Chula Vista Zero Waste Academy

Course Syllabus and Expectations

The City of Chula Vista's Office of Sustainability is offering a 5-session Zero Waste Academy course to educate Chula Vista residents on the concepts and practices of Zero Waste and to promote understanding of the City's Waste Reduction Strategic Plan (Zero Waste Plan) and the City's goal of achieving 90% waste diversion by 2035. Also, many "wastes" are actually "resources" that can be used again until their useful life is no more. Students will be provided with opportunities to gain knowledge and will be highly encouraged to become participants so they can implement Zero Waste actions into their lives. Various issues, including Zero Waste for Chula Vista, detailed in the City's Zero Waste Plan, will be covered in the course to promote an overall understanding of Zero Waste thinking and practices with the intention of benefitting our community and the region. In-person tours of the Otay Landfill, EDCO's Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and a Construction and Debris (C&D) facility are also planned. Conducting this course fulfills part of the Zero Waste Plan (Action 3.8) of developing and implementing a Zero Waste education and recognition program that encourages applying Zero Waste principles and engaging and collaborating in such activities.

The course will consist of:

- Talks/presentations from knowledge experts
- Informational readings and online videos
- Conducting a waste audit at your home
- Participating in a sustainability project (document and report on it at the final class) *
- In-class two-way discussions include tips and tricks to build and practice Zero Waste actions.
- In-person tour of the Otay Landfill is included to provide participants with a firsthand look at what happens with waste collected.
- Potential, In-person tour of a materials recovery facility (MRF) and a Construction and Debris (C&D) facility. This will provide an eye-opening opportunity to see how recyclable materials are handled and an understanding of the business of recycling.
- Participation in Beautify Chula Vista

In order to be recognized and receive the Zero Waste Champion certification, attendance is mandatory for every class and complete the class requirements (listed above).

The key expectation is for Zero Waste Champions to take the lessons learned and become advocates for implementing Zero Waste practices. As a Chula Vista Zero Waste Champion, this includes adopting a leadership role as one in the community which informs others about Zero Waste and its environmental benefits. As such, it is highly advised that Champions share this information on social media and via email to those in their networks or any groups, organizations, clubs or special interest groups a Champion belongs to or associates with. One suggestion would be to have a “video party” to share videos presented as part of the course. One of the key purposes of Chula Vista's Zero Waste Plan is to "change the mindset" of residents and businesses – it takes a community effort and participation of all sectors to make changes needed to reduce and eliminate waste and implement these practices. As part of this course, Zero Waste Academy participants will be encouraged to create a Zero Waste project of their own design or to participate/volunteer with existing organizations to help them implement programs or assist as volunteers with implementing Actions in the City's Zero Waste Plan. Additionally, the City of Chula Vista is interested in building a core group of volunteers from its Zero Waste Champions to assist from time to time in sustainability and Zero Waste outreach efforts and events.

Syllabus/Lesson Plan:

8/6/26 First Class: What is Zero Waste? Introduction and Overview (2 Hours)

This class will provide an overview of Zero Waste and key issues. It will also touch on Chula Vista's Waste Reduction Strategic Plan (Zero Waste Plan).

First-Class suggested videos and readings: Please read and watch the content below.

- Pre-class Required Reading: Chula Vista Waste Reduction Strategic Plan (Zero Waste Plan), visit www.chulavistaca.gov/zerowaste
- Video: The Story of Stuff: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM
- Article and website: Honestly Modern – Sustainable Living for Modern Families (This site serves as primer for Zero Waste as an aspirational endeavor covering numerous activities. Explore, learn more).

Topics:

- **Academy overview**
- ***Defining Zero Waste***
    - What is a Zero Waste System?
    - Zero Waste Hierarchy
    - "Resources" Not Wastes
    - Circular Economy
    - Benefits of Zero Waste
    - Triple Bottom Line
    - Extended Producer Responsibility
        - What you should know – Explanation and breakdown
        - Legislation
        - Examples in the US
        - Pharmaceutical Takeback
            - What Chula Vista Does
        - What you can do
    - Product Stewardship
        - Legislation
        - California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC)
        - Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE), Mattress Recycling Council, Paint Care
        - What you can do

- **Introduction and Overview of Chula Vista Zero Waste Plan**
    - Goal and Purpose – 90% Diversion Goal
    - Core Principles of Zero Waste Planning
    - Intro to Chula Vista's Waste Stream
    - Waste – pounds per day per capita
    - California Waste Reduction Legislation
    - Six Key Tasks of the Zero Waste Plan and Actions
    - Tasks Descriptions and Summary of Actions
    - Waste Diversion and Reductions of Green House Gases - Projections
    - Actions Planned - Blend of Current and New Activities

- **Conducting Your Own Waste Characterization**
    - Household Assessment - Find out what you discard – throw away, recycle, sell, or donate
    - Keep track/document using guidelines provided to Academy participants
    - Based on your tracking, determine ways to avoid and reduce waste creation o Submit via email to environmentalservices@chulavistaca.gov by Monday, October 26

- **Discussion and Zero Waste Tips and Tricks Discuss today's class topic.**
  Provide simple ways to reduce waste and reuse products and avoid creating waste. (Content from CLEAN Newsletter reuse articles, websites, news articles, and other sources.)

