

ZERO WASTE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The goal of this assessment is to look for gaps in infrastructure, policies, programs and services that will help you reach Zero Waste goals. Building a Zero Waste Community is a journey that can take many years, but no matter where you are in the journey, these principles can help guide you along the path to Zero Waste:

1. **Everyone in the community has the opportunity to recycle at their home, at work, and everywhere they go in public, and recycling is at least as convenient as trash.**
2. **Everyone can easily access information about recycling and how to reduce waste in their own life.**
3. **Incentives and policies promote recovery over wasting and the use of less toxic materials.**
4. **There is sufficient processing and marketing capacity to recycle a wide range of materials.**
5. **Local markets and opportunities exist to reuse materials, create green jobs and support the local economy.**



Moving toward Zero Waste is not just about new recovery infrastructure—it's a comprehensive system of policies, programs, facilities and community engagement.

STEP 1: VISION AND GOALS

What is the vision of the future of your community recycling program?

Describe what you want to achieve in the short and long term, e.g. increase recycling rate to x%, improve access to programs, expand materials collected, improve education and outreach, etc.

Does the community have a mid-term or long-term annual diversion rate goal?

Does the community have a solid waste plan?

Describe any community goals or planning documents that influence waste management policies such as climate action plans, economic development goals, green jobs goals, etc.

STEP 2: DATA OVERVIEW

Please fill in any data you have on the amount of materials handled in the community. Please note if this numbers include just residential services or the entire community.

| Method | Tons | Sector | Notes |
|---------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Tons landfilled | | | |
| Tons incinerated | | | |
| Total tons disposed | | | |
| Tons recycled | | | |
| Tons composted | | | |
| Total tons diverted | | | |
| Total materials generated | | | |
| Diversion rate | | | |

Do you have a local or regional waste characterization study on what's in your trash or recycling?

STEP 3: STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

What is your community's best or most successful waste management program?

What material/sector is your community's biggest challenge?

(e.g., food scraps composting, electronics, C&D)

What priority material or sector would I like to focus on in the short term?

(e.g., starting/improving organics or C&D diversion, or increasing recycling in the commercial sector)

What is my agency's greatest need for technical assistance?

(e.g., education materials, building political support, model policies & programs, infrastructure assessments, help developing markets, attracting business development, decreasing contamination, benefits of increasing recycling and composting rates, quantification tools, information on funding opportunities, etc.)

STEP 4: INFRASTRUCTURE AND MARKETS

Describe the current status of the following facilities to recycle or dispose of materials:

Landfills

- Capacity remaining
- Distance from community
- Who owns it?
 - If it's the city, does the revenue go to the general fund or stays to support waste programs?
- What is the tip fee?

Incineration

- Capacity remaining or years left in contract
- Distance from community
- What is the tip fee?
- Who owns it?
 - If it's the city, does the revenue go to the general fund or stays to support waste programs?

Materials recovery facility

- Dual stream or single-stream
- Materials accepted
- How many tons are currently processed per year? Is there capacity to accept more tons?
- Distance from community
- Current tip fee or gate payment
- Who owns it?
- Identify end markets—paper mills, smelters, bottling plants, etc.

Composting facility

- Materials accepted, e.g. yard waste, food waste, biosolids
- How many tons are processed per year? Is there capacity to add more tons?
- What is the processing technology?
- What are end products and how/where are they marketed?
- Distance from community
- Who owns and operates the facility?

Construction and demolition (C&D) materials

- Identify facilities to recover C&D materials
 - Processing capacity, technology, materials accepted, end markets, tip fee
 - Include aggregate grinding, used building material outlets like Habitat for Humanity ReStore

Reuse industry

- Identify secondhand outlets for materials like clothing, electronics, household items, building materials
 - Includes thrift stores, flea markets, antique dealers, craigslist, Habitat ReStore, landfill swap shack

Special wastes

- Are there programs for hazardous wastes? Are they regional, local, ongoing, occasional? Is there any education about these programs?
- What materials are collected?

Hard to Recycle Materials

- Identify and describe any recycling or reuse programs for any of the following materials:
 - Textiles, electronics, cooking oil, Styrofoam, scrap metal (including appliances), furniture, books, cell phones, carpet, packaging (not accepted by most recycling programs)

STEP 5: RECYCLING AND TRASH COLLECTION

Residential

- Describe any curbside recycling services for single-family homes and/or curbside yard waste collection.
 - What materials are collected and how (frequency, cart/bin, manual or automatic truck)?
 - How many households participate?
 - How is it funded (subscription service, property tax)
 - Who provides the services?
 - How much does it cost per household?
- Is there curbside trash collection?
 - How often
 - How is it funded (billed per user, tax base)?
 - Are there limits on the amount collected?
 - Who provides the services?

Multi-family

- Do apartments and condos (greater than 7 units) receive curbside recycling? Please describe the services.

Drop-off centers

- What materials are collected?
- How are programs funded? What are the costs to operate the drop-off centers?
- Are locations staffed?
- Are there plans to expand or close these facilities?

Businesses

- Who provides trash and recycling services to businesses?
- Does the city license haulers to provide these services? Is there any data collected on the amount of materials collected or the number of businesses participating?

- What materials are collected and how (frequency, cart/bin, manual or automatic truck)?
- How many businesses participate?
- Is there a green business program to promote businesses that care about the environment?

Trash and recycling haulers

Please list all private companies that provide trash and recycling collection services, including residential, commercial and roll-off services:

| Company | Services provided | Sector(s) served | Notes |
|---------|-------------------|------------------|-------|
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Public sector recycling:

- Describe school recycling and composting efforts.
- Describe government recycling and composting efforts.
- Are there any recycling bins in public areas like ball fields, shopping areas, parks, etc.?

STEP 6: POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Identify and describe the existing waste regulations, policies, and general practices at local level. Examples include:

- Solid waste plan—is there one? Does it have recovery goals?
- PAYT pricing
- Mandatory recycling
- Disposal bans
- Providing recycling services to all residents
- Bottle bills
- Hauler licensing/registration for residential or commercial services; is data reporting included?

Please list the state policies that affect your programs:

| State level policies | Materials included and sectors affected | Details |
|-------------------------------|---|---------|
| Landfill bans | | |
| Mandatory recycling | | |
| Electronics programs | | |
| Solid waste plan requirements | | |
| Mandatory services | | |
| Other | | |

Purchasing policies

- Do you have a green purchasing policy that gives preference to materials made with recycled materials, such as recycled paper?

STEP 7: MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Identify local and regional businesses using recycled materials.

Do you know of any community, regional or state resources to help grow new businesses based on materials recovery, such as market development grants, technical assistance, low-interest loans, etc.

STEP 8: EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Describe ongoing education programs for residents and businesses by the city.

(e.g. recycling guidelines, bill inserts, flyers, print or radio ads, major community events)

Are there other groups providing recycling education? Please describe these efforts.

STEP 9: LOCAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT

Please identify which of the following people or groups are supportive or opposed of expanding recycling in your community:

- Elected officials
- City staff
- Active citizens groups or organizations, such as Keep America Beautiful affiliates, Sierra Club,
- Regional partnership including county officials or staff
- University or other institutional partners
- State resources
- Trash and recycling companies
- Chamber of Commerce and job development organizations

| Person/group | Supportive or opposed | Willing to invest time in effort |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
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