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PRACTICES**

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# SMART AND SUSTAINABLE ZERO WASTE HOUSE FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY: AN ANALYSIS ON HOUSEHOLD WASTE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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**Abstract:** *The zero waste housing approach has become important for smart and sustainable living and the improvement of community life. This article deals with the concept, technologies, and methods that facilitate building smart and sustainable zero waste homes. Special attention is given to the management of everyday household waste such as solid, liquid, gray water waste, kitchen waste, plastics, e-waste, and other hazardous materials. This paper focuses on the application of smart technologies, methods of circular economy, and green construction concepts towards an eco-friendlier and reduced environmental impact. Our goal is to analyze all available methods and prospects in building zero waste houses in order to create thoughtful, sustainable, and resilient communities.*

**Keyword:** *Zero waste house, smart living, waste management, green community, sustainable community*

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## 1. Introduction:

The increasing in consumer culture and the urbanization growth rate has contributed a more than relative amount of household waste generation around the world. The World Bank has predicted that global municipal solid waste will increase without any intervention measures from a very huge 2.01 billion tons in 2016 to 3.40 billion tons by 2050 [1]. The large amount of food residues, packaging materials, electronic waste, and even toxic chemicals in this waste stream has become headache to conventional waste management systems, which are becoming outdated due to the ever-growing dependence on dumping waste in landfills and incineration. The growing amount of waste sent for landfilling and incineration may leads to environmental degradation in terms of land, groundwater, air, and greenhouse gas emissions pollution [2]. The zero waste house (ZWH) is becoming the great idea like a game changer to face these issues and challenges in terms of sustainability. A zero waste home may become the solution for the problem of landfills or incinerators as very little or no waste will be sent to it. It will be achieved through the use of source separation, composting, recycling, grey water reuse and digital waste tracking [3]. Also these homes use eco-friendly building materials and smart technologies, which at the same time; reduce resource use and waste production at the point of design. The change to zero waste in the residential sector is to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 11(Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) which in turn promotes long term ecological balance and public health at large [4]. Urban areas are continuously expanding and adopting smart and sustainable

waste management practices within their home. This is now becomes a personal and communal responsibility [5].

This study reviews the multi-dimensional approaches for the management of solid, liquid and other home based wastes through the design of the zero waste houses as a path towards better environment and community resilience.

## 2. Zero Waste House (ZWH) concepts:

Zero waste houses are a global concept of sustainable living which includes architectural innovation, smart technologies, and conscious consumer action. The main objective is to minimize environmental burden is to reduce the waste produces within the house which we sent generally for landfills or incinerators. (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Zero Waste House

ZWH design is based in principles of eco-minimalism, resource efficiency and a circular economy. ZWH uses 5R lifestyle as shown in figure 2.

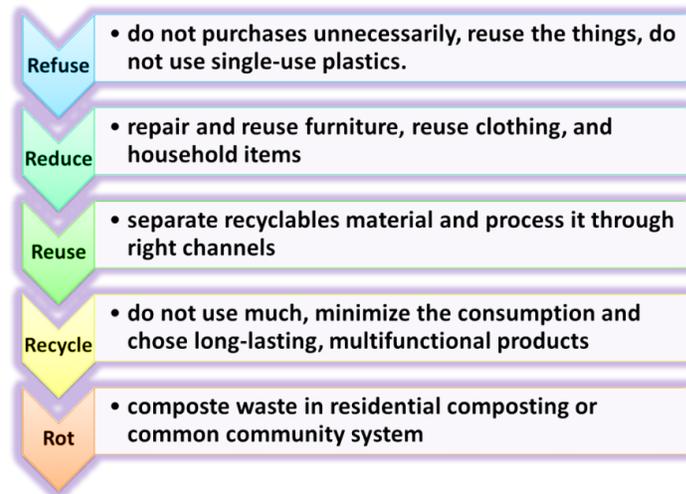


Figure 2: 5R lifestyle

The ZWH design starts with the sustainable material selection, modular construction, solid waste management and water & energy conservation to managing waste generated in day to day life in smart way.

**Sustainable Materials:** fly ash concrete, bamboo, reclaimed wood, and recycled steel are the sustainable materials and environmentally friendly, used in the construction [6, 7, 8].

**Modular Construction:** Prefabricated material or modular components greatly minimize waste on the job site during construction of the house [9,10].

