



## How to Hold a Zero Waste Neighbors' Night Out!

Suggestions by Brennan Bird

Here are a few tips from Cool Davis on how to host a zero waste Neighbors' Night Out. Even a few conscious decisions can reduce our waste disposal and help us lower greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Before the Event**

Essential reminder: the most successful way to reduce waste is to avoid producing it in the first place. So, to that end, use these considerations when preparing for your event.

#### **1) E-vite your Guests**

Send invitations via email to help save money and paper. Include these zero waste guidelines in your invitation to encourage your neighbors to follow them also. If you are hand-delivering invitations, print them on the back of used sheets of paper or use post-consumer recycled paper.

#### **2) Prepare Local Dishes that Reduce Packaging and Limit Waste**

Prepare dishes with locally grown produce and with ingredients that can be bought in the bulk section. Make sure to bring your own bags and jars to the store. In this way, you'll support local farmers, produce a meal with a low-carbon impact, and create less throw-away packaging. Encourage your neighbors to do the same, and have them "show-off" how little packaging their dish required!

#### **3) Encourage Drinks that Reduce Packaging**

Avoid packaging; recycling seems great but it still uses a huge amount of energy. Aluminum cans are the most readily and efficiently recycled; if neighbors purchase drinks for the event, encourage canned drinks over glass ones. Plastic #1 and #2 containers are the most readily recycled, #3-#7 plastics are more difficult. Bonus points for neighbors who make their own drinks, which requires little or no packaging at all! Serve pitchers of water to avoid plastic bottled water.

### **During the Event**

#### **4) Use Reusable Dishware**

Rely on all things reusable; disposable dishware is wasteful, and although biodegradable dishware is better, it still requires vast amounts of embodied energy to produce and must be broken down in a commercial compost facility. Use your own reusable dishware and invite your neighbors to help wash dishes afterwards; or invite your neighbors to bring their own plates and utensils. Use cloth tablecloths and napkins to further reduce the resources your event consumes. If you must use disposable dishware, look for the kind that is "home compostable."

Hint: For picnic style events, many folks are liking the dishes and cups called Preserve made from 100% recycled plastic which are attractive, dishwasher safe, light-weight, stackable, durable, inexpensive, and reusable. They are available at the Davis Food Coop and elsewhere in town.

#### **5) Label Recycling and Compost Bins**

Label bins to encourage your neighbors to place the recycling and the compost in the right places. If absolutely necessary, have a much smaller "landfill" bin nearby, for the few items that cannot be recycled or composted.

## 6) Brainstorm More Ideas

Display a white board or butcher paper to capture more suggestions on how to hold a zero waste event. Your guests will enjoy sharing and discussing their ideas about how to adapt and expand these guidelines for other events.

## After the Event

### 7) Wash Your Dishes in a Water-Efficient Manner

Dishwashers use less water than hand washing! Place scraped dishes directly into the dishwasher, and at the end of the wash cycle let dishes air dry for the most efficient way to wash dishes. For hand washing, set out wash bins with hot water for guests to wash their own dishes. The first bin is for dirty water, the second bin is cleaner water, and the last bin is the cleanest for the final rinse. This helps reduce the amount of water required to wash the dishes, and ensures that everyone pitches in.

### 8) Compost

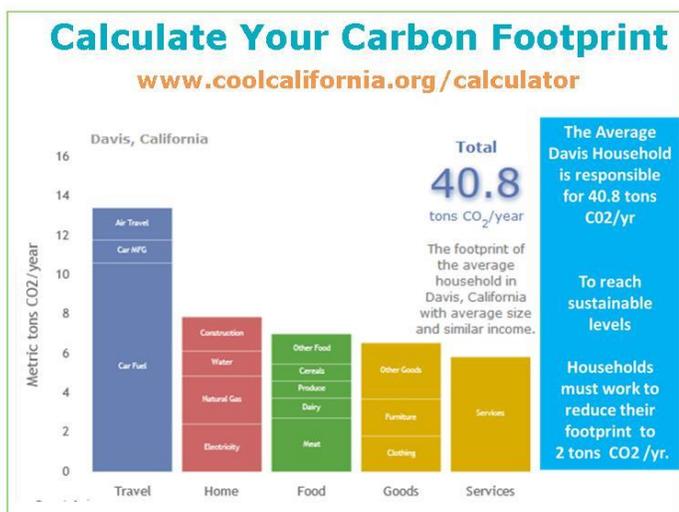
Make sure you have secured a place to compost the organic matter. If you don't have your own compost bin, invite a neighbor with a compost bin to take on the extra material. Or, use this event as an incentive to start your own bin. (<http://cityofdavis.org/pw/recycle/backyardcompost.cfm>)

### 9) Leftovers?

Invite your neighbors to take home some of the leftovers—in reusable containers— so that you aren't overburdened with food.

These simple steps can help ensure your Neighbors' Night Out comes as close to zero waste as possible. For more resources on how to live a sustainable lifestyle, please consult the National Resources Defense Council's Guide to Greener Living: <http://www.nrdc.org/cities/living/gover.asp>

Have a zero waste suggestion that isn't listed here? Please send it to Lynne Nittler at [lnittler@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lnittler@sbcglobal.net) so we can add it to our list.



The goal of the draft Davis Integrated Waste Management Plan is to reduce waste disposal to 1.9 pounds per person per day as calculated by the CA Dept. of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (Calrecycle) by the year 2020, and as close to zero pounds per person as possible by the year 2025. These goals are consistent with Calrecycle's current statewide recycling targets. Aiming for zero emissions will help Cool Davis meet the City goals to engage 75% of Davis households in carbon reduction by 2015.

