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I. What is the "Beyond the Ban" Project?

This project, building on previous work on sustainable consumption, compostable plastics and community engagement, sought to explore disruptive interventions and policies to prevent the release of plastics into the environment and reduce the burden of managing plastics on municipalities**.** From the outset, the goal was for participant cities to co-develop and share model policies and best practices, infrastructure investment opportunities, and blueprints for community engagement that reduce the negative impacts of plastic packaging while promoting sustainable economic development.

II. Planning for the Convening.

This project sought a new and participatory way to engage with an emerging sustainability issue, plastic pollution. Even the term "plastic pollution" was introduced to the vernacular only recently and forces a new conceptualization of plastic, a material which has been critical to the development of the 21st century economy. To have this conversation, it was necessary to bring our stakeholders together in a transparent process the cultivated creative thinking and problem solving in order to explore ways in which multiple city goals could be accomplished.

In order to succeed in the development of this process, UPSTREAM brought together a core design team that would be able to represent the different interests represented in the future convening. This group consisted of Jamie Rhodes, UPSTREAM; Leah Bamberger, Providence; Julie Bryant, San Francisco; Rob Costanzo, Surrey; and Julie Curti, Meister Consultants. This group's charge was to provide feedback and support in crafting an engagement and facilitation strategy that would challenge participants to see the potential role they can play in preventing a mounting global problem.

UPSTREAM as the lead on this project, only represented one point of view. Though the instigators of this process, it was critical to rely on the expertise and experience of a skilled facilitator and city government participants. Meister Consultants out of Boston, Massachusetts were chosen as facilitators due to their exceptional reputation for leading inclusive and collaborative processes with city governments to tackle systemic challenges. City government representatives had the most on-the-ground knowledge with respect to existing programs and how their communities experience the impacts of plastic pollution.

In order to prepare participants for the meeting that took place in December of 2016, UPSTREAM facilitated one-on-one interviews[1] will all participants and followed-up these discussions with a survey[2] tailored to the feedback that was received. This research was executed with the intention of understanding city operations and priorities in conjunction with existing efforts that would impact the generation and/or management of plastic pollution.

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[1] *See* Appendix A for a summary of completed interviews.

[2] *See* Appendix B for select survey results. Full datasets are available as part of grant materials.

III. Convening Results

Project participants were brought together for a one and a half day meeting[3] in Providence, Rhode Island from December 8th through December 9th. It was facilitated by Julie Curti and Neil Veilleux from Meister Consultants. The articulated primary purpose of the meeting was to review initial research, learn from current practices, and develop new city-level interventions. The design team also discussed aspirations to reach some shared understanding of the problem, priorities for action, reflection on next steps, and early discussion of the best ways to collaborate in the future.

Defining the problem. The group's definition of the problem of plastic pollution centered on several themes:

- **Materials:** There are certain "bad plastics" and other materials cities need to focus on that the group identified. These include plastic film, marginal plastic, foams, single-use plastic items, biodegradable plastic, plastic lining in packaging and cups, flexible packaging, and some hard plastic. Organics were also identified as a high priority for cities via the survey and interviews, but were not the focus of this workshop.

- **Recycling/MRF:** A second problem identified included issues with recycling and materials recovery facilities (MRF). Here the materials identified cause challenges in that there is not a system for processing them all (e.g. flexible packaging or dirty plastic film), there is contamination in recycling and compost, and the supply chain is hard to manage. Recycling is not processed domestically and instead exported. The materials stream is also rapidly changing, and MRFs have not been able to keep up.

- **Consumers:** Participants described several challenges around consumers with plastic pollution. Consumers were often misinformed or had "consumer illusion" that led to "wishful recycling." Participants generally felt that consumers want to do the right thing, but also wanted convenience and stuck to their habits and expectations.

- **Marketing and Industry:** Consumer behavior quickly tied to marketing in the problem definition. Here problems included green washing and misdirection from industry (e.g. confusing product labels and symbology). Industry design of packaging and materials is done without city input and makes recycling or reuse much more difficult and expensive to manage. Participants also noted that industry lacks any financial responsibility for what they produce, and generally expects it is the role of government to manage waste. Industry also has – and has used – its power to fight attempts to give them more responsibility for their waste.

- **Economics:** Participants noted that economic concerns were key barriers; any solutions would

[3] *See* Appendix C for full agenda and participant list.

need to be justified as helping the bottom line and benefit-cost calculations were suggested as a good tool to use. Plastic pollution can harm GDP, as in the case of seafood with accumulation of plastics in the stomachs of marine fish.

