MONETIZING THE EQUITY IN MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE
On Building the Local Circular Economy: Owning the Means of Production

By Jon Michael Huls – Managing Partner/CEO @ SEMCO M.Huls@sustainable-env.com

Transforming traditional waste management to sustainable materials management is not just pie in the sky. It is the HERE and NOW path for communities who own their own solid waste management systems.

Local governments face many challenges including loss of natural capital, overuse of raw resources, unemployment, too much waste, failed recycling programs, eco-justice issues, GHG emissions, declining revenues, and more. However, there is a solution for communities who own their own landfills in which they can optimize solid waste services via privatization but keep municipal equity. As part of this, they can build resource recovery infrastructure for material supply and build a demand superstructure that can create jobs, build a circular economy, reduce GHG, and enhance revenues.

We are all aware of a growing "Deindustrialization of America" –- over 60,000 factories and nearly 6 MM jobs have been lost since 2000 with many in the recycling industries. Our society is rapidly becoming a service-based economy that is mostly "consumptive" rather than "productive". The "Take – Make – Dispose" linear model of economy has severe consequences for our environment, global climate change, and biological life in our oceans and lands. A circular economy based on cradle-to-cradle principles can offset deindustrialization. But to make this a reality, we need to understand how to *monetize sustainability*. But it is difficult because our nation for the past 100 years has prioritized wastefulness as an economic strategy, so it now permeates our entire system. Our landfills take in nearly 400 million tons annually but in effect we have been stockpiling commodities in what we could and should call urban mines.

The *urban mine* is a huge untapped resource, fed by an average of 7.5 lbs per person per day of used commodities. This is *refined* material that goes to waste and must be replaced in our society. Insufficient infrastructure and end-users exist to utilize this material. However, we can borrow from the model of traditional industrial parks that cluster industries in one location solely for land usage efficiencies, and instead build resource recovery and eco-industrial parks (RR-EIPs) that can cluster reuse & recycling industries on a symbiotic business & consumer basis, shortening supply lines and creating local community wealth. RR-EIPs can target collaborative materials processing and used commodity marketing opportunities. When sited on existing and closed landfills, they can take advantage of permitting and siting opportunities. RR-EIPs can create a circular economy that generate jobs while repairing the environment.

To date there are few RR-EIPs co-sited on existing or closed landfills. About 1,269 open landfills operate in the USA and about half are owned by municipalities. This is interesting as nearly 70% of all municipal wastes end up landfilled. Does your community have a landfill? Are you sitting on a potential waste-to-wealth opportunity? Can you optimize your solid waste system?

With SEMCO's help, communities can revitalize the economy while reimagining landfills into RR-EIPs based on community and industrial symbiosis that is environmentally friendly and just. We have developed a blueprint that takes the best aspects of currently existing and proven RR-EIP's here and abroad, and tailored our plans to the needs of localized areas. Call or write us to learn more!

SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CO.

SEMCO

Helping Local Governments & Industry to Monetize Sustainability Since 1995

- ✓ Sustainable Materials Management
- ✓ Forensic & Environmental Assessment
- ✓ Compliance Reporting
- ✓ Education Outreach and Edutainment
- ✓ Organics Recycling & Edible Food Recovery
- ✓ Grant Writing & RFP Processes
- ✓ Business Sales & Market Development
- ✓ Zero Waste Master Planning

Offices in Lake Forest, CA & Atlanta, GA

Sustainable-env.com/