

HENNEPIN COUNTY

2024-2029

Solid Waste Management Plan



Table of contents

Section 1: Background	4
Purpose of the 2024 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan.....	4
Waste management in Hennepin County.....	5
Partnerships.....	5
Guiding policies.....	6
Public involvement in developing the county solid waste plan.....	9
Section II: Zero-waste priorities	15
Priority zero-waste actions.....	15 – 21
Section III: Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan strategies	22
Improving the reliability of the data (strategies 1 – 8)	24
Regional solutions (strategies 9 – 12)	25
Waste reduction (strategies 13 – 18)	26
Reuse (strategies 19 – 29).....	28
Collection best practices (strategies 30 – 34).....	31
Recycling management (strategies 35 – 38).....	32
Recycling market development (strategy 39)	33
Organics management (strategies 40 – 44)	34
Wood waste and emerald ash borer (strategies 45 – 54).....	35
Organics market development (strategies 55 – 56).....	38
Emerging technology (strategy 57)	39
Waste-to-energy (strategy 58)	39
Landfilling (strategy 59).....	39
Product stewardship (strategy 60)	39
Household hazardous waste (HHW) (strategies 61 – 64).....	39
Sustainable building and deconstruction (strategies 65 – 75)	40
Supporting materials	43

Section 1: Background

Purpose of the Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan

Hennepin County, like all metro area counties, must submit a county-specific plan that implements the required strategies and various optional strategies in the Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan (metro policy plan). The county-specific plan must address the waste hierarchy to reduce waste, increase recycling, abate landfilling, and advance a zero-waste future. (Minn. Stat. §§ 473.149, 473.803). The 2024 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan (county solid waste plan) complies with these statutory mandates and covers the next 6 years of solid waste planning.

The foundation of the county solid waste plan is the Hennepin County's Zero Waste Plan, developed in 2023 to meet the county's goal of diverting 90% or more of waste from landfills or incinerators. The county further prioritized the highest impact zero-waste actions in the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System to accelerate the closure and repurposing of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC).

The county's zero-waste priorities address most of the strategies in the metro policy plan. By continuing our existing programs and initiatives, the county fulfills the required strategies and far exceeds the minimum requirement of 75 points for optional strategies.

This plan was adopted by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners on (insert date after adoption) and submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for approval.

How to read the plan

The county solid waste plan includes a background section that describes the amount of waste that needs to be managed, the guiding county policies that serve as a foundation for this plan, and the public's involvement in developing the plan.

The second section describes the prioritized highest impact zero-waste actions from the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System. Related strategies in the Zero Waste Plan and the metro policy plan are indicated in each action.

The third section is organized by the categories and strategies in the metro policy plan. Each strategy indicates whether it is a required or optional strategy and how the metro policy plan strategy aligns with zero-waste actions. The strategies are color coded based on the status of the county's implementation or plans for implementation.

Waste management in Hennepin County

In 2023, approximately 1.3 million tons of waste was generated in Hennepin County, with 43% of this waste recycled or composted. The material remaining after waste prevention, recycling, and composting is about 750,000 tons that is currently managed as trash.

To understand the magnitude of the amount of trash, imagine the Target Field ballpark from the field to the top of the covered canopy. Residents and businesses in Hennepin County fill Target Field 6 times a year with discarded items. We have a monumental lift in front of us to achieve a zero-waste future.



Partnerships

Throughout this plan, the county notes the important role partners play in advancing the strategies necessary to realize a zero-waste future. Knowledge of these key partnerships is important to understanding this plan.

- **The Partnership on Waste and Energy (PWE)** is a Joint Powers Board consisting of Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington counties formed to address waste management and energy issues. The partnership seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy, and enhance the health and resiliency of the communities we serve while advancing equity and responding to the challenges of a changing climate. PWE counties have supported many important policy changes, including building a state-wide coalition to develop a product stewardship bill for packaging. They have also invested time and money in researching and addressing the metro wood-waste issue and are working together on the need for increased capacity for organics processing.
- **Cities** play an important role in implementing recycling services, from contracting for service delivery to face-to-face interactions with residents about these services. A significant number of the zero-waste priorities and new strategies in this plan require collaboration with cities to develop and advocate for effective policies and coordinate implementation. The county cannot underscore enough how important cities are to implementing this plan and ultimately achieving zero waste.
- **Haulers and processors** are the backbone of our solid waste management system. They play a crucial role in service implementation and own much of the infrastructure, from collection trucks and waste transfer stations to recycling material recovery facilities and landfills. Haulers are often the main point of contact for residents and businesses and play an important role in determining the waste services they have. Strong partnerships and coordination between haulers, cities, the county, and the state will be critical to meet county and state recycling goals.
- **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)** is an ally and important partner in ensuring compliance, reporting, coordination between metro counties and supporting needed policy changes for transforming the solid waste system.
- **Legislators** play an essential role in ensuring policies and funding match the scale of the changes needed to reach zero waste and address climate change.
- **Community and advocacy organizations** build coalitions and organize residents to advocate for the transformational change needed to move to a system that values materials and keeps resources in the cycle of use.
- **Residents and businesses** are key to reaching our zero-waste goals. The best policies, infrastructure, and programming will go nowhere without their participation and buy-in. We all have a role to play in ensuring a zero-waste future is achievable.

