**Resolution 15: Examining Cornell University’s Existing Waste Management Practices**

***Abstract:*** In order to ensure Cornell University remains a clean, safe, environmentally sustainable, and ecologically compatible educational and living community, investments must be made to investigate existing waste management practices as a means of identifying existing short-comings and opportunities to incorporate technology, engineering, and innovation.

***Sponsored by:*** Josh Washington, Master’s Representative

***Reviewed by:*** Committee on Infrastructure, Technology, and the Environment, 20/03/2022

**Whereas,** Cornell University is recognized as a “global leader in sustainability and climate change research, teaching and engagement,” specifically, such that our “campuses are living laboratories for developing, testing and implementing solutions that address these most challenging issues,” as digitally noted by administrators,[[1]](#footnote-1) and

**Whereas,** Cornell University is currently “the leading Ivy League institution rated by AASHE STARS, and one of just eight universities in the world to achieve the highest possible STARS rating of Platinum,”[[2]](#footnote-2) and

**Whereas,** Cornell University’s Campus Master Plan promotes the important role of stewardship ensuring that the University’s continued development “respect[s] and manage[s] the physical environment of the campus and its broader land base for the health of the university, its constituencies, its neighbors and the larger regional ecosystem,”[[3]](#footnote-3) and

**Whereas,** in their November 16, 2021 visit to the Assembly, President Pollack and Vice President Malina expressed their support for the sustainable development of campus, noted the important role that sustainable infrastructure plays in the daily happenings of the Cornell community, and

**Whereas,** the installation of such “smart” waste and recycling infrastructure has the potential to continuously provide waste accumulation metrics, enabling informed decision making with respect to collection times, cycles, and/or patterns, and

**Whereas,** in the current absence of a similar method of remotely tracking metrics of waste accumulation, our current waste disposal and recycling system inefficiently and unnecessarily burns fossil fuels and wastes financial resources surveying and collecting waste from receptacles that are not fully filled, and

**Whereas**, in the current absence of a similar method of remotely tracking metrics of waste accumulation, admirable attempts to conserve financial resources and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inadvertently neglect overfilled waste receptacles, resulting in a greater likelihood of wildlife accessing waste, posing a potential danger physical danger, as well as perpetuates existing issues of waste ending up in our local waterways and natural environment(s), resulting in detrimentalecological consequences.

**Be it therefore resolved,** Cornell University shall form a working group comprised of representatives from the Department of Facilities Management, the Office of the University Architect, the Department of Energy and Sustainability, the Department of Finance and Administration, and the various Cornell Assemblies to study the efficacy of updating the University’s outdoor waste management infrastructure to include the incorporation of smart waste receptacles. The working group shall be charged with, but not limited to, developing an accurate representation of the location of all outdoor waste receptacles on the University’s Ithaca campus, determining the frequency with which these outdoor waste receptacles are serviced, determining the weekly fuel and labor cost rate associated with servicing such receptacles, projecting and evaluating the differential fuel and labor cost rate associated with replacing existing outdoor waste receptacles with smart waste receptacles, and considering the holistic integration of smart waste receptacles into the broader infrastructure and sustainability strategy of the University.

**Be it further resolved,** that should such a working group conclude that the general replacement of existing waste receptacles throughout the University’s Ithaca campus with smart waste receptacles will likely result in a net reduction in fuel and labor required to service waste from outdoor receptacles as well as a net reduction in the University’s carbon emissions compared to the current baseline, the University shall develop and implement a plan to update the University’s existing waste receptacle infrastructure in a manner that comports with the working group’s findings.

**Be it finally resolved,** the commencement of this initiative will continue to support the historic and thriving environmentalist values of Cornell University, making good on promises of sustainable development.

Respectfully Submitted,

Josh Washington

Master’s Representative

1. <https://sustainability.cornell.edu/#:~:text=Cornell%20is%20a%20global%20leader,change%20research%2C%20teaching%20and%20engagement> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/about/reports-awards-facts/awards-rankings#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20Cornell%20University%20became,possible%20STARS%20rating%20of%20Platinum>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://masterplan.cornell.edu/doc/CMP\_PART\_1/campus\_maste\_\_plan\_principles\_essential\_features.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)