



Los Angeles Area  
Chamber of Commerce

TUESDAY | Aug. 16, 2005

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

# Let's Talk Trash



## Coming up at the Chamber

[View all upcoming events on our web calendar.](#)

**THU | Aug. 18**  
International Trade & Investment Council Meeting  
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**TUE | Aug. 23**  
Referral Network  
A Growing Companies program sponsored by Wells Fargo  
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**WED | Sept. 7**  
Health Care Committee Meeting  
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**TUE | Sept. 13**  
Referral Network  
A Growing Companies program sponsored by Wells Fargo  
[more info](#)

**WED | Sept. 14**  
Member Orientation  
[more info](#)

**WED | Sept. 14**  
New Member Reception  
[more info](#)

**THU | Sept. 15**  
Environmental Quality Committee Meeting  
[more info](#)

**FRI | Sept. 16**  
Accenture Pancakes & Politics  
[more info](#)

**FRI | Sept. 16**  
Education and Workforce Committee Meeting  
[more info](#)

**TUE | Sept. 20**  
Transportation & Goods Movement Committee Meeting  
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**THU | Sept. 22**  
Economic Development & Land Use Committee Meeting  
[more info](#)

**THU | Sept. 22**  
Trade Briefing: Doing Business with Israel  
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The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, with more than 1,400 members, is the voice of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber promotes a prosperous economy and quality of life in the Los Angeles region. For more information, visit [www.lachamber.org](http://www.lachamber.org)

350 S. Bixel St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
213.580.7500 tel  
213.580.7511 fax  
[info@lachamber.org](mailto:info@lachamber.org)

There was a lot of trash talking at Los Angeles City Hall last week, some of which was actually about the city's waste management situation.

The issue at hand was whether to renew a contract with the operators of Sunshine Canyon landfill for five years to continue service for residents throughout the city. Instead of making a decision, the city council opted to wait another six months for "study and review."

In that time, the city council has a lot to think about in terms of how we dispose of our trash. This is also a good opportunity for all of us to evaluate our own practices and determine what we can do to be more environmentally responsible at home and at work.

Naturally, city councilmembers from the Valley feel a lot of pressure to vote against this contract extension, because they want the dump to close down as soon as possible. Understandable, but not practical. Certain facilities, like waste disposal, water treatment, or other operations may be undesirable but are necessary for the functioning of any city.

But at the end of the day, the city council needs to make the best decision based on what the city can afford to do and what the unintended consequences will be. That decision should be to renew the contract and make the most of an imperfect situation.

Let's say that the city council voted the way landfill opponents wanted them to and L.A.'s trash was diverted to landfills in other cities. Not only would this be unfair to those cities' residents, but also it would cost the city at least an additional \$20 million annually to send our trash elsewhere. The increase would be passed on to us in the form of an additional fee; do we really want that? And, by the way, if people are willing to pay more for city services, \$20 million could hire lots of new police officers.

The most important point, however, is that if the contract is not renewed, it will not translate into the landfill closing. Not at all. In fact, it will result in other cities transporting their trash through Valley neighborhoods while our city's trash will be driven even further away.

Sunshine Canyon is a privately owned facility and is in compliance with all federal, state and local standards related to landfills. Keep in mind that California's environmental regulations are the strongest in the nation. Furthermore, the operator has guaranteed that Los Angeles will always have the lowest rates at the landfill.

I agree with Councilman Greig Smith and other opponents of the landfill that the city must do more to reduce the amount of solid waste produced by residential customers, which is approximately 4,000 tons daily. Smith is right that the city must find a way to include apartments in the city's recycling programs, for example, and composting seems like an easy practice to adopt into our daily routines at home. Looking further ahead, the city could also be a leader in converting solid waste into an energy source.

Of course all of these options will not eliminate the need for landfills, nor will they come without a price.

By ignoring solid waste issues for so long, the city has run out of options. Sunshine Canyon continues to be the best solution for the next five years, and the city council should work toward extending this contract--and take recycling to the next level.

And that's the Business Perspective.

Russell J. Hammer  
President & CEO  
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

*The Business Perspective* is an award-winning weekly opinion column by Rusty Hammer, President & CEO, LA Area Chamber

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