Guiding policies

As an organization, Hennepin County excels when facing big challenges, and the county has been a leader on solid waste policy for more than 40 years. This includes starting the first recycling programs in the 1980s, introducing household hazardous waste collections in the 1990s, beginning organics recycling in the 2000s, prioritizing waste prevention and reuse in the 2010s, and expanding recycling and organics requirements in the 2020s. This work has all been guided by previous solid waste management plans. Despite these impressive efforts, progress remains incremental, with our recycling rate increasing 2% since the last solid waste management plan in 2018.

A dramatic shift in priority at the state level to advance zero-waste policies is required to meet our zero-waste and climate goals. This plan outlines actions the county will take to continue to drive the transformational change needed. The following summary describes the guiding policies that are foundational to this 2024 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan.

The Climate Action Plan

In 2021, the county adopted its Climate Action Plan. Hennepin County was the first county in the state to have a climate action plan and set one of the most ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets among climate leaders. The Hennepin County Climate Action Plan includes bold strategies on preventing food waste, tackling plastics pollution, and advocating for state leadership on zero-waste policies.

The Zero Waste Plan

Following the adoption of the Climate Action Plan, the Hennepin County board commissioned a Zero Waste Plan to define what it will take to get to a future that doesn't rely on landfilling or incineration. Staff led an extensive planning and engagement process that spanned nearly two years and centered the voices of community members and organizations traditionally not engaged in solid waste planning. Research for the plan provided a gaps analysis of our solid waste system compared with national and international zero-waste leaders. The 62 actions included in the Zero Waste Plan were informed by data and driven by the community to achieve maximum impact.

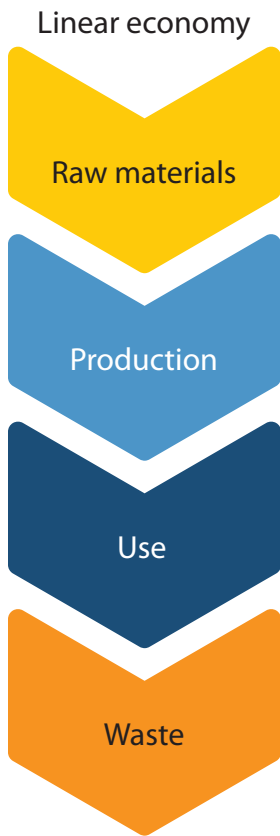
The county has defined zero waste as preventing 90% or more of all discarded materials from being landfilled or incinerated. The Zero Waste Plan and this definition serve as the foundation of 2024 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan.

Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System

In August 2023, the Hennepin County board sought additional information on the county's waste-to-energy facility and its role in the solid waste system. During the next six months, the county board reviewed a significant amount of information on legal, financial, and environmental factors associated with the county's solid waste system.

These discussions resulted in the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System by aggressively pursuing zero-waste policies, programming, and infrastructure and advocating for policy changes at the state level to move toward zero waste and make meaningful progress toward reducing climate emissions. The plan includes zero-waste legislative platform priorities, 12 prioritized zero-waste actions, and a zero-waste dashboard to track progress toward responsibly closing HERC.

Why do we need to reinvent the solid waste system?



Our solid waste system is the end of a linear economy that is driven by consuming raw materials. In a linear system, stuff is produced as cheaply as possible, regardless of whether it can be repaired or recycled. Once we are done with it, we can easily discard all this stuff each week at our curb or in dumpsters behind our buildings.

In applying the Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) process to the Zero Waste Plan, staff and community members took a closer look at who benefits from this system. Through this analysis, a clear picture of a system from which some profit immensely while others are inequitably burdened emerges.

