



U.A. Resolution #8

1 Examining Cornell University's Existing Waste Management Practices

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2 **Sponsors:** Jacob J. Feit, Executive Vice Chair of the University Assembly; Ian Akisoglu, Chair of
3 the Campus Committee on Infrastructure, Technology, and the Environment; Duncan Cady,
4 Undergraduate Representative to the University Assembly
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6 **ABSTRACT:** In order to ensure Cornell University remains a clean, safe, environmentally
7 sustainable, and ecologically compatible educational and living community, investments must be
8 made to investigate existing waste management practices as a means of identifying existing short-
9 comings and opportunities to incorporate technology, engineering, and innovation.
10

11 **Whereas,** Cornell University is recognized as a “global leader in sustainability and climate change
12 research, teaching and engagement,” specifically, such that our “campuses are living laboratories for
13 developing, testing and implementing solutions that address these most challenging issues,” as
14 digitally noted by administrators,¹ and
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16 **Whereas,** Cornell University is currently “the leading Ivy League institution rated by AASHE
17 STARS, and one of just eight universities in the world to achieve the highest possible STARS rating
18 of Platinum,”² and
19

20 **Whereas,** Cornell University's Campus Master Plan promotes the important role of stewardship
21 ensuring that the University's continued development “respect[s] and manage[s] the physical
22 environment of the campus and its broader land base for the health of the university, its
23 constituencies, its neighbors and the larger regional ecosystem,”³ and
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25 **Whereas,** in their November 16, 2021 visit to the Assembly, President Pollack and Vice President
26 Malina expressed their support for the sustainable development of campus, noted the important role
27 that sustainable infrastructure plays in the daily happenings of the Cornell community, and
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29 **Whereas,** the installation of such “smart” waste and recycling infrastructure has the potential to
30 continuously provide waste accumulation metrics, enabling informed decision making with respect
31 to collection times, cycles, and/or patterns, and
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¹<https://sustainability.cornell.edu/#:~:text=Cornell%20is%20a%20global%20leader,change%20research%2C%20teaching%20and%20engagement>

²<https://sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/about/reports-awards-facts/awards-rankings#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20Cornell%20University%20became,possible%20STARS%20rating%20of%20Platinum.>

³https://masterplan.cornell.edu/doc/CMP_PART_1/campus_maste_plan_principles_essential_features.pdf

33 **Whereas**, in the current absence of a similar method of remotely tracking metrics of waste
34 accumulation, our current waste disposal and recycling system inefficiently and unnecessarily burns
35 fossil fuels and wastes financial resources surveying and collecting waste from receptacles that are
36 not fully filled, and
37

38 **Whereas**, in the current absence of a similar method of remotely tracking metrics of waste
39 accumulation, admirable attempts to conserve financial resources and reducing greenhouse gas
40 (GHG) emissions inadvertently neglect overfilled waste receptacles, resulting in a greater likelihood
41 of wildlife accessing waste, posing a potential danger physical danger, as well as perpetuates existing
42 issues of waste ending up in our local waterways and natural environment(s), resulting in
43 detrimental ecological consequences.
44

45 **Be it therefore resolved**, Cornell University shall form a working group comprised of
46 representatives from the Department of Facilities Management, the Office of the University
47 Architect, the Department of Energy and Sustainability, the Department of Finance and
48 Administration, and the various Cornell Assemblies to study the efficacy of updating the University's
49 outdoor waste management infrastructure to include the incorporation of smart waste receptacles.
50 The working group shall be charged with, but not limited to, developing an accurate representation
51 of the location of all outdoor waste receptacles on the University's Ithaca campus, determining the
52 frequency with which these outdoor waste receptacles are serviced, determining the weekly fuel and
53 labor cost rate associated with servicing such receptacles, projecting and evaluating the differential
54 fuel and labor cost rate associated with replacing existing outdoor waste receptacles with smart waste
55 receptacles, and considering the holistic integration of smart waste receptacles into the broader
56 infrastructure and sustainability strategy of the University.
57

58 **Be it further resolved**, that should such a working group conclude that the general replacement of
59 existing waste receptacles throughout the University's Ithaca campus with smart waste receptacles
60 will likely result in a net reduction in fuel and labor required to service waste from outdoor
61 receptacles as well as a net reduction in the University's carbon emissions compared to the current
62 baseline, the University shall develop and implement a plan to update the University's existing waste
63 receptacle infrastructure in a manner that comports with the working group's findings.
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65 **Be it finally resolved**, the commencement of this initiative will continue to support the historic and
66 thriving environmentalist values of Cornell University, making good on promises of sustainable
67 development.
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69 Respectfully Submitted,
70 Jacob J. Feit
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72 Executive Vice Chair, University Assembly