8/13/26 Second Class: Food and Yard waste recycling / Household Hazardous Waste and C&D (2 Hours)

This class will cover two distinct areas: 1) Food and yard waste recycling and its importance, and 2) A brief overview of dealing with Household Hazardous Waste, and Construction and Demolition.

Second-Class suggested videos and readings:

- Cedar Grove GORE Cover Compost Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRD385ibwqA&pp=ygUWY2VkYXIgZ3JvdmUgY29tcG9zdGluZw%3D%3D
- Otay GORE Compost Grand Opening https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKNqaydvlA8
- Long GORE Compost Video (No narration) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwS_-m806w8

Organics Recycling

- Food and Yard Waste Recycle (Green Cart/Green Dumpster)
    - Fighting Climate Change
    - What can be recycled and what cannot?
        - Food Waste
        - Yard Waste
    - What happens with collected food and yard waste?
        - Composting process – creates chemical-free, nutrient-rich soil amendment
        - Compost production at the Otay Composting Facility
        - Availability of compost – for residents (6 free giveaways), schools, City parks and facilities, golf courses, agricultural and landscape industries.
    - Best Uses and Benefits of Compost
    - Backyard composting – Create Your Own
        - Master Composter Classes and Living Coast Discovery Center Classes

Dealing with Household Hazardous Waste

- Use of Hazardous Wastes in the industry
    - End of life – what happens to these chemicals
- Description of HHW – household hazardous and toxic materials/products: cleaners, fuels, oil, miscellaneous chemicals, paints, batteries, electronics, sharps, fluorescent bulbs, and several other applicable items.
    - Proper HHW disposal for Residents
        - Disposal at City's Household Hazardous Waste Facility – Key Statistics
        - Reuse program store at the HHW

        - PaintCare locations
    - Proper HHW disposal for businesses – Small Quantity Generators
        - What should businesses do?
- Prescription Drugs
    - Description
    - Where to properly dispose – collection kiosks
    - Take-back events

C&D

- What is Construction and Demolition (C&D) Debris
    - Chula Vista's ordinance
    - What is required?
    - Why is diverting C&D debris important?
- What is a Waste Management Report (WMR)?
    - When is a WMR required?
    - What materials are listed on the WMR and why?
    - Are there any costs associated with the WMR process?

8/17/26 Tour Day: Construction and Debris (C&D) Facility, and Otay Landfill

(Approximately 4 hours, not including travel time. Course participants may need to arrange carpools).

This class is tours of the C&D facility, and Otay Landfill. The tour of Otay Sustainability Park is organized by City staff and conducted by Republic Services, owner/operator of the Otay Sustainability Park.

Otay Landfill:

- Participants will witness and learn how trash and organic waste generated by Chula Vista residents and businesses are handled. The tour will provide a firsthand understanding of what happens to what you throw away and the magnitude of the waste stream.

Academy enrollees are automatically signed up for the tours when they enroll for the Zero Waste Academy. A reminder email about the tours will be sent to Academy Participants.

(POTENTIAL TOUR) Local Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

This class session is a tour of the MRF facility. This tour will be organized by City staff and conducted by EDCO; owner/operator of these facilities located in Lemon Grove.

MRF:

- Course participants will see firsthand how recyclable materials are handled and prepared to become raw materials for producing new beverage containers and manufacturing other products from recycled content.

Academy enrollees are automatically signed up for the tours when they enroll for the Zero Waste Academy. A reminder email about the tours will be sent to Academy Participants.

8/20/26 Third Class: Recycling, it's markets and plastic issues & Extended Producer Responsibility (2 Hours)

This class be cover two distinct areas: 1) A brief overview on recycling, recycling markets, and the issues with plastics and packaging; and 2) Extended Producer Responsibility

Third-Class suggested videos and readings: Please read and watch the content below.