- **Politics:** Economic concerns tied directly to political concerns. Participants identified a lack of political will as a challenge, with the status quo having momentum and the system of waste management seeming opaque to politicians and consumers. A participant suggested plastic pollution needs to become a problem financially and in terms of public pressure to become urgent. Messaging to politicians and public is a challenge and there is not enough upward pressure on, or a sense of urgency for, political leaders to act. As a result, waste policy has been a piecemeal approach in cities, which makes municipal service delivery suffer.

- **Information Needs:** Participants felt that they lacked enough information on the issue of plastics pollution and especially in terms of which solutions are most effective. They wanted more information about what can counter convenience, what types of messaging are most effective, and about how to measure the impacts of plastic pollution and any policy solutions.

- **Neighborhoods:** The impacts of plastic pollution are felt in city neighborhoods, where litter can make people feel unsafe. Challenges such as people lacking time and energy for cleanup, not being invested in their community, not having options for where to put their waste or covered bins to contain it, and/or the deviance by littering were all identified. Plastic pollution impacts were also linked globally to environmental and human health harms in other countries and the oceans via the Marine Affairs Institute presentation.

There were a number of key themes that emerged from the discussion of plastic pollution as a targeted problem.

- Waste management system is opaque to consumers and politicians
- Industry creates the problem but is not held responsible
- Municipal government is burdened with solving the problem
- Plastic pollution is a livability issue with disparate impacts
- Impacts are felt from the local level to the global, including human and environmental health
- There is “good plastic and bad plastic”
- Consumers want to do the right thing, but also want convenience
- Need better alternatives to bans; currently even the best solutions are piecemeal

Solutions brainstorm. Several general principles emerged during the solutions discussion: cities need the resources to execute, approaches need to be convenient for consumers, and there’s a need to build political will. Incremental wins and steps are important, while also recognizing that more comprehensive

and integrated policies are most desirable.

Solutions fell into several categories, covering behavior change, city networks, education and NGO partnerships, materials processing, packaging and product design, and other policy solutions. Ideas discussed, which are listed here to show from highest to lowest the level of interest indicated from the participating cities, included:

- **Incentivize behavior to reduce single-use items:** This solution had the most interest out of the participating cities and was the topic of one of the workshop's breakout groups. During the brainstorm, participants suggested ideas such as targeting consumer behavior, encouraging re-use and focusing on reducing single-use disposables, offering incentives for repairing items, using fees vs. discounts, and exploring creative incentives (e.g. cutting the line at the coffee shop if you bring your own mug). They also noted that bans should not be the focus, but instead an approach that is useful to people's lifestyles.

- **Develop a city, regional, or state network in support of extended producer responsibility (EPR):** This solution also generated strong interest and was the focus of a breakout group. Here participants suggested building a city, state, or regional network for policy leverage. An example was that there could be an opt-in program for cities in the Northeast or on the West Coast. EPR efforts could focus specifically on packaging. Participants noted that states with bottle bills often find conflicts with EPR.

- **Develop a toolkit of policies and best management practices for plastic pollution and waste elimination:** This solution was the third focus area for a breakout group and was identified as an action area where UPSTREAM could lead and help cities. Participants expressed strong interest in knowing about how to weigh the costs and impacts of different waste management policies in the shorter and the longer-term. They suggested developing a hierarchy around different activities and policies a city can pursue based on impact.

- Solutions that also generated interest from at least several of the participants when asked to prioritize included:
    - Social marketing campaigns and branding for behavior change
    - Financial incentives for businesses on behavior change
    - Reports or studies to inform action and priorities. Economic and marketing research on the consumer and business sides.
    - Approved product packaging ranking and/or a manufacturers' rating on quality/longevity of a product
    - Public education about plastic pollution, reduce, re-use, and recycling
    - Better labeling systems for plastics

- Engaging with industry to encourage product and packaging design changes
- Developing a U.S. materials processing industry
- Developing truly compostable products
- Designing convenient regulations
- Pursuing city procurement solutions on plastic

Next steps. Participants shared strong interest in pursuing several ideas from the workshop:

- **Toolkit:** Participants would like to see the toolkit idea move forward, led by UPSTREAM. Immediate steps would be developing the concept further and pursuing funding.

- **Incentive program:** There was interest in seeing the business incentive program to reduce single-use items move forward, which was one of the small working group ideas further developed in the detailed workshop notes. This idea would provide a set of criteria and associated assistance and incentives, including procurement, to help businesses voluntarily reduce single-use items. It also offers a companion incentive program for consumers who participate. Clean Water Action may be able to develop this further.

- **EPR convening:** Another item for further action was bringing cities together around the EPR model idea discussed at the workshop. UPSTREAM was suggested as a good convening partner.

- **NGO and academic partnerships with cities:** Participants were energized to pursue partnerships between academic institutions and cities and between NGOs and cities to provide extra capacity and technical assistance to help cities move ideas forward.

