



# Building a Green Economy: The Recycled Market Development Zone Program Provides Help and Resources

by Margo Reid Brown

A Chinese proverb advises, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." At the heart of California's successful recycling industry is an innovative program drawn from similar inspiration and administered by the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

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Margo Reid Brown is chairperson of the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB), which is the state agency designated to oversee, manage and track the 92 million tons of waste generated each year in California. CIWMB promotes reducing waste whenever possible and protecting public health and safety and the environment. For more information, visit [www.ciwmb.ca.gov](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov).



**T**he Recycled Market Development Zone (RMDZ) program (online at [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RMDZ](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RMDZ)) offers manufacturers a helping hand rather than a handout by providing affordable loans and technical assistance that can help a manufacturing business through the challenging formative stages of developing new recycled-materials products. The end result is a thriving, ongoing commercial enterprise.

In California, recycling has evolved into a growth industry that rivals the size of the motion picture industry. More than 5,300 recycling-related companies are doing business in the state. They employ more than 85,000 people, account for \$4 billion in wages and salaries and generate \$10 billion worth of goods and services annually.

**Success Stories**

The RMDZ program plays a key role for many businesses looking to expand.

One of these is Fire & Light Originals Inc. of Arcata, which turns recycled household glass into premium dinnerware and glassware. Fire & Light was formed in 1995 as a partnership between the Arcata Community Recycling Center and a group of investors who saw opportunities for creating higher value products and diverting about 170 tons of glass from landfills every year. Six years later, with the help of an \$850,000 RMDZ loan, the company acquired a new facility, increased its manufacturing floor space more than tenfold and added 20 new jobs. Today, its elegant glassware is sold in specialty stores and galleries in all 50 states and overseas.

*LEFT TO RIGHT: A worker at Fire & Light Originals pours recycled glass; workers at ersol Silicon recycle semi-conductor materials for solar panels; an ersol Silicon employee tests material; and an Earthworm Soil Factory worker turns enriched earth.*

RMDZ loans often help fill the void when conventional business financing is hard to come by. Fire & Light co-founder John McClurg says the favorable loan rates offered through RMDZ gave his company more options for its expansion. "The lower interest rate allowed us to do some things we couldn't do through conventional financing," he explains.

Another company that has benefited from an RMDZ loan is ersol Silicon. Based in Camarillo, ersol Silicon processes fallout materials from the semi-conductor industry and recycles them for use in the solar industry. CEO Rob Bushman, who started out in recycling with his father in 1974, realized that these materials could be recycled and started washing them, but could not get them clean enough for the solar panel industry. Conventional banks

*continued*

The payoff for local governments comes in the form of new or expanding businesses that create jobs, conserve natural resources and generate tax revenue.





The RMDZ program provides loans and technical assistance for companies, such as ersol Silicon (above), that develop new recycled-materials products.

The Recycled Market Development Zone program offers manufacturers a helping hand rather than a handout.

were reluctant to approve a loan for such a novel business venture. However, a \$1.6 million low-interest RMDZ loan allowed him to buy the equipment necessary to purify the material for solar buyers. Today, ersol Silicon is a recognized industry leader, and its products are in demand worldwide.

“The whole RMDZ program was helpful — lending me the money and believing in an idea and a concept that the banks

and traditional lenders just didn’t believe in,” Bushman says. He calls the RMDZ loan “the turning point in my life and my business career.”

#### Laying a Foundation for Success

The RMDZ program provides low-cost loans with payback periods ranging from five to 15 years, depending on how the loan will be used. Businesses have used RMDZ loans for site acquisition,

working capital, machinery/equipment purchases and refinancing high-interest loans. Prohibited uses include research and development, hazardous waste cleanup, demonstration projects, matching funds for other California Integrated Waste Management Board grants, and payments to business owners/investors.

The RMDZ program also offers technical assistance with a variety of related tasks, such as developing a business plan, navigating the regulatory maze when establishing or expanding a manufacturing venture, redesigning a website to help attract new markets, and identifying reliable, ongoing sources of recycled materials.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board also helps these businesses by stimulating consumer demand for recycled-content products; it hosts a free RecycleStore website (online at [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RecycleStore](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RecycleStore)) and offers a *Recycled-Content Product Directory*, which lists thousands of products available for sale.

Looney Bins, an award-winning and rapidly growing construction and demolition debris waste-hauling and recycling company in Los Angeles, credits support from RMDZ for its early growth and ongoing success. The company was founded in 1986 and carved out a niche in the recycling industry by contracting with Hollywood studios to deconstruct movie lot sets, finding new uses for the lumber, cardboard, metal, plastic and other salvageable components. It was acquired last summer by Waste Management Inc.

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RMDZ issued its first loan to Looney Bins in 1999 for \$500,000 to purchase equipment and provide working capital. This enabled the company to begin grinding wood and drywall into mulch. In 2003, Looney Bins used an additional RMDZ loan to finance a new business venture, Downtown Diversion, which recycles construction and demolition debris. By 2006, Downtown Diversion had become the nation's top recycler of construction and demolition debris, diverting as much as 50,000 tons of materials away from California landfills annually.

