



Plastic Bag Recycling: New York City and Beyond

In January of this year, the New York City Council passed a bill that requires large stores, those of 5,000 square feet or more, as well as all branches of chain stores with more than five locations in the city, to collect and recycle plastic bags. Customers can return plastic bags as well as other stretchy plastic such as dry cleaning bags to any store, not only the store they came from, and stores will have to contract for removal and recycling of the bags.

Supporters of the bill include the Food Industry Alliance, which represents 750 supermarkets in the city, the Progressive Bag Affiliates, a trade group that represents American plastic bag makers, and environmental nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council.

Similar moves to reduce plastic bag usage are taking place around the world. *The Waste Paper* has already reported on plastic bag bans in San Francisco and at Ikea stores, and all 270 Whole Foods stores throughout the U.S. will eliminate plastic bags by Earth Day in April 2008.

In order to combat litter generated by the daily use of three billion plastic bags, China has banned free plastic shopping bags as of June 1, 2008, and will phase out the production of ultra-thin bags that are virtually unable to be reused. The Chinese government has urged “a return to cloth bags and shopping baskets.” Additionally, Australia has planned to phase out free plastic shopping bags by 2009.

More Info:

www.nytimes.com/2008/01/10/nyregion/10bags.html - City Council Passes Bill for Bag Recycling
www.ecospace.cc/environment/banning-plastic-bags-0108.htm - China, Australia banning bags

Did You Know...?

Each year, Americans throw away some 100 billion plastic bags, and less than 1% of them are recycled.

The Green Way to Retrofit Buildings

Green construction is a popular choice of builders and developers these days, but new construction accounts for only a small percentage of the nation’s estimated 4.5 million commercial properties. According to a recent New York Times article, it is becoming more common for building management companies to retrofit existing buildings with green principles in mind.

Numerous real estate companies are now thinking green: retrofitting existing buildings according to environmental principles, and saving some green in the process. A 2006 study by the US Green Building Council found that building owners can save on average 90 cents a square foot annually by retrofitting buildings.

The LEED program, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, offers environmental standards to construct or retrofit green buildings. To date, over 1,200 U.S. buildings have been certified under the LEED standards, 95% of which represent new construction.

Great Forest is able to assist property management companies interested in pursuing LEED-EB certification. Contact your Great Forest representative for more information.

More Info:

www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/realestate/commercial/27sqft.html - NY Times Article: ‘Green’ Buildings Don’t Have to be New

New York City to Mandate Electronics Recycling

As of March, New York City is the first U.S. city to pass an electronics recycling law to tackle electronic waste (e-waste). New Yorkers generate over 25,000 tons of electronics annually, a figure that does not even include all of the outdated computers and iPods sitting unused in peoples' closets after a life span of only a few years.

This extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation will require manufacturers of computers, TVs and MP3s to take back their products once consumers wish to dispose of them. In addition to providing New Yorkers with an environmentally-friendly recycling option for these items, this law will also give manufacturers an incentive to design products that are easier to recycle and contain less toxic materials. The specifics of each manufacturer's plan might range from drop-off to mail-in to curbside collection programs for electronic waste.

Despite criticism by Mayor Bloomberg, this legislation includes performance standards, which will require incremental increases in e-waste collection. By 2018 manufacturers must recycle at least 65% of their sales.

Due to the toxic components in electronic items, many computer manufacturers already offer take-back programs, and the Department of Sanitation hosts e-waste recycling events. For more information about what to do with e-waste at home, visit www.nyc.gov/nycwasteless.

Electronic waste at the office can also be

donated or recycled; ask your Great Forest representative for details on how to recycle waste at your office.

More Info:

http://ny.metro.us/metro/local/article/Council_replaces_one_ewaste_bill_with_two/12003.html - "Council replaces one e-waste bill with two" article 3/13/08 in NYC Metro

The Secret Life series

The Secret Life Series, a project by NYC-based non-profit INFORM, is a web-based collection of videos that explains the 'life-cycle' of everyday products.

The current Secret Life video highlights cell phones, detailing everything from how they are made to what happens to them once they are discarded.

The videos are entertaining and educational, and the website also helps consumers learn how to properly recycle and take action on the highlighted topic.

Up next: The Secret Life of Paper.

More Info:

www.secret-life.org

Mandatory Recycling in Westchester County

As of February 1st, improperly sorted trash and recyclables in Westchester County, NY will not be picked up by the sanitation trucks. The waste will be left on the curb for residents, along with a red "Oops" sticker, informing them of the offense.

Westchester County Executive Andy Spano has praised Westchester's high recycling rates (consistently above 40%) but also said, "We need to set our sights higher. Recycling is so important to conserving natural resources and protecting the environment – we cannot afford to be complacent. We need to do more."

More Info:

www.westchestergov.com/environment.htm - Information about recycling in Westchester County