**Energy & Water Efficiency:** Energy and water efficient systems like Solar panels, Rainwater harvesting systems, and passive cooling designs are commonly used for energy and water conservation. Permeable landscaping, grey water recycling, and water-efficient plumbing, are the systems useful in liquid waste management in ZWH [11].

These practices are important to support zero waste lifestyle and are essential for long-term sustainability [12].

**Smart Technologies for Waste Monitoring:** Involvement of smart technologies like IoT and automation technologies like smart bins, mobile apps, energy management systems in ZWH can be used to improve the performance and liability of waste monitoring [13, 14, 15,16]

Zero waste houses are not just the solution for managing waste of a single family but are a component of a larger community ecosystem. When it is scaled up, it can lower greenhouse gas emissions and landfill demand, enhance neighborhood aesthetics and health, and encourage recycling, composting, and sustainability education initiatives, in the communities. Green building incentives are one way that local governments can help with this transition along with waste management policies, and public awareness programs [17,18,19,20].

### 3. Solid Waste Management at ZWH

Achieving houses with zero waste requires effective solid waste management. Food scraps, plastic packaging, textiles, paper, and broken objects are the waste materials that sent to traditional landfills or incinerators along with many other wastes. This worsens the environment and increases greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, ZWH emphasize on waste prevention, reuse, and recycling at the source while implementing proactive and sustainable methods to manage and reduce household solid waste. Following strategies are applicable to achieve solid waste management:

**Source Segregation:** It is the initial step in achieving a zero waste house. The solid waste is to properly separate waste into recyclable (plastic, paper, metal, glass), non-recyclable, and biodegradable (organic) components. Diverting from landfills and directing toward composting, up cycling, or recycling of the material, is very essential step in ZWH [19, 21, 22].

**Composting Units:** Food leftovers and garden scraps can be used as a significant amount of the biodegradable solid waste generated in homes to turn this organic waste into fertilizer-rich compost for gardens using vermicomposting systems or home composting units [23]. Smart composters equipped with moisture and temperature sensors can also be used to increase efficiency of composting [15, 16, 24.].

**Recycling and Up-cycling:** Cardboard, paper, metals, and some plastics are few of the Recyclable materials. This material cleaned, sorted, and sent to nearby recycling centers or else used again at home. Up-cycling waste materials into home furnishings, storage containers, or home décor through DIY activities will prolong product life and lower the demand for virgin resources [12].

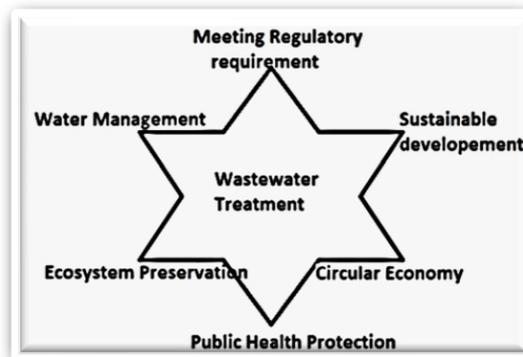
**Smart Waste Monitoring Systems:** Smart bins and IoT enabled monitoring devices are used into innovative zero waste houses to keep track of the quantity of waste [25, 26].

**Community and Circular Support:** Community-based waste management systems connects the Zero waste houses to recycling centers, swap centers, and shared composting stations. This encourages sustainable culture and strengthens the local circular economy. Batteries and e-waste are examples of rare or dangerous items that can be properly disposed of with the help of partnerships with non-profits and municipal programs [3, 27, 28, 29, 30].

ZWH families can significantly reduce their waste material through recycling, composting, smart monitoring, and community integration. These methods may have an impact on bigger systems and open the door to waste-free cities on expansion [31, 32, 33, 34, 35]

#### 4. Liquid Waste Management in ZWH

A key element of sustainable zero waste house is liquid waste management. The routine household work water undergoes treatment, reuse, or sent for safe disposal. It contains rainwater runoff, kitchen wastewater, black water (toilet waste), and grey water (relatively clean waste water from sinks, baths, and washing) [36, 37]. Effective liquid waste management saves water which helpful in lowering environmental pollution as shown in figure 3[38].



