

**SITES FOR OUR SOLID WASTE:  
A GUIDEBOOK FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

**Office of Solid Waste  
Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

## PREFACE

The conflict over solid waste management continues to escalate in many parts of the country and is likely to be a pressing public policy issue throughout the 1990's. Even with increased source reduction, recycling, and composting, new waste disposal facilities will be needed to manage our growing waste stream. Finding new sites, however, promises to be extraordinarily difficult.

Much attention has been paid to the so-called NIMBY (not in my backyard) syndrome, which portrays local residents as emotional opponents of new sites while often ignoring the complexity of the underlying issues. The intense political conflict in local communities centers on important questions of the appropriate use of technology, acceptable levels of risk, and the distribution of decision-making power in a democratic society.

The challenge faced by public officials is to find sites that are both technically sound and socially acceptable. A key to recent success stories around the country has been the effective use of public involvement. Public officials and citizens have found that they can work together to manage our solid waste and to protect public health and the environment.

Public officials are the primary audience for this guidebook, but citizens and industry professionals may benefit from reading it as well. This project is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ongoing efforts to improve the management of municipal solid waste nationwide. The EPA's Office of Solid Waste also recently produced the *Decision Maker's Guide to Solid Waste Management* to help public officials evaluate various waste management options.

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Practical experience indicates that improving siting decisions in solid waste management can be extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the positive response received from potential users of this guidebook is an encouraging sign that public involvement can serve as a productive policy tool.

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