- MRF videos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5nmNKVNCBw (This provides an understanding of how MRFs operate and the recycling business. This class will provide an overview of the waste stream, categories of discarded materials, and recycling systems).
- Plastic Wars Episode 38-15 Frontline https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/plastic-wars/

Topics:

- **Understanding the Waste Stream**
  - Upstream, Midstream, Downstream
    - Descriptions
    - Wastes Generated
    - How these apply to Chula Vista
    - Role of Republic Services – City of Chula Vista's Franchise Hauler
      - Trash, Recycling, Food, and Yard Waste Recycling
      - Bulky Pickup for residential and multi-family
  - Twelve Market Categories of Discarded Materials – Revisit the Circular Economy
    - Compostable, recyclable, potentially recoverable, non-recoverable
    - Content and percentages of discarded materials
    - How materials can be reused

- **Recycling Markets for "Resources" (Discarded Materials)**
  - Role of MRFs
  - Market issues – CRV (beverage containers), glass, paper, plastics, construction debris, food, and yard waste – key statistics
  - Recoverability and management of discarded materials
  - How materials can be reused

- **Recycle Right in Chula Vista**
  - Residential Service
  - Multi-family and Commercial Service

    - Recycling Service (Blue Cart/White Dumpster)
        - What can be recycled and what cannot?
        - Wish-cycling
        - What do I do with this item? Options for recycling certain items – metals, bubble wrap, packing peanuts, mattresses, carpet, textiles, and more
        - Recycling Business in Chula Vista

- **Extended Producer Responsibility**

8/24/26 Mandatory Community Service: Beautify Chula Vista

Academy participants are required to participate in Beautify Chula Vista, an annual, city-wide community event dedicated to local environmental stewardship and beautification. Further details regarding event location will be provided during class 1 of the academy.

8/27/26 Fourth-Class: Social & Behavior Change – Keys to "think and practice" Zero Waste (2 hours)

This course will be divided into three distinct areas: 1) dealing with Household Hazardous Waste, 2) Construction and Debris, and 3) Changing Behavior – Keys to "think and practice" Zero Waste. The class will conclude with certificate handouts!

Fourth-Class suggested videos and readings: Please read and watch the content below.

- Greenwashing vs. Green Marketing – What is your Company doing? - Oct. 14, 2020, https://www.protectusa.net/greenwashing/
- Greenwashing - A short documentary: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INtguE3J09c
- 12 Cheap and easy tips for reducing your Waste- Sustainability Zero Waste Hacks https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9ojpJBSTw8 (highly recommend)
- Tips for a Zero Waste Living https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5ijPk5_8pM

Topics:

- **Eco-Friendly Business**
  - What is Greenwashing?
  - Greenwashing vs. Green marketing
  - Examples of companies with sustainable practices
  - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
  - Sustainable Packaging

- **Review of the Zero Waste Hierarchy – Keep it out of the landfill**

- **Reduce – Avoid and reuse waste creation**
  - Expansion on the how and why
  - Avoid household toxic cleaners and yard/garden chemicals and replace with nontoxic products
  - Buy what you need
  - Food shopping
  - Benefits of reduce

- **Reuse or Repurpose – In same way, find similar or new uses for materials**
  - Expansion on the how and why
  - Household items (examples to be given)
  - Benefits of reuse and repurpose

- **Repair – Can it be fixed? Can I get parts?**

    - Expansion on the how and why
    - Keep it out of the landfill
    - Determine value of repair vs. buying new
    - Benefits of repair
    - Donating materials
    - Fix-it Clinics

- **Zero Waste Presentations and Take Home lessons discussion**
    - Discussions about Zero Waste practices and lessons learned

Waste Characterizations 1-2 pages. Submit via email to lescobedo@chulavistaca.gov or print out and turn in at the end of class.

Expand Your Zero Waste Knowledge - More Suggested Readings:

Zero Waste Articles, Video Links and Organization Websites

This first section contains information regarding Chula Vista as well as information from the State of California and other organizations.

- City of Chula Vista Zero Waste webpage: Zero Waste | City of Chula Vista
- Video: http://www.storyofstuff.com
- California Product Stewardship Organization website: Product Stewardship and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- Chula Vista City Environmental Services/Sustainability website: Chula Vista, CA Trash & Recycling | Republic Services
- SWANA Organization website: Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA)
- California Organization Website, RDMZ source page: Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ) Program
- Organization website: California's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy - CalRecycle Home Page
- Organization website: Zero Waste and Economic Recovery - GAIA
- Organization website, Keep America Beautiful: Keep America Beautiful
- Recycling Solar panels -City of Santa Monica: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uodHTg_vi1s
- Resource webpage: Sustainable Materials Management US EPA