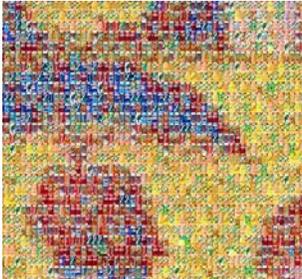


# Summary

A portion of the 106,000 aluminum cans used in the US every 30 seconds.



Partial zoom.



Detail.



Click on thumbnail to view larger image.  
Click on larger image to close.

CHRIS JORDAN

**Running the Numbers**

An American Self-Portrait

*Cans* Seurat, 2007

60"x92"

In June 2006 Olympia City Council adopted a Zero Waste Resolution. It establishes a vision for the City and a new direction for the Waste ReSources Utility and gave rise to a new strategic and operational six-year plan. It adds specificity to Olympia's Sustainable Community vision, and aligns with the Public Works vision of "Balance and Harmony between People and Nature." In this context, the Waste ReSources mission is:

**"To lead and inspire our community toward a waste-free future."**

Its strategic role is:

**"To create opportunities to eliminate waste."**

For the past two decades, Olympia has been moving in this direction by providing waste reduction and recycling collection services. This Plan creates the framework for a more focused approach toward Zero Waste, with these long-term goals:

**Goal 1: Reduce the overall waste generated in Olympia (garbage and recyclables).**

The quantity of products and materials used and ultimately discarded by Olympia residents and businesses is steadily decreasing over time.

**Goal 2: Increase the quantity of recyclable and compostable materials diverted from the landfill.** The percentage of discarded products and materials that are reused, recycled or composted by Olympia residents and businesses is steadily increasing over time.

**Goal 3: Manage Olympia's waste system responsibly.** Discarded materials are collected, processed and disposed of reliably, with minimal impact on environmental and public health and worker safety.

## THE ZERO WASTE CHALLENGE

Globally, waste is a huge problem caused by:

- A growing population.
- Increasing consumption.
- A system of resource extraction, manufacturing and distribution that encourages depletion and doesn't factor environmental and social costs into the price of the end product.

The result is increasing depletion of natural resources and increasing greenhouse gas emissions and air and water pollution – all of which is environmentally unsustainable and costly to society as a whole. Olympia residents and businesses contribute to this global problem. Locally, a growing population and increasing quantities of waste are creating environmental problems and pressuring an already strained regional waste management system.

The movement towards Zero Waste is part of a solution because it:

- Considers the whole life cycle of a product and ways to reduce waste in “upstream” production and distribution processes as well as in “downstream” consumer choices and waste management practices.
- Supports operational efficiency by reducing the overall amount of waste to be handled, and by facilitating shared public and private responsibility for “end of life” waste management.

*Toward Zero Waste: Olympia’s Waste ReSources Plan* anticipates a future in which “waste” is viewed as an inefficient use of resources. It launches a long-term, systematic effort to:

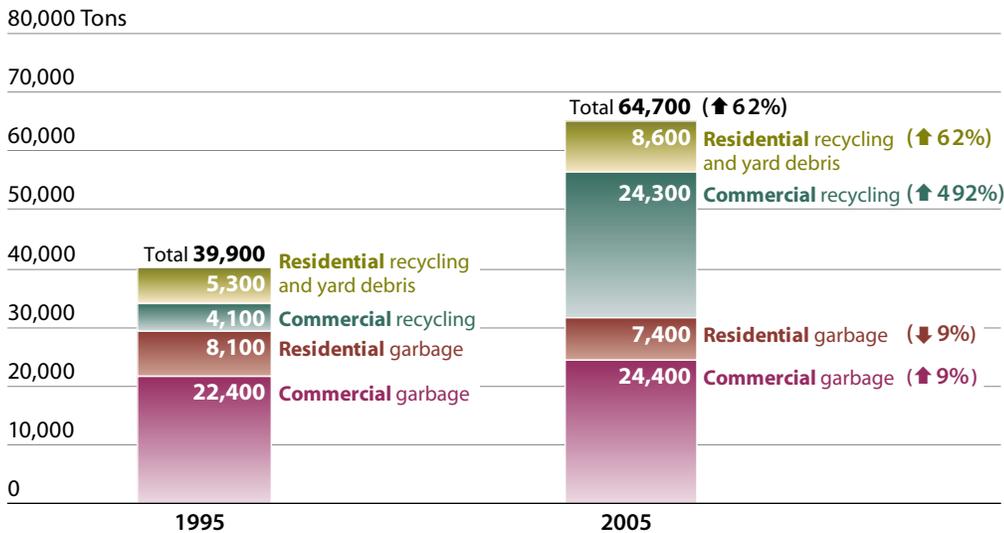
- **Reduce per capita quantity** of waste generated in Olympia.
- **Increase the portion** of waste that is recycled or composted.

See **Chapter 1** for details.

## OLYMPIA’S PEOPLE AND THEIR WASTE

In 2005 Olympia’s residents and businesses generated approximately 64,700 tons of waste, of which an estimated 51 percent (32,900 tons) was composted or recycled. Of the total waste, about three quarters is generated by commercial businesses and about one quarter by residential customers. Nearly 28 percent of the garbage sent to the land-fill is currently or potentially recyclable – particularly paper, food debris and construction and demolition (C&D) debris. Between 1995 and 2005, total waste increased by 62 percent, as shown below.

Waste Generation in Olympia, 1995 and 2005 (Tons)



Sources: City of Olympia weight measures (residential garbage and recycling tons, and commercial garbage tons); Thurston Regional Planning Council 2005 Profile (population). Commercial recycling tons are estimated as shown in **Table 2.2**.