The multinational waste industry makes big profits from landfills, while taxpayers pick up the management and cleanup costs after they close. Product manufacturers and retailers profit from selling tons of “stuff.” Businesses that generate a lot of waste and residents that consume and dispose excessively don’t take equitable responsibility for managing this waste. Many residents feel powerless as there is only so much they can do as an individual, and the current system makes it impossible to avoid some types of waste.

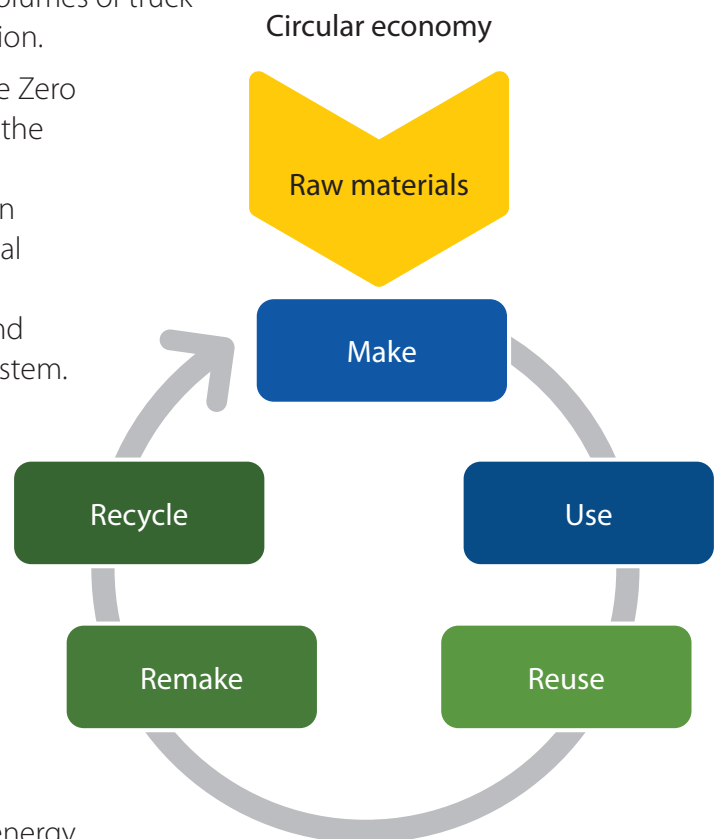
We also know that some residents are more burdened by the impacts of the system. Black, Indigenous, and people of color as well as residents with low incomes and/or disabilities are commonly not benefiting from and are being more burdened by the current solid waste system. Additionally, our youth and future generations will bear the environmental and social costs of this system long into the future.

These burdens are most prevalent for residents living near solid waste facilities, in multifamily housing or rental units, in areas with high rates of illegal dumping and litter, in high-density areas with higher volumes of truck traffic, and in areas facing cumulative impacts of pollution.

More information on how REIT was used to develop the Zero Waste Plan can be found in the supporting document, the Development of the Zero Waste Plan report. Additional information about the location of solid waste facilities in relation to the MPCA’s area of concern for environmental justice can be found in the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center and its Role in the Solid Waste System Report and the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County’s Solid Waste System.

As local governments, counties and cities must deal with the trash problem with little influence over what is produced and limited resources to deliver convenient services to recover and reuse the materials.

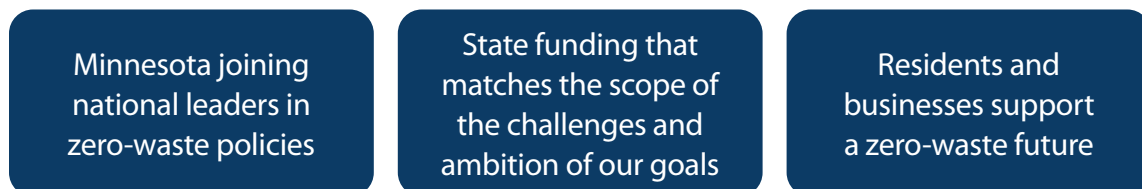
The county’s climate-action and zero-waste goals require us to reinvent our solid waste system and transition to a circular economy that values raw materials and prioritizes reuse. This will keep our valuable natural resources in a cycle of use instead of putting them in a hole in the ground or burned for energy.