### Turning Trash Into Cash

The success of companies like these exemplifies the notion of turning trash into cash, which is the RMDZ program's goal and a central component of the campaign to recycle more waste and foster sustainable markets.

The Earthworm Soil Factory's wiggly workers munch their way through discarded food and garden waste — material that otherwise would have ended up in a Butte County landfill — and turn ordinary soil into a rich, nutrient-loaded product that is sold to nurseries, landscaping companies, organic farmers and consumers.

Conventional banks were hesitant to back owner Larry Royal's venture in 2003, but a \$300,000 low-interest loan from RMDZ helped turn a business plan into a green business trailblazer.

"I didn't go to RMDZ at first because I thought it was going to be a really bureaucratic government process," says Royal. "But the staff at RMDZ, as well as my zone administrator, made things easy for me. They helped us set up meetings, coordinate with the county and prepare for hearings about land-use issues." He adds, "Without RMDZ my business wouldn't be here."

### Program's Economic Impact Is Broad and Lasting

In fall 2008, the RMDZ program topped the \$100 million mark in loans approved since its inception 15 years earlier. The RMDZ program offers business support

as part of its ongoing effort to make California the national leader in sustainability and waste reduction. Recycled-content businesses that have received loans and technical assistance from RMDZ annually divert about 7 million tons of solid waste that otherwise would be headed to California landfills; they've also added 8,800 new jobs to the state's work force.

Local contact with manufacturing businesses is the cornerstone of the RMDZ program's success. RMDZ zone administrators generally are employed in the public works or economic development offices at the city or county level. They work to attract new and expanding manufacturing businesses to their regions by offering an array of incentives, which can range from less stringent building codes and zoning laws to streamlined permit review processes and reduced taxes and license fees. The payoff for local governments comes in the form of new or expanding businesses that create jobs, conserve natural resources and generate tax revenue.

### For More Information

Local agencies interested in learning more about how the RMDZ program can help businesses in their area can find more de-



*Fire & Light Originals recycles household glass to create new dinnerware.*

tailed information online at [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RMDZ/ZoneAdmin](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RMDZ/ZoneAdmin) and [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RMDZ/EconDevelop](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RMDZ/EconDevelop). ■

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Third, local governments and the ICMA University can work together to create standards for manager competency in sensitivity to multi-ethnic and multicultural concerns.

**Include and value training for young professionals.** To succeed in this changing environment, it is essential for cities to institute a corporate culture that embraces training in the largest sense. Training exposes staff at all levels to the environment of the next generation. For students, it can include an internship program and/or implementing a government program at the local high school. Internally, perfor-

mance evaluations can address the time managers set aside to train subordinates, as well as a manager's educational goals for him or herself and for subordinates; the organization's assignment of a mentor for early career employees; and the creation of an internal training program for staff. Organizations can also institutionalize the celebration of employee training and educational accomplishments. Ultimately, training takes all shapes and forms; fully integrating it into the organizational culture is the important thing.

**To create a workplace that mirrors the population it serves, the next generation of professionals must be nurtured today.**

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**Embrace mentoring to leave a positive legacy.** Mentoring is an essential strategy for embracing the next generation. It's also the best way to leave a positive legacy for local government, and it warrants specific attention. Mentoring can be fun. It doesn't require a great deal of time and can be a fulfilling endeavor for all involved. Most importantly, it's an investment in the future. It provides assistance and guidance to help employees succeed and gives the mentor insight into another person's knowledge and perspective.

Despite the fact that the mentor-protégé relationship is usually beneficial for both parties, the survey found that people have many reasons for not being a mentor, including limited time, inability to find a mentor or the challenge of finding a mentor within the employee's agency. Perhaps the most surprising reason was that nobody had asked them to participate in such a program.

Many of these concerns can be mitigated when mentoring is embraced as a core competency for professional managers. Mentoring programs are relatively easy to

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## Borrowing Best Practices

Many agencies have created and implemented measures to effect the change demanded by California's increasing diversity. One-on-one coaching, discussion panels and webinars on career issues that include diversity in the workplace are a few such efforts. Best practices can also be borrowed from local governments that have successfully addressed diversity. The City of Santa Ana is one such municipality. Assistant City Manager Cathy Staniford explains that Santa Ana has had a bilingual recruitment policy for the past 10 to 15 years for all front-line positions at all levels. Over time, increasingly diverse front-line staff have been promoted to management and supervisory positions.

## Why It Matters

To build on past successes and create a workplace that mirrors the population it

serves, the next generation of professionals must be nurtured *today* by individuals in management and executive positions. Organizations need to value diversity as a core competency of staff, institute a corporate culture of training and actively support mentoring and training.

