordinator for each shift to train bin monitors how to help event participants deposit recyclables, compostables, and trash in the correct bins and where to stage full garbage bags and flattened cardboard.
- Prepare signs for each bin and tape actual samples from the event of the items that will go in each bin.
- Take photos showing bin setup on event day for next year's chairperson.
- Ask bin monitors to query event participants if this system made recycling easy for them.

## **After the Event**

- Assign volunteers to inspect trash; some separating and sorting may be needed to pull recyclables and compostables out of the trash bags.
- Count, weigh, and tally the bags of each type collected from the three-bin stations. After pickup, call the waste contractor for tonnage.
- Take photos for a visual record of how many bags of each type were collected.
- Publish waste-reduction results in the local newspaper.

## **Publicity & Printing**

### **Plan Ahead**

- Brainstorm ways to reduce the amount of paper and printed materials generated for the event, for example, use email, reduce the quantity and/or size of flyers (use a half-page), print double-sided.
- Buy and use recycled paper with the highest percentage of post-consumer waste.
- Provide clearly labeled containers at exits to collect printed materials that can be reused next year or recycled.
- Provide suggestions to the public for how to pack their own zero-waste food.
- Decide in advance how you will measure the green actions at this event. Include comparisons with prior years and quantify, if possible.

### **Partner with a “Green” Printer**

- Use paper with the highest percentage of post-consumer waste possible.
- Use soy or veggie-based inks.
- Include “recycle this page,” “printed with soy ink,” or similar messages as appropriate.

### **Educate**

- Use large poster displays of event schedule and map rather than printing individual copies for each attendee.
- Find out what each committee is doing to green the event and write those ideas into public service reminders to be announced over the public address system during the event. For example, prepare waste-related announcements to encourage waste reduction and recycling.
- Include green event actions in all pre-event publicity.

### **After the Event**

- Write notes and tips for the next chairperson, including what worked and what didn't.

## **Food & Beverage Vendors**

- Review any city/county health regulations that impact vendors and inform them that they must comply to these regulations prior to serving food on event day.
- Before inviting any vendors, write up the regulations/permits relating to food/beverages for the event (for example, homemade items not allowed, no alcohol allowed.)
- Create or revise an application form that includes “green” questions, suggestions, and requirements regarding vendor food purchases, preparation, and waste created.
- Use vendors/caterers who will promote green awareness by:
  - Using washable/reusable serving equipment (chafing dishes, pitchers, condiment dispensers, etc.).

- Providing plates, bowls, cups, silverware, and napkins that are reusable or washable (best); biodegradable or compostable (very good); or recyclable (good). No Styrofoam, mylar, individual condiment packets, or plastic straws.
- Learning what options are available for bulk buying of greenware.
- Letting you know prior to the event what waste their booth will generate and will provide samples of their containers for display at the trash/recycling stations.

### **Power Generation/Children's Area**

If inflatable toy structures are used, choose a vendor willing to:

- Locate the structures where the noise has the least impact and the structures do not damage the grass.
- Set up the structure early so the pumping-up phase (noisy) occurs before the event starts.
- Use a less polluting way of generating power—biodiesel, solar—if possible.



## Waste Reduction Initiative



### **Our waste reduction initiative is three-part:**

- 1) education
- 2) advocating the City for waste-reduction policies
- 3) working with local organizations to reduce waste at community events

### **Los Altos Waste Contract**

Our efforts with the City resulted in an RFP for a new waste contract that incorporates a 75% waste diversion goal for the city, and commercial and residential food waste compost collection, which could have a significant impact in reducing waste. GreenTown is working in conjunction with the Los Altos Environmental Commission to educate the community about the upcoming City of Los Altos waste contract. A new 10-year waste contract will be awarded on March 9th, 2010. See the [RFP](#) and [RFP Summary](#), and our [GreenTown Los Altos Waste Management Report](#) attached below.

The new contract is currently under review by city staff and presents a timely opportunity for improved service and critical environmental benefits at the best possible price. Staff will make their vendor recommendation to City Council at the February 23 meeting. The review materials will be available to the public on the agendas/minutes section of the city council website before the meeting on Friday, February 19. The public review and

comment period will be open from February 23 until March 9; GreenTown plans to review the contract and provide feedback to the city. Los Altos City Council will decide the waste services vendor at their March 9 meeting.

GreenTown Los Altos urges our members to attend these important council meetings and learn about the proposed new services. By actively participating in the process, we can achieve a robust new contract that will simultaneously improve the quality of life in our community, support sustainability and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information about the GreenTown Waste Reduction Initiative and the waste contract, visit our website at [http://www.greentownlosaltos.org/drupal/waste\\_reduction](http://www.greentownlosaltos.org/drupal/waste_reduction)

### **Community Events Waste Reduction**

Our community events waste reduction projects have now resulted in two events where recycling and composting was collected and diversion rates significantly increased.

- At the Community Picnic in September 2008, 75% of waste was diverted from the landfill.
- At the Rotary Club's Fine Art in the Park in May 2009, we diverted 80% of waste from the landfill, and a full 44% of the waste stream was compostable.
- At the Community Picnic in September 2009, we diverted 76% of waste from the landfill.
- We have provided guidance to many large and small groups and events to help them go green. See the [Green Event Guidelines](#) attached below.

**For more information, contact:** [waste@greentownlosaltos.org](mailto:waste@greentownlosaltos.org)

Kacey Fitzpatrick, Chair  
Mike Barnes, Vice Chair

Item #86

Day	Date	Page Loads	Unique Visitors	First Time Visitors	Returning Visitors
Friday	1st January 2010	0	0	0	0
Saturday	2nd January 2010	1	1	1	0
Sunday	3rd January 2010	0	0	0	0
Monday	4th January 2010	2	2	1	1
Tuesday	5th January 2010	3	3	2	1
Wednesday	6th January 2010	3	3	0	3
Thursday	7th January 2010	2	1	1	0
Friday	8th January 2010	1	1	1	0
Saturday	9th January 2010	1	1	1	0
Sunday	10th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Monday	11th January 2010	3	2	2	0
Tuesday	12th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Wednesday	13th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Thursday	14th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Friday	15th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Saturday	16th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Sunday	17th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Monday	18th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Tuesday	19th January 2010	5	5	4	1
Wednesday	20th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Thursday	21st January 2010	0	0	0	0
Friday	22nd January 2010	0	0	0	0
Saturday	23rd January 2010	0	0	0	0
Sunday	24th January 2010	1	1	1	0
Monday	25th January 2010	3	3	3	0
Tuesday	26th January 2010	0	0	0	0
Wednesday	27th January 2010	1	1	0	1
Thursday	28th January 2010	2	2	2	0
Friday	29th January 2010	1	1	0	1
Saturday	30th January 2010	1	1	1	0
Sunday	31st January 2010	0	0	0	0



Chart6







