



Cornell University
University Assembly

U.A. Resolution #3

Increasing the Number of Sustainable Waste Receptacles on Campus

[11/30/2021]

Sponsors: Jacob J. Feit, Executive Vice Chair of the University Assembly; Ian Akisoglu, Chair of the Campus Committee on Infrastructure, Technology, and the Environment; Duncan Cady, Undergraduate Representative to the University Assembly

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 increase the number of sustainably compatible waste receptacles across the University's Ithaca, New York campus. Additionally, waste receptacles ought to be strategically placed such that both financial and natural resources are conserved, recycling habits are rationally incentivized, in order to protect these lands, public health, natural resources, and regional biodiversity.

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 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 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

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.>



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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 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 “measure diversion rates,”⁴ by employing using self-harnessed solar power to continuously provide waste accumulation metrics, resulting in informed decision making with respect to collection times, cycles, and/or patterns, and

Whereas, “smart” waste management and recycling infrastructure are similarly outfitted with the technology necessary to “periodically compact[s] the trash inside, creating space for more,”⁵ 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 devastating environmental/ecological consequences, and

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

⁴ <https://bigbelly.com/solutions/campus/>

⁵ <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2011/02/belly>



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Whereas, our peer institutions, including Massachusetts Institute of Technology,⁶ Brown University,⁷ and Boston University⁸ have all implemented “smart waste & recycling” initiatives on their campuses with phenomenal success, and

Be it therefore resolved, Cornell University shall efficiently invest the funds and resources necessary for the full, successful implementation of a campus-wide network of solar-powered waste receptacles, outfitted with monitorization technology allowing for the efficient tracking of waste receptacle capacity in order to strategically plan collection timing, ultimately reducing greenhouse gas emissions necessarily involved in waste collection and processing, and

Be it further resolved, such waste receptacles must be limited in quantity as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the financial burden of sustaining this initiative, however, these installed “smart” receptacles ought to be strategically placed with respect to foot-traffic and living spaces, facilitating practical, equitable access to proper waste disposal, in totality ensuring adequate waste and recycling disposal is rationally incentivized, limiting the propensity for littering and dumping, and

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,

Jacob J. Feit

Executive Vice Chair, University Assembly

⁶ <https://news.mit.edu/2011/bigbelly-solar-at-mit>

⁷ <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2011/02/belly>

⁸ <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2009/big-bellied-trash-eaters-arrive/>