**Figure 3: Reasons for wastewater treatment**

**Grey water** makes up nearly 80% of a household's wastewater. It can be safely reused after proper treatments [39]. Grey water recycling systems in ZWH, filters the water using membrane systems, sand, or gravel, and reuses it for non-potable purposes such as toilet flushing, landscape irrigation, or floor cleaning. Advanced grey water system uses sensors and automated valves to monitor water quality and flow, ensuring safe and efficient reuse (40,41).

**Black water** contains organic matter, pathogens, and chemicals that require more advanced treatment before reuse or discharge. Decentralized treatment systems, such as composting toilets, bio-digesters, or artificial wetlands, are employed in sustainable homes to process black water locally [42, 43]. For example, composting toilets completely eliminate the need for flushing and water consumption by treating waste through aerobic decomposition [44]. These systems are increasingly used in off-grid or water-scarce environments. This reduces the demand on municipal water supplies. But it is not suitable for storm water runoff, which can introduce pollutants into natural waterways.

**Rainwater harvesting** in ZWH, is collected rainwater to be used outdoors or as drinkable water, depending on local laws and the degree of treatment [45].

**Smart water management systems** are integrated into modern ZWH to track usage of water, find leaks, and maximize water flow. Water waste is greatly decreased by these technologies like automated irrigation systems, dual-flush toilets, smart faucets, and low-flow fixtures [45].

Families can monitor water usage in real time and get alerts for overuse or system issues due to these systems' integration with dashboards and smartphone apps.

## 5. Other household trash management

Beyond the usual solid and liquid categories, other types of household waste must be addressed in the quest for zero waste living. Because of the toxic components and possible negative effects on the environment and human health, hazardous household waste and electronic waste, or "e-waste," are the main challenges. To achieve the objectives of zero waste houses, this e-waste must be managed effectively.

Discarded electronic equipment including cell phones, batteries, computers, televisions, and chargers, are comes under the electronic waste. According to Balde et. al. (2017), these products contain hazardous substances like lead, mercury, cadmium, and brominated flame retardants that can be leached into the soil and water if not handled properly [46]. Careful consumption, repairing, and reusing practices can reduce e-waste drastically in ZWH. Peoples are encouraged to extend the life of electronic devices by upgrading, repairing, or purchasing second-hand items [47, 48, 49, 50]. E-waste must be stored and separated properly to prevent contamination of other waste streams. Manufacturer take-back programs and authorized recycling facilities offer sustainable disposal options that encourage material recovery and minimize resource extraction [47, 51]. Also some communities set up e-waste libraries or collection drives to exchange or recycle working electronics.

The toxic, flammable, corrosive, or reactive items, such as paints, motor oils, cleaning supplies, pesticides, and expired medications, are considered hazardous household waste. These materials can contaminate soil and water when disposed of in ordinary trash cans or drains, causing trouble to both human and environmental health [52]. These hazardous items are safely stored and disposed of through municipal hazardous waste programs or authorized collection facilities. Families are also encouraged to label hazardous items clearly and educate all members on safe handling and disposal procedures [53, 54]. The implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is critical for managing both e-waste and hazardous waste. EPR policies require manufacturers to take responsibility for the end of life treatment of their products, thereby encouraging them to design products that are easier to recycle or dispose of safely [55]. Zero waste homes support this model by consciously choosing brands that offer transparent take-back and recycling services [49, 50].

## 6. Smart Technologies for ZWH

An important development in sustainable living is the integration of smart technologies into zero waste homes. These tools help peoples to cut waste, maximize resource use, and support the objectives of the circular economy by providing real time monitoring, automated decision making, and data driven insights. Smart ZWH enable citizens to effectively manage solid, liquid and energy waste by combining Internet of Things (IoT) devices, sensors, and home automation systems [14].

**Smart Waste Monitoring Systems:** IoT enabled smart trash cans are able to identify the kind, amount, and mass of household waste [15, 20, 56]. Some systems provide feedback too [25]. Smart homes make use of automated water meters, flow sensors, and leak detection systems to control water consumption and minimize waste. Smart grey water recycling units, reduce the demand for freshwater by treating water from showers and sinks, and redirecting it for irrigation or flushing. These systems guarantee safe reuse by automatically modifying treatment cycles in response to data on water quality.