- **Education and awareness:** Several participants shared that the information from the workshop was very helpful, especially defining the problem collectively, and they wanted to pursue more education and awareness about the problem and solutions in their home cities with colleagues and the public. This was another area identified where UPSTREAM could help in terms of helping with messaging and how to effectively define the problem of plastics pollution for the public (e.g. health impacts of plastics or other angles).

- **Grant funding:** Several cities expressed interested in pursuing grant funding opportunities with UPSTREAM. Clean Water Action can also provide support in this space on the grassroots/community engagement side.

- **Continued collaboration and communication:** There was interest in continued collaboration

amongst the group. This could be via USDN or other existing networks, but also should ensure that NGO and academic partners can stay in touch as well. Quarterly conference calls, a web platform, a peer-to-peer learning group, and/or other low-barrier-to-enter solutions were suggested. Participants also identified this as an area where UPSTREAM could take the lead on coordination.

IV. Implementing Results.

Following the December meeting, consistent with the initial grant proposal, the cities of San Francisco and Providence were challenged to take the discussion and determine the best way for their cities use the information that was shared. UPSTREAM met with city staff individually and with community allies to develop action plans that were tailored to the needs and existing policies of each city.

San Francisco

In order to meet the needs of a San Francisco specific campaign, UPSTREAM chose to bring on new expertise and support. Miriam Gordon, former California state director for Clean Water Action & Clean Water Fund and San Francisco resident, was hired to lead discussions with city staff and organize community support for additional city policy. Initial conversations were held with Julie Bryant and Jack Macy of the SF Department of the Environment with Jamie and Miriam from UPSTREAM. Based on a review of the December work and existing city priorities, the group determined to move forward with a "Beverage Litter Policy" that focuses on reducing plastic pollution by reducing the amount of single-us take-out beverage cups and associated plastic items that come with to-go beverage sales.

In February, Miriam met with the San Francisco Department of the Environment and allies at Clean Water Action to ensure that both were committed to moving forward with the San Francisco Beverage Litter Policy. The team reviewed and identified model ordinance language. Miriam had developed a relationship with Sandra Lee Fewer, Supervisor of District #1, who had recently indicated an interest in tackling the litter problem in her district.

Additional allies at the Plastic Pollution Coalition and Surfrider Foundation were engaged as they had taken on efforts to secure a straws reduction policy in San Francisco. Knowing that it would take significant effort to implement a cups and straws policy, UPSTREAM worked to align efforts and combine an "ask first" policy with straws into a proposed fee on take-out beverage packaging. Surfrider decided they were not interested in working on straws issues at the policy level and is instead educating restaurants about plastics. The Plastic Pollution Coalition decided to partner. A coalition of supporters met with Supervisor Fewer on March 13th, 2017. Supervisor Fewer has decided not to move forward on any particular policy until she holds a litter hearing and gathers input.

Additional meetings have been held with both Palo Alto, Berkeley, and San Jose. Both cities have expressed interest in the cup fee policy and are expected to begin working on ordinance language in

2017.[4]

Providence

The City of Providence was starting at a different baseline than San Francisco. Providence was saddled with a poor performing recycling system that failed to capture much of the available material. There have been no city specific proposals to ban particular plastic items such as take-out bags or polystyrene food packaging. Essentially a blank canvass for potential action, many of the non-government stakeholders in Providence, and much of Rhode Island, felt the time has come for a more aggressive approach to plastic pollution, especially given the close identity between Rhode Island and ocean health.

The difficulties in Providence stem from a confluence of pressures. As waste management continues to be a significant line item in annual budget, there continues to be a need to maximize the impact of their existing Zero Waste plan. There is only one landfill in the state, owned and operated by a quasi-public corporation, and their statutorily set tipping fees for municipalities are set to rise for the first time in decades as the landfill gets closer to filling. Beyond financial concerns of the city, a variety of communities have expressed a need to address litter concerns. Less affluent communities struggle to dedicate local resources, such as volunteer cleanups and business expenditures, needed to prevent and mitigate the impact of litter. On all fronts the prevalence and exponential growth of single-use disposable plastic have exacerbated each of the problems giving motivation for action.

Though the full organizing and policy project in Providence will not be completed upon the end of this grant period, project participants broke down their work into two segments: grassroots engagement and policy development. Individual communities need to be engaged in furtherance of a more thorough understanding of how plastic pollution impacts people's experience. In order to address these problems, city policy needs to be crafted and tailored to meeting the needs of a diverse set of communities, both residential and commercial.