The Cal-ICMA Coaching Program offers free and low-cost tools to support such endeavors online at [www.cal-icma.org/coaching](http://www.cal-icma.org/coaching). Local officials and managers are encouraged to make use of them and promote the key role diversity plays in our communities. ■

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## Top Reasons Why Local Government Professionals Are Not Involved in Mentoring Programs

- Lack of time, programs or organizational support;
- Not asked to participate as mentor or protegee;
- Need training or guidelines;
- Too new or lack experience to be a mentor;
- Not sure where to find information or a mentor;
- Mentor retired or left the agency;
- Looking for specific qualities in a mentor; and
- See mentoring as needed only when seeking a promotion.

Source: California Preparing the Next Generation Survey, 2007-08

## DIRECTOR OF FIRE SERVICES

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The City of Coronado is seeking a Director of Fire Services to serve as the City's Fire Chief and report directly to the City Manager. Under general direction, the Director will plan, direct, manage and oversee the activities and operations of the Fire Department including fire suppression, fire prevention, disaster preparedness, emergency medical and hazardous materials response, beach lifeguard services, and training. Recommended Experience: Ten years of increasingly responsible fire suppression and fire prevention experience including multiple years of management and supervisory responsibility. The ideal candidate will be creative, energetic, community oriented and will practice a flexible "hands-on" management style.

City application and resume required. More information and applications are available at [www.coronado.ca.us](http://www.coronado.ca.us) under Quick Links/Employment. Submit application materials to: City of Coronado, Administrative Services/Human Resources Division, 1825 Strand Way, Coronado, CA 92118. Phone: (619) 522-7301. Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 15, 2009.



## City of San Clemente

### Economic Development and Housing Director

The beautiful southern California community of San Clemente has 4.7 miles of beautiful beaches and great surf that draw visitors on a year-round basis. The City is a family-oriented community of more than 67,900 residents and encompasses 18.5 square miles. Reporting to the City Manager, the Economic Development and Housing Director will develop, manage and coordinate programs in support of the City's economic development interests and housing programs, including overseeing the City's Redevelopment Agency. Bachelor's degree in urban planning, economics, public or business administration, or a related field is required; Master's desirable. Annual salary range of \$124,872 – \$151,788 DOQ.



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Filing deadline is **June 19, 2009**.

implement and can be structured to be informal — using a telephone conversation rather than meeting in person every time — thus minimizing time constraints. Tools available from the PNG committee for its coaching program make it simple

to match mentors with proteges. Willingness to serve as a mentor to early career professionals to facilitate such match-ups can be included as a desirable quality in job descriptions. In summary, mentoring is easier than one thinks.

## J O B O P P O R T U N I T I E S

### COUNTY OF SONOMA

The beautiful and scenic Sonoma County represents the majestic California landscape at its finest. The variety of entertainment and cultural activities, fine dining, award winning wineries, and communities with a charming small town-feel, make the area a wonderful place to live and work. The County serves a population of more than 475,000 residents, including 155,000 residents in Santa Rosa, the County Seat.

#### DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Director of Information Systems has an essential role in providing the vision, leadership, and technical guidance to the County's technology enterprise consisting of computer systems, data communications, records management, and reprographic services. The new IS Director will be a progressive and strategic business partner who serves as an ambassador in providing service, proactive solutions, and strong technical expertise to the IS department of 133 FTEs, and to the entire county operation.

Required experience will include a minimum of five years of senior or executive level management experience, ideally within a large and complex governmental information technology operation. A BS or BA in a related discipline is required — an advanced degree is highly desirable. The annual salary for this position is up to \$172,604, DOQ with an attractive benefits package. To be considered, submit a cover letter, resume with salary history and five references (email preferred) to Paul Kimura by June 5, 2009. A job announcement is available on our website at <http://www.averyassoc.net/jobs>.



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### Finance Director City of Murrieta, CA

Known for its numerous amenities and outstanding Southern California quality of life, the City of Murrieta (pop. 100,173) is seeking a new Finance Director. Supported by a staff of 19, the Finance Department is responsible for all aspects of financial operations for the City. Murrieta's FY2008-09 General Fund totals approximately \$64 million. The City operates on a two-year budget cycle.

The candidate selected will be an exceptional manager of people and multiple priorities. Members of Murrieta's management team are extremely team oriented, collaborative and customer focused. The next Director will enjoy working with supportive colleagues who are mutually committed to individual and organizational success.

The ideal candidate will be well-versed in all aspects of local government finance and possess a strong background in accounting. Experience with major software conversions is desirable. A Bachelor's degree is required.

The starting salary for this position is estimated to be in the range of \$125,000 to \$150,000 DOQE. Salary is supplemented by a generous benefits package which includes 2.7% @ 55 PERS. This recruitment will close on **Friday, May 22, 2009**. Visit the TBC website at [www.tbcrecruiting.com](http://www.tbcrecruiting.com) to download recruitment brochure and apply online.

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