**Energy Efficiency and Appliance Management:** Zero waste homes aim to minimize not just material waste, but also energy waste. To minimize unnecessary energy use, automated appliance control systems, motion activated lighting, and smart thermostats adjust settings depending on occupancy and usage patterns [57, 58]. Reliance on non-renewable energy sources is further reduced by integration with solar energy systems and battery storage. A zero waste, solar Tamil Nadu home saves 70% energy monthly as per the article in ‘the better India’ by Anjali Krishnan on 20 December 2020[59]. .

**Inventory and Consumption Tracking:** Smart kitchens track groceries and household items using barcode scanning or RFID (Radio Frequency Identification). By warning users of impending expiration dates and making recipe recommendations based on the ingredients that are available, this technology reduces food waste. Similarly, smart cabinets can monitor supplies like toiletries or cleaning supplies, assisting users in avoiding overspending and reducing packaging waste.

**Behavioral Feedback and Mobile Applications:** Users can view real-time water, waste, and energy usage statistics through a centralized interface provided by mobile applications linked to home systems. To promote ecofriendly behaviors, these apps frequently offer personalized recommendations, waste disposal instructions, and sustainability advice. Some users uses the apps to participate in local sustainability challenges, compare with community benchmarks, and monitor their progress toward zero waste goals [3].

## 7. Challenges and Opportunities

The vision of zero waste housing is creating homes that minimize waste through sustainable living, use of circular resource and smart design. While the potential benefits of such homes are substantial, their implementation presents a number of practical, economic, behavioral, and infrastructural challenges, as well as opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and systemic change.

### **Opportunities and Challenges:**

New technologies such as real-time tracking apps, Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered waste sorters, and Internet of Things (IoT) devices can improve the effectiveness and usability of zero waste living [15]. Affordable modular systems are becoming available, allowing retrofitting in existing homes. The adoption of zero waste houses can be accelerated by government led programs like tax breaks, green building certification schemes, and subsidies for environmentally friendly building materials [55]. Local policies which directed the segregation at source or provide composting bins help regularize sustainable practices [63,64]. Community zero waste initiatives offer scalable and socially inclusive solutions, including repair stores, bulk food cooperatives, and shared composting units [3]. These models promote group responsibilities which reduce personal burdens. Integration of environmental education into school curriculum and launching of public awareness drives will drastically change the thinking pattern of the society towards zero waste living. Empowered and informed citizens are more likely to make sustainable lifestyle choices [53].

But, a substantial open investment is needed to implement zero waste systems with different technologies [60]. But many common families may be not reachable for these technologies, particularly in developing nations as the subsidies or incentives are very limited. In some areas, waste is directly dumped outside the open areas as no proper infrastructure available. Municipal policies are also inconsistence having poor waste segregation systems, and unreliable collection services, so peoples are not ready for this change. Transformation into zero waste living requires a change in daily routines, including disposal and consumption patterns. [61, 62].

Some urban areas have policies that promote green infrastructure or waste reduction, but national-level policies and incentives for zero waste homes are not there or get neglected [54]. This limits large-scale adoption and discourages innovation in the housing sector.

## Conclusion:

Smart and sustainable zero-waste houses are a revolutionary step towards a good life and safe Environment. They join personal lifestyle preferences with more general global sustainability objectives as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. ZWH can reduce drastically the Environmental impact of waste by efficiently managing all types of household waste, including liquid, solid, e-waste, and hazardous materials, by combining cutting-edge technologies with time-honored environmentally friendly methods.

These ZWH combine simple, practical inexpensive techniques like waste segregation, up cycling, and rainwater harvesting with high-tech smart systems like energy-efficient appliances, automated composting units, grey water recycling, and IoT-enabled waste monitoring. This integration reduces dependencies on municipal systems, encourages resource conservation, and improves operational efficiency.

Living a zero-waste lifestyle has advantages beyond the environment. Due to reduced pollution, better sanitation in public places, and increased biodiversity in urban ecosystems, communities will get healthy environment. Moreover, when robust policy frameworks, financial incentives, educational outreach, and mass community participation will increase, the adoption of zero-waste principles will becomes more feasible and scalable.

Zero-waste houses are not just a futuristic idea but it is also the modern necessity. As per the expanding urbanization, adopting this sustainable housing model is essential for creating strong, self-sufficient, and environment friendly communities. It has infinite long-term benefits in terms of health, economy, and ecological stability, but such a big shift needs collaboration and support from everyone.

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