An effective grassroots engagement relied on community partners with organization membership or motivated constituencies seeking to find solutions to the way in which plastic pollution manifested itself in communities and to city infrastructure. The community engagement process is being anchored by the Clean Water Action Rhode Island organizing team who have met with city staff and the Environment and Sustainability Task Force to identify existing outreach efforts and community leaders for engagement. Neighborhood associations and individual activists are being engaged in an effort to bring people and local businesses together to share priorities and identify critical next steps for city action.

Within Rhode Island there continues to be additional communities taking up the issue of single-use disposable plastic, primarily in the form of city level bag bans. Two new communities have enacted these policies just in the first four months of 2017 even though momentum for state level action has waned. Engagement and leadership by the capital city will be a catalyst for future action at the state

[4] Existing model ordinance language can be found in Appendix C. Further development and refinement of model policies will be addressed in a future Plastic Pollution Toolkit.

level.

Over the course of the upcoming months, UPSTREAM will work with city and organization partners to craft a city specific policy for preventing plastic pollution. This work will be closely aligned with the development of the Plastic Pollution Toolkit discussed below.

V. Building a Plastic Pollution Toolkit

The project partners who met in December clearly articulated a need for a "Plastic Pollution Toolkit" that would help them understand the scope of the problem and the differing ways in which cities could address it. It was proposed that the structure would match priority outcomes, e.g. reduction of waste generation or improved recycling processing, with policy options, e.g. polystyrene bans or investments in recycling sorting infrastructure. This would make a toolkit relevant to all cities regardless of the predisposition to waste management and history of engagement.

In early research on the development of this toolkit lead the UPSTREAM team to identify a critical ally, Plastic Pollution Coalition <www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org>, had launched a working group initiative to develop a similar project. After discussing the needs of both projects, it has been determined that building this toolkit should be a collaborative effort by the existing and new stakeholders in each effort. It is anticipated that a early version of the toolkit will be made available in the next 8-12 months.

The primary difference in the two ideas is audience. The need identified through the Beyond the Ban project focused on how to support city staff and policymakers. The Plastic Pollution Coalition was seeking to primarily support community advocates in both the United States and in the Global South where plastic pollution is a more acute local issue. Our intent is to combine efforts and determine what methods of distribution will be best for making sure that a future toolkit is seen by each of these audiences.

Researching and building a Plastic Pollution Toolkit is now a core program for UPSTREAM, including expanding and extending the contract of our California consultant, Miriam Gordon, to play a leadership role in the collaborative effort.

VI. Potential Next Steps

This project has led to the development of a number of potential complementary next actions by both cities and other participants. The Plastic Pollution Toolkit will need additional work in the coming years to reflect the ongoing policy efforts of cities across the country. The private sector also continues to innovate on the ways in which plastics will be used in commerce, necessitating an ongoing dialogue between local systems operators and policy makers with the industry utilizing these materials. As cities and states seek policies to address system funding shortfalls with the need for radical infrastructure investments, bringing private industry into the dialogue will be critical in future years.

Finally, cities continue to be primary actors in addressing climate change. With climate action plans in place across the nation, one of the less understood ways in which these goals could be met are with progressive and innovative waste prevention and management tools. Greenhouse gas emissions could be reduced through the use of less material, like plastic, that is derived from fossil fuels. Alternatively, reduction goals could be met through more effective materials management that sends less to landfills and incinerators while focusing on creation of a more circular economy.

In furtherance of this goal, UPSTREAM is seeking to develop clear standards on quantifying the climate impacts of waste prevention and sustainable materials management. As cities seek every opportunity to reduce climate emissions, it is necessary that each sector undergo a full analysis to determine the most effective next steps to reducing overall emissions.

Appendix A: Interview Summary

To: Beyond the Ban Participants

From: Jamie Rhodes, UPSTREAM

Re: **Summary of Beyond the Ban Project Interviews**

Cc: Urban Sustainability Directors Network

Between September 1st and September 16th, staff from UPSTREAM and Clean Water Action conducted 40-60 minute interviews with staff from the following cities and organizations:

Cities	Organizations
San Jose, CA	Surfrider Foundation
San Francisco, CA	Californians Against Waste
Providence, RI	Plastic Pollution Coalition
New York City, NY	5 Gyres Institute
Seattle, WA	National Resources Defense Council
Santa Monica, CA	GAIA
Boston, MA	Responsible Purchasing Network
Somerville, MA	California Product Stewardship Council
Surrey, British Columbia, CAN	UPSTREAM
Portland, ME	Clean Water Action

Though this is far from an exhaustive list of the entities concerned with and engaged on issues associated with the impacts of the exponential growth of plastic and plastic packaging, it does provide a unique cross-section of opinions and experience.

