

Reinventing the Hennepin County solid waste system

Promote a zero-waste and clean-energy future to help the county meet its climate action goals and reinvent the county's solid waste system to accelerate closure and repurposing of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC).

Adopt policies that put Minnesota on-par with national zero-waste leaders

- Adopt Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act (extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging).
- Make it easier for local governments to have higher level of control over the waste hauling and processing system.
- Adopt and enforce material bans at landfills for all materials that emit methane, such as food scraps, paper and cardboard, wood, and textiles.
- Redirect the Solid Waste Management Tax (SWMT) currently going to the general fund to provide adequate SCORE grants. SCORE funding has been relatively flat for decades and has not kept pace with the increased volume of garbage. Current levels are not sufficient for the infrastructure investments and program changes needed to achieve zero-waste goals.
- Set a 50% or higher diversion requirement for construction and demolition (C&D) waste.

Invest in recycling infrastructure, advancing circularity, and waste reduction and reuse

- Establish additional funding mechanisms to fully implement zero-waste actions.
- Redirect previously allocated state bonding monies and appropriate additional funds to construct a county recycling recovery facility.
- Improve statute language on volume- or weight-based pricing to incentivize waste reduction.
- Invest in market development for both traditional and hard-to-recycle items.
- Provide resources for Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to enforce state statutes.

Reduce disproportionate impacts from our solid waste system

- Direct funding to areas of environmental justice concern.
- Phase in emissions requirements for waste trucks through measures such as increased use of compressed natural gas or transition to electric fleet.
- Update landfills to achieve greater environmental outcomes, including requirements for gas recovery systems and monitoring and reporting on air emissions.

Amend existing policies to remove disincentives

- Adopt a food waste compost requirement in MNDOT specifications.
- Reduce barriers for businesses to use refillable containers.
- Revise building codes and zoning ordinances that inhibit recycling.
- Revise the current EPR system to cover collection costs for all electronic waste.

Absent significant state level support for zero-waste initiatives, we risk increasing landfilling and going in the wrong direction for climate action. Landfills are huge methane emitters and have been identified by climate scientists as a major contributor to our climate crisis. The county's Zero Waste Plan outlines the actions needed to make meaningful progress toward climate emissions reduction.