

PROGRAM HISTORY

Caltech's commitment to waste reduction and recycling spans over 40 years. In the early 1960s, a small recycling program was run by a number of volunteer graduate students. In 1979, one of the student volunteers, Professor Judith Cohen, returned to campus as a faculty member and petitioned the administration to establish a recycling center. In 1989, a group of students created the Caltech Environmental Task Force (CETF) to run the recycling program. School and workload demands created challenges for CETF participants so for continuity purposes, campus recycling program operations became the responsibility of the Buildings and Grounds Department within Facilities Management.

In 2016, the Institute began instituting changes to its recycling program on campus to address increasing waste management costs and to improve on-campus diversion. The changes include streamlining collection and sorting processes, consolidating recycling streams, and increasing the consistency of bins and signage. Each building on campus now has a recycling station in a central location on each floor with consistent and clear labels. Over 1,000 bins are now in place across campus.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Goals for Viability

Reduce waste through responsible procurement practices and encourage materials reuse and recycling.

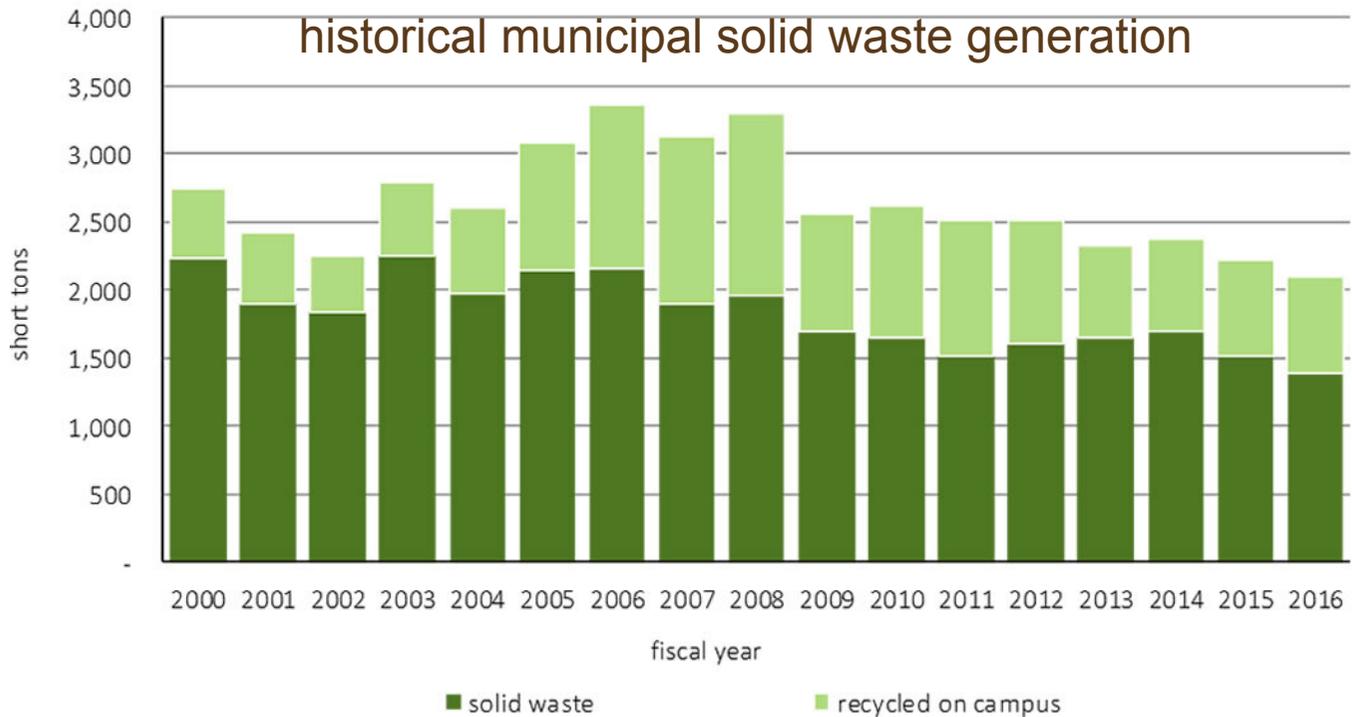
Strategies

- Vendor engagement & supply chain impact assessment
- Transparency in final material disposition
- Facilities stockroom management
- Academic department procurement
- Student led dining assessment



MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE

The campus community has been successful in its efforts to reduce the tons of municipal solid waste (MSW) generated on the core campus, shown in the figure below. The Facilities Department has plans to expand its recycling and waste reduction programs on campus through a combination of increased access to recycling for the campus population and a composting program that is being piloted at the main dining facility, Chandler. Additionally, strategic partnerships with waste haulers and recycling companies will aid in achieving higher diversion rates.



Strategic partnerships

The Institute's waste hauler transports all materials to a material recovery facility (MRF) to sort recyclables and commodities from trash. Trash is sent to an [incineration facility](#) in Long Beach where the material undergoes waste to heat energy transformation. Residual ash and unburned trash is transported to a landfill that employs methane gas recovery for energy generation. These progressive waste management technologies effectively provide Caltech with close to 100 percent landfill diversion throughout the year.

Composting

Caltech collects and separates all of its landscape waste for processing with the Institute's waste hauler, which processes the material for composting and other uses. Caltech is also exploring a variety of methods to compost organic material and food waste generated in the campus' dining facilities. Through composting on site or with a third-party partner, Caltech could significantly reduce the amount of trash that is sent to the landfill.