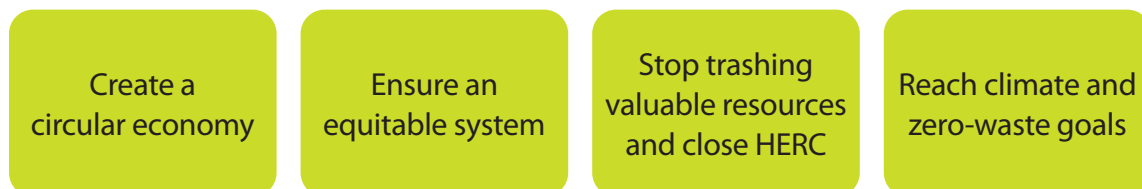
A vision for a reinvented system



This vision depends on:



With these dependencies met, we can:



Hennepin County's vision of a reinvented solid waste system is a zero-waste future where less waste is created in the first place, where everyone shares responsibility, and where everyone benefits from easily accessible services. This system has widespread participation in programs and social norms that align with zero waste.

This vision will require significant action from state and local policymakers, significant funding for program implementation, development of infrastructure, and an overall societal commitment to reducing waste.

The county commits to leading and building a coalition of elected officials, business leaders, and residents to prioritize the waste issue and be changemakers.

To achieve a 90% or greater recycling rate, the county will need to prevent or capture the remaining organics and recyclables being trashed, develop stronger recovery options for household goods and building materials, and find solutions for the materials that currently don't have viable options for reusing or recycling. It is also essential to address how products are designed before they get to consumers and eventually become waste.

Many of the changes needed are beyond Hennepin County's control and depend on legislative action to put Minnesota on-par with national zero-waste leaders and increase funding to match the scope of the challenges we face and the ambition of our goals. Policy changes that the state legislature needs to pass to realize this zero-waste future are included in the supporting materials. With these dependencies met, the county, along with our city and state agency partners, can create a circular economy and ensure an equitable system. We can stop trashing our valuable resources and close HERC. And we can do it while reaching our climate and zero-waste goals.

Public involvement in developing the county solid waste plan

Facilitating public involvement is an essential part of preparing the 2024 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan. The county's approach included the following.

Building from the broad base of learning from the development of the Zero Waste Plan

The county's Zero Waste Plan was developed with extensive public feedback from more than 1,800 participants over the previous two years. Staff built from these key findings and gathered additional input on how to implement the zero-waste actions and organize these actions to meet the objectives defined in the metro policy plan.

Learn more about the learnings from the development of the Zero Waste Plan at beheardhennepin.org/zero-waste-future.

Gathering additional input on implementation of prioritized zero-waste actions and required metro policy plan strategies

The metro policy plan includes some strategies and details that are not specifically addressed in the county's zero-waste priorities. We plan to implement those strategies but additional action is needed, as outlined in Section II: Zero Waste Priorities.

Engagement efforts for the county solid waste plan included gathering additional input from cities and haulers on the following metro policy plan strategies:

- Placing increased priority on waste prevention and reuse programs.
- Making residential organics available in cities with populations greater than 5,000.
- Implementing best practices for waste collection.
- Developing plans to prevent and manage wood waste.
- Reducing barriers and increasing participation in household hazardous waste services.
- Establishing mandatory pre-processing of waste to recover recyclables from the trash.

Cities

Cities play an important role in implementing recycling services, from contracting for service delivery to face-to-face interactions with residents about these services.

County administration met with city managers in May 2024 to discuss the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System. The city managers discussed the needed investment in resources to maximize curbside programs, support for the county leading on organized waste collection efforts, interest in exploring more about recycling recovery facilities and how this technology can supplement curbside collection, and that the county can help cities communicate to residents the value of organics programs.

Staff also continued to engage city recycling coordinators on select metro policy plan strategies that affect their cities and residents – both required strategies that the county must implement and optional strategies the county is considering for implementation.

Staff held in-person and virtual meetings in May and June 2024 and sent a follow-up survey after the meetings. Cities that did not attend a meeting were also invited to meet individually with county staff.

Of the 45 cities in Hennepin County, 31 cities representing 98% of the county's population gave feedback through one or more of the input opportunities. Cities gave feedback on the following strategies:

- **Same-day collection (required strategy #30):** Recycling, trash, and organics are already collected on the same day in most cities, and most of the cities that have materials collected on different days did not express opposition to changing.
- **Organics collection in cities with a population greater than 5,000 (required strategy #40):** The county already has requirements for cities with a population over 10,000, so this strategy would only affect cities with populations of 5,000 to 9,999. Affected cities were focused on options for contracting for organics recycling service and wondered about the need to maintain already established drop-off sites. Suggested county support includes help with contracting, SCORE funding, and providing incentives to residents.
- **Using compost in construction and landscaping projects (required strategy #55):** Some cities already require compost to be used in their construction and landscaping projects. Many of the city recycling coordinators were unsure if their