

## Recycling is Essential to Building and Supporting Our Communities through Jobs and Environmental Stewardship

The U.S. recycling industry has its roots in multi-generational family businesses with long standing investments and engagement in the communities in which we are located. In fact, the cornerstone of the U.S. recycling industry is the commitment of recyclers to supporting the social well-being of our communities through good stewardship of the environment and long-term economic investment. While the recycling industry today is composed of a mix of small, mid-size and large companies, some family owned and some publicly-held corporations, what has remained consistent over time is the commitment of individual recyclers to our communities. The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI), an NLGA Chairman's Partner, is proud to say its origins date back to the early 1900's when some of the nation's "original recyclers" formed an association to represent and speak on their behalf, and many of our members have remained a part of the ISRI family for multiple generations.

One of the recycling industry's core values involves recycler's commitment to our communities demonstrated through being a good neighbor. Being a good neighbor is accomplished through active engagement in our communities, providing employment opportunities for those who live within our communities, and operating safe, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible recycling facilities.

We view ourselves as stakeholders in each and every community where we operate and we understand the importance of doing our part to help build and maintain safe, environmentally sound and prosperous neighborhoods. For these reasons, we are committed to working alongside community leaders and our neighbors to identify opportunities for strategic partnerships to help our communities thrive. Our presence in communities enables us to better support community growth and development, provide direct and indirect jobs, support community activities, e.g. recreational leagues, local events, educational programs, and further contribute to a safe environment.

Recycling within the United States is essential to the environment and our communities, representing \$110 billion in economic activity and touching virtually every segment of our economy. We directly employ more than 164,000 Americans in jobs averaging \$73,000 in wages and benefits annually, while generating and \$13 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue. These numbers tell the story of a strong U.S. recycling industry, but not one without challenges in key segments of the industry. Most notably, significant challenges have arisen over the last several years within the residential sector of recycling and we are working together with partners to strengthen our communities by addressing these various challenges.

Recyclers across the country work daily with local municipalities to ensure recyclables are collected, processed and successfully enter the manufacturing supply chain, thus supporting state and local governments in delivering such services to the community. The vast majority of recycling operations that support municipal programs (often called scrap recycling facilities, Material Recovery Facilities, or MRFs) are privately run operations. Without the support of



ISRI is the voice of the recycling industry, promoting safe, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible recycling through networking, advocacy and education.



recyclers, valuable commodities would be diverted to landfills, and not only be lost for critical supply to manufacturers, but also end up wrongfully in the waste stream. The ramifications of this would not only hurt manufacturing, but also prove contrary to public health goals by complicating the entire residential recycling system in our communities.

This year, ISRI gathered a group of ISRI member companies operating private sector MRFs in order to identify and address the challenges communities are facing today with municipal recycling. While the vast majority of the recyclable material that flows through today's recycling infrastructure does so without any problems, and is transformed by recyclers into clean, high quality, commodity grade product, we recognize that this is not always true for residentially-sourced material. As such, the residential recycling infrastructure in the United States requires a unique approach separate from the industrial and commercial recycling sector.

We are eager to collaborate with partners such as NLGA to help strengthen and sustain community recycling programs. For example, a committee of diverse members representing MRFs, paper, plastic and metal recyclers is working with various stakeholders in developing a certification program to ensure that brands and the public know the certified packaging will be recycled - that it can be collected, sorted, and processed properly and that there is an end-market for the materials. As we continue looking for additional opportunities to strengthen our communities and their recycling programs, we encourage NLGA and its members to partner with us to increase public education on what is and is not recyclable. For more information, contact Danielle Waterfield at [DWaterfield@ISRI.org](mailto:DWaterfield@ISRI.org) or (202)714-3295.