The goal of these interviews was to understand the landscape of efforts to impact the flow of plastic both in commerce and in our environment as plastic pollution. These efforts include a variety of policy and community engagement efforts coupled with education programs. While considering what data may be available to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs currently in place, the focus of these conversations was to understand the experience and perspectives of project participants.

Existing Policy Efforts

While the introduction to these interviews were intended to focus participants to discussing plastic, discussion ranged across many topics. Given the complexity and variety of responsibilities for most sustainability staff, it was impossible to limit this to one discrete topic. Sustainability departments represent a critical intersection of needs and responsibilities within a given city, where staff integrate the work of multiple departments through the lens of "sustainability." This perspective is invaluable, yet the practical implementation of sustainability measures require buy-in and support from operational departments. Knowledge regarding the variety of ways in which sustainability work is integrated into city operations is a valuable tool for when this project seeks to pilot new programs.

Aggregated among all the city participants, the greatest amount of time and effort has been focused on the banning of particular products, namely plastic bags and polystyrene packaging. A primary impetus for these policies have been to achieve an overall reduction in the use of these products which are not generally manageable in the municipal recycling system or otherwise result in devaluing of collected material through contamination. Additionally, these products have a significant environmental impact in the form of litter, blocking stormwater systems, and contaminating compost streams. Though most cities have not specifically cited data to demonstrate that scope and depth of the economic impacts of plastic usage, many of these points are used in the advocacy necessary to institute these bans.

Outside of product or material bans, each city has worked to modernize its materials management[5] system. These steps to incorporate practices and policies to update municipal systems range from increasing cart sizes, segregating organics, single-stream recycling, to Pay-As-You-Throw. These systems shifts generally have the benefit of increasing the amount of material that is collected and diverted from traditional waste management techniques, i.e. landfilling and incineration. Each system change comes with a cos that is

[5] "Materials management" is used here to refer to all post-consumer collection of waste, recycling and/or compost, which vary from city to city.

directly tied to education and compliance for residents, businesses and other institutions who must adjust to any new system.

Though not directly related to plastics management, most of the participating cities have set targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. There has been an interest expressed in more closely connecting waste reduction and management efforts with those emissions reduction targets. More data needs to be collected as to how the waste management system leads to emissions in order to establish how system changes equate to overall emissions reduction. Among the advocacy groups interviewed, it is clear that the driving crisis of climate change is closely connected to the on-going use of plastic. So long as cheap oil dominate the international economy, there will be an almost limitless source of the refining by-product which is the building block of an increasingly plastic society.

Types of Goals and Metrics

In lab conditions, every new idea would be thoroughly tested through data collection and analysis. Of course public policy and city operations are far from lab conditions. One of the core goals of this project is to understand what data may be available to evaluate the plastics related zero waste policies that are being considered or have been implemented. Unfortunately, it is rare for there to sufficient baseline and post-policy data available in order to isolate the impact of past actions. Compounding this concern is the variety of ways in which data is being captured across North America. What is discussed here is the broad suite of data points that warrant additional discussion and potentially the target of the upcoming survey.

The most prevalent goal that has been established is to reach “zero waste” by a target date, i.e. 2020 or 2030. It is critical to ask how zero waste is defined in this context. At the most general level, it is quantified as a significant reduction, as much as 90%, in the amount of material that is being managed by traditional systems like landfills and incinerators. Diversion into alternative management efforts like recycling and composting is the primary metric. The greatest variability in this conceptualization of a city-specific goal is the role of source reduction and the overall prevention of waste generation.

Additionally, many cities have established clear goals on specific recycling and/or composting rates. These efforts are focused on improving existing systems through introduction of new technology or operational changes. The most common example has been the launch of residential composting programs. When implemented there are similarities to curbside or transfer station based recycling efforts and target a certain percentage of the waste stream based on previous waste characterization studies. However, these measurements are most often based on collection tonnages, which is widely regarded as an insufficient measurement. Tonnage is easiest to measure with trucks riding over scales, but it is not necessarily the most useful tool, as weight does not necessarily equate to environmental harm or landfill capacity. Weight is, of course, the primary driver of disposal costs, hence its usefulness as a public policy tool.

One of focus for many sustainability departments has been to push their cities to lead by example in recycling and waste reduction efforts. While the most prevalent focus in this area has been greenhouse gas emissions reductions and energy efficiency, there are also specific departmental, building or other unit goals for

recycling, composting and waste reduction. While not generally binding, these goals and metrics are designed to show the private sector and residents what is possible to replicate. There is a lot more that can be done in this space, from auditing of city departments to purchasing policies which prioritize waste reduction.

Barriers to Action.

