



Leisure World Laguna Hills, California

50% Waste Reduction Rate



Thanks to an aggressive program installed, maintained, and encouraged by property management, the Leisure World residential community in Laguna Hills, California, has cut its waste stream in half. One of the keys to Leisure World's success is its composting program. Landscape trimmings account for 25% of the community's waste stream, with mixed residential recyclables (newspaper and commingled containers) accounting for another 25%.

Program Description

Leisure World is a sprawling residential community located on more than 700 acres of land with approximately 18,000 residents. Building types range from single-family units up to 24-unit buildings. This poses an unusual challenge for management who has devised a combination centralized collection for commingled materials, drop-off system for newspapers, and curbside program for the single-family units.

Varied building configurations result in three different trash collection systems. Residents of three-story buildings use trash chutes. Residents of other multi-family units bring their trash to three-cubic-yard containers in enclosures located throughout the premises. Residents of single-family units put their trash at curbside for collection. Outside contractors collect trash twice per week.

While Leisure World has a strong recycling program of typical home-generated recyclables, what drives its recycling rate to 50% is its composting operation. This program began in 1990. Leisure World's landscaping staff collect all landscaping debris and grind, process, and compost it

on site. They use the finished compost as potting soil in the on-site nursery, and mulch for landscaping purposes. Staff use several source reduction techniques, including direct mulching when cutting grass, and planting drought resistant species.

Leisure World's residents recycle beverage containers, magazines, and telephone books at one centralized drop-off site at the maintenance service center, driving distance for most residents. At this site there are nine recycling collection containers, one or two for each commodity. The containers are three-cubic-yard metal bins. The material collected here accounts for less than 5% of the total recyclables diverted.

In-house staff collect newspapers curbside from the single-family units. The remaining population, who reside in multi-family structures, place their newspaper in one-cubic-yard covered metal bins. Approximately 450 of these bins, custom designed for Leisure World, are distributed throughout the complex

Materials Collected

- Glass
- Aluminum
- Newspaper
- Magazines
- Yard trimmings
- White goods
- Scrap metal
- Laser printer cartridges

alongside trash containers. Private contractors collect this material.

Other materials collected for recycling including white goods, scrap metal (such as old hot water heaters, sinks, and other fixtures generated by the maintenance department), and laser cartridges. Management also plans to implement a cardboard collection program using one four-cubic-yard container on the premises.

Staffing needs for the recycling program are met with existing staff. Because outside contractors handle the collection of recyclables (except yard trimmings), only a small amount of staff time is devoted to cleaning the centralized collection location. The composting program has two dedicated staff: one for materials collection, the other for tub grinder operation.

Outreach Activities

The program involves community residents through governance committees that oversee all aspects of operations on the premises. This direct involvement gives residents a direct stake in the success of the program. Interested residents often bring contamination issues to the attention of the program manager.

All recycling containers are labeled with stickers indicating which materials to deposit. Management promotes the program through articles in the community newspaper and bulletins on the community cable channel.

Costs/Benefits

The centralized collection program minimizes costs. Leisure World also receives top dollar for its newspaper as it is clean and uncontaminated. For instance, in 1996 management spent \$95,000 on newspaper pickup, but received \$123,000 in revenue for this newspaper and saved \$82,000 in tipping fees, netting an overall savings of

\$109,000 for newspaper alone. Savings are passed on to residents through lowered operating costs. As of 1996, nine years after implementing the recycling program, Leisure World realized \$80,445 savings in operating expenses. All program costs include equipment (tub grinder and tractor to turn windrows), start-up costs (grading of compost site), and labor (two staff for composting program).

The yard trimmings collection program results in lower hauling and tipping fees, reduced need for soil amendment purchases, and reduced water needs. Careful records of the flow of materials and costs allow staff to understand the true cost savings of recycling. The program coordinator tracks tonnage by requiring waste slips from the contractor who has a scale on its truck. The in-house composting staff also weigh yard trimmings with an on-board scale.

Tips for Replication

- Ensure a committed management staff is on hand.
- Encourage residents to make the extra effort to recycle.
- Keep careful cost and tonnage records in order to recognize true cost savings.
- Focus on recovering materials with high volume and high value.

Contact:

Cindy Cramer
Management Analyst
Landscape Division
Professional Community
Management, Inc.
Leisure World
P.O. Box 2220
Laguna Hills, CA 92654
(714) 597-4669 fax (714) 470-0148



Program Summary, FY96

Start Date	1987 (yard trimmings added 1990)	
Type of Buildings	318 single-family buildings and 2,231 multi-family buildings; multi-family buildings range from 2 to 24 units and from 1 to 3 stories	
Households Served	12,736	
Total Waste Generated (Tons)	FY86	FY96
Disposed	>14,500	15,755
Diverted	14,500	7,800
	NA*	7,955
Total Diverted (%)	NA	50%
Materials Recovered	NA	7,955
Yard trimmings	0	4,711
Newspaper	NA*	3,043
Other recyclables	0	201
Average Generation (lbs./HH/day)	>6.24	6.77
Disposed	6.24	3.35
Diverted	NA*	3.42
Fees per Year	>\$815,522	\$735,077
Disposal	\$815,522	\$562,077
Diversion	NA*	\$173,000
Net Costs per HH per Year	>\$64.03	\$57.71
Disposal services	\$64.03	\$44.13
Diversion services	NA*	\$13.58
Net Costs per Ton	>\$56.24	\$46.66
Disposal services	\$56.24	\$72.06
Diversion services	NA*	\$21.75

FY = fiscal year HH = household NA = Not available

Note: Numbers may not add to total due to rounding.

*Leisure World had a newspaper recycling program before 1986, but did not track tonnage or costs.