



LANDFILLING OUR RESOURCES IS A WASTE

by Councilman Greig Smith

I've written much in this space about ending the outdated practice of landfilling our trash in the City of Los Angeles. Mayor Hahn has indicated that the City will not dump our residential waste in the Sunshine Canyon Landfill after our current contract expires in June of 2006. Since that date is fast approaching, the City is closely examining short and long term alternatives.

Last week, the Bureau of Sanitation released a report that ranked the proposals of other companies competing for our waste business. The report showed that there was a viable alternative that would allow us to stop dumping our trash in residential landfills, and is actually *less* expensive than any future contract that BFI has proposed for Sunshine Canyon. This is exciting news for the short term of waste management in our City, but we are also looking toward the future.

The future of waste management is actually resource management. We already know that recyclables such as cans, bottles and cardboard are valuable commodities, for which there is a market. What is not as well known, is that much of what we consider to be trash, can be converted by clean, proven technologies into renewable green fuels, compost and other resources. When trash is thrown in a landfill, that's the end of its useful life and the start of an environmentally hazardous process that requires myriad pollution mitigation. When waste is converted into a resource, a commodity has been created that provides an economic and environmental benefit.

I recently had the opportunity to travel to Europe and visit some waste conversion facilities that have been on the forefront of creating and refining these technologies. I saw a good representation of various thermal-recycling technologies, which produce clean fuel and raw

materials for manufacturing. I also visited anaerobic digestion facilities, where high quality compost and clean, renewable fuel are converted from waste.

One exciting feature of conversion technologies, is the total environmental and economic benefit. By creating renewable fuel sources, we are reducing pollution as well as dependence on fossil fuels and foreign oil. High quality compost is proven to regenerate soil by adding back the valuable nutrients that are traditionally depleted with every crop. Soils treated with this compost require 30% less water and produce a much higher yield.

In the coming months, the City will be evaluating these technologies to determine the most viable for the City of Los Angeles. In the meantime, if you'd like to read a detailed report about the European facilities I visited, please visit my website at www.lacity.org/council/cd12. After the first of the year, I will be releasing my own long-term action plan to eliminate waste in the City of Los Angeles. I am truly excited about the prospects for resource management in Los Angeles and look forward to implementing the economic and environmental benefits of these proven technologies to end our dependence on landfilling.

European Conversion Facilities Tour

- MVR - Thermal Recycling Facility
- MPA - Pyrolysis Facility
- Thermosteel - Gasification/Pyrolysis Facility
- Valorga - Anaerobic Digestion Facility
- OWS Brecht II DRANCO - Anaerobic Digestion Facility