As with all efforts, there are a myriad of political, resource and other barriers to taking what may seem to be a common sense step in addressing a critical problem. There are two primary categories that were discussed in these interviews: resources and knowledge. Resources relate to the time, staff and/or money that would be necessary to develop, legislate and implement new programs. Knowledge barriers are more closely tied to public awareness and interdepartmental commitment to efforts. Knowledge barriers could be the result of insufficient data, but it may also refer to lack of systems understanding[6].

While recycling generally has universal appeal, there is insufficient awareness as to how the recycling process works and the forces at play in the creation and operation of any system. With respect to plastic films and its impact on the environment, the ways in which it contaminates and devalues other waste streams has not been communicated to the public in a meaningful way. Without a full understanding of how individual action impacts the larger system, there is little impetus to adopt small behaviour changes which could, in the aggregate, result in a significantly more efficient or effective system.

Operators of recycling systems across the country are struggling with the existing market for recyclable plastics. While there is disagreement as to whether the current downturn is a permanent feature or a temporary slump, it has upended much of the financial viability of recycling programs. As more products and packaging become plastic based, recycling systems have been unable to adapt with sufficient speed to maximize the potential value of system inputs. When the value of the material being sold out of the recycling system drops, the system itself needs to seek alternative subsidization either through public funds, user fees or a shift to extended producer responsibility. However, the significant barrier of public knowledge of this system makes it even more difficult to build the political will for instituting these potential new funding mechanisms for a critical program.

Though outside of the purview of this group, the fact that there is no national policy for addressing waste, increasing recycling and reducing overall waste generation in the United States hamstrings the United States' ability to impact these global markets. Much of the authority for these decisions have been devolved to cities, towns and/or regional waste districts. However, the flow of material into these systems, sale of recyclable material and, to some degree, final disposal of waste is an international market. This has resulted in a significant imbalance of power between what policymakers can control and the market forces being

[6] Systems is used as a broad term to refer to both the "plastics lifecycle" and local recycling systems. Both are notoriously opaque for residents and there is generally little internal motivation to break down difficult knowledge barriers.

exerted on them. In order to address this imbalance and in the absence of national policymaking, there would be significant value in the development of a network of cities that are able to act in concert to leverage their collective influence.

As with all policy and programs, there is a significant under-resourcing of our materials management systems. There is a need for additional policy staff to develop strategic goals. Capital is needed to update equipment and implement long-term programs. Time is necessary in order to develop and roll out new policies and community engagement efforts. There is a constant tension between the ability to meet on-going operational needs balanced with what is necessary to adopt and implement systems changes.

Potential New Ideas

There are few actual new ideas in the world of public policy, including in the sustainable materials management realm. Discussions on this topic were more focused on what ideas and concepts participants thought would be valuable to explore in their own cities and communities. Pulling from the depth of experience represented in this project, these ideas, and many more, are the primary target of discussion in the December meeting.

One potential policy idea that has been utilized in the rest of the world but not in the United States is the implementation of an Extended Producer Responsibility program for materials recycling, primarily packaging. This policy has the potential to bring new resources and capacity into managing a system by putting financial and operational responsibility on those that are deciding what material to put into the system. This has the potential of creating a financial incentive to move away from low value plastic and plastic film, which is a primary driver of plastic pollution.

Whether a program focus is managing the use of plastic bags and films or creating more sustainable communities, there is a need for increased capacity for public engagement and local organizing. There is a shared experience among cities in the struggle to constantly roll out new waste management systems, whether it is new recycling cart size, composting requirements and/or changes in collection schedules. Each change requires significant outreach and education in order to achieve desired levels of compliance while also addressing justice and equity concerns about how such decisions may inordinately impact communities of color and/or English as a second language communities. Beyond this, the development of more sustainable communities requires regular engagement and understanding of public services, including the all too important of question of “Why?”.

There has been a shared desire among cities that there needs to be a shift in packaging design. The biggest concern here is that cities are not big enough to change packaging, just as they are not large enough to impact the global movement of waste and recycling. To be effective, state governments are likely the appropriate entities to drive reduction, although national action would be more effective. States can establish standards and requirements for packaging use across a larger population leading to industry consistency and a level playing field for industry along with predictability for a mobile population base. As is, industry is making money using the most amount of the lowest quality material. The benefit goes to industry

while the burden of hauling and disposing of this material falls on local governments.

Additional Needs

In attempting to focus more closely on the impact of the exponential increase in the use of plastics in our economy, there is a significant need to understand how that material moves into and out of systems controlled by local governments. A better understanding of the source of the material can help tailor the need for local policies to minimize or prevent the ongoing usage of this material, e.g. plastic bag bans or disposable utensils. Knowing how it travels out of the community, i.e. through the waste stream, littered, in the recycling stream, etc., is just as critical in understanding how to tailor that system either to minimize opportunities for it to escape into the environment or address the economic impact of managing the material.

