



Contact: Adan Alvarez, (323) 404-5939

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City of Long Beach Takes First Step in Transforming Commercial Waste and Recycling System

Long Beach, CA – Last night, Long Beach City Council members voted overwhelmingly to issue a **five year notice** to waste haulers, setting the clock ticking as it explores the best options for transforming the City's current commercial waste and recycling system.

Don't Waste Long Beach -- a coalition of environmental, community, food rescue, and worker rights organizations -- applauded the move and advocated for an exclusive franchise system as the best way to achieve zero waste. The proponents say an exclusive franchise system would allow the City to hold waste hauling companies accountable by requiring high safety and environmental standards, efficient routing, quality service, guaranteed access to recycling, and eventually green waste collection. Long Beach is one of the few cities in California of its size that does not have a local zero waste goal, and the recycling rate in the commercial sector is less than 20%.

Robert Nothoff, Director of Don't Waste Long Beach, said, "We're happy that our city leaders are working to establish region-wide standards in the commercial and multi-family sector. In order to be the green city we aspire to be, we need to transform our system here in Long Beach by increasing access to recycling for all city residents and businesses, and establishing efficient truck routing which will reduce air and noise pollution."

Food waste is another issue that is important to the coalition. Diana Lara, a coordinator at Food Finders Long Beach stated, "For the last ten years, I have worked to collect food from different donors, like restaurants and bakeries, and have it delivered to different organizations in Long Beach that provide meals to the most vulnerable members of our community." She emphasized the need for change adding, "I think that it is wrong that tons of food is wasted due to our inefficient waste system, while there are many kids in our communities who go to bed on an empty stomach. Long Beach

needs to transform the way it deals with waste and ensure that all residents have access to recycling and compost collection at home and at work to help address this problem.”

Coalition members also highlighted the opportunity for green job creation that could be generated by increasing the city’s recycling levels. Maurice Thomas, coalition member, and local waste worker stated, “One of the ways that Long Beach can expand opportunities for people looking for gainful employment is by increasing access to recycling in our city. By increasing its level of recycling, Long Beach can create good, green jobs for Long Beach residents, and become a green job development leader for other cities to follow.”

Following the vote, Vice Mayor Rex Richardson commented, “I commend my colleagues on taking this great step forward to look at practical solutions that will help to protect our communities and create local job opportunities for residents across our city. We believe that this is the right step that must be taken in order to fulfill our vision of a city that works for all people and values health, our environment, and our economy.”

For more information, please visit: www.DontWasteLongBeach.org

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