While many communities have the ability to track back contaminated loads to particular communities, it would be helpful to have an even more granular real-time data as to what is being disposed of in any stream, waste, recycling or composting, as it is being collected. This could be done by haulers as part of their collection duties or automated as part of the collection process. Regardless of the ways in which this data could be generated, greater knowledge of what is being collected as it is being collected can help build the foundation for additional pre-consumer regulation or post-consumer management techniques.

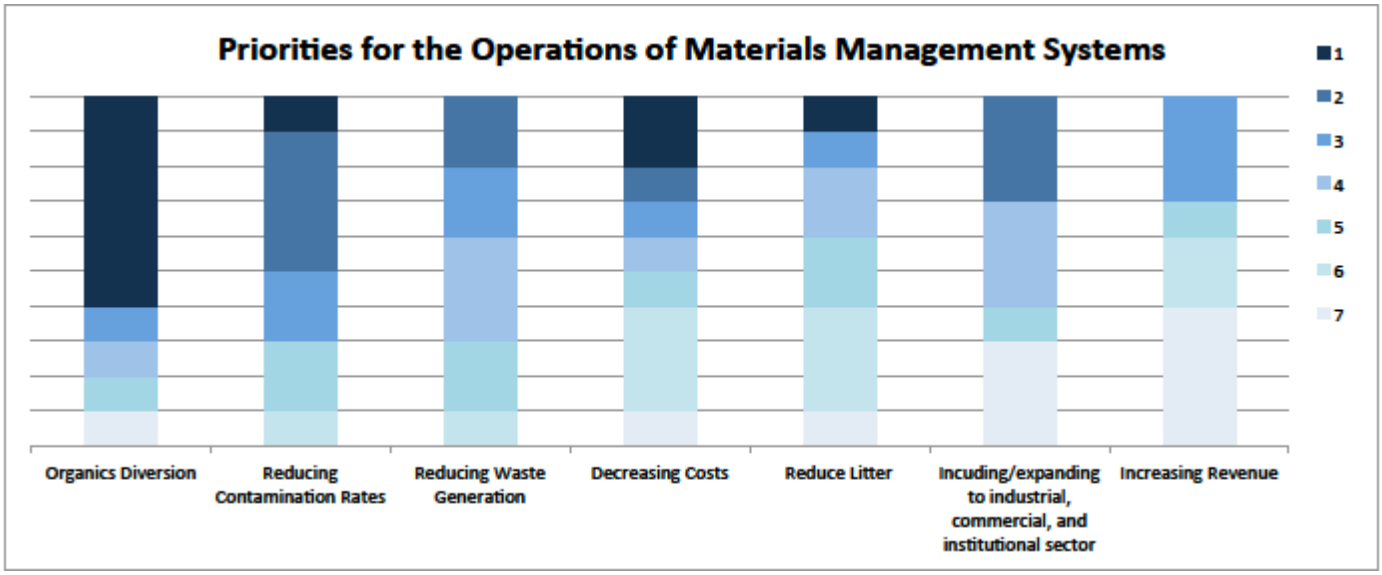
Potential December Topics

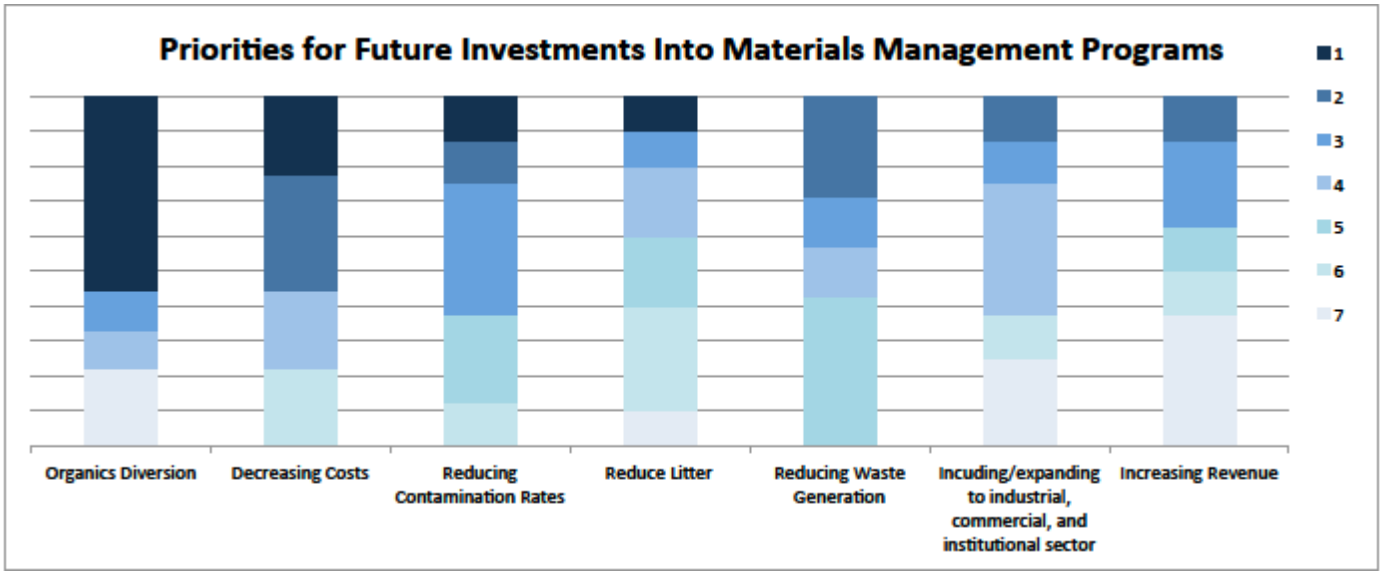
The agenda for our December convening will be under development throughout the fall. There are a couple of ideas that were brought up to be considered:

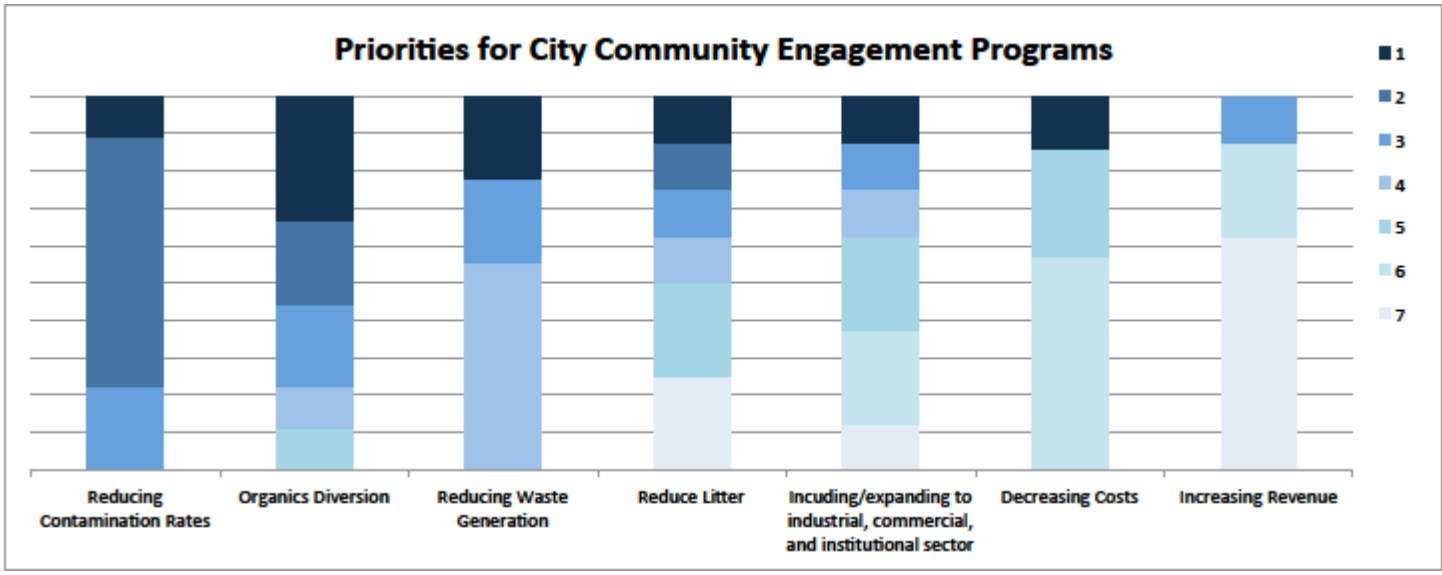
- Model policy for addressing plastic pollution.
- Developing a shared vision for collective action.
- Connecting this work with city climate goals.
- Preventing loopholes that allow industry to avoid regulation.
- Learn from CA in developing a more strategic policy and implementation of a product ban or analogous policy.
- Evaluate the potential for statewide policies.
- Explore the ways in which cities can reduce the amount of plastic entering the waste stream.

Appendix B: Select Survey Results Presented at Convening

(Sample survey and full survey results can be found in attached grant materials)






Priorities for City Community Engagement Programs
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Reducing Contamination Rates
Organics Diversion
Reducing Waste Generation
Reduce Litter
Incuding/expanding to industrial, commercial, and institutional sector
Decreasing Costs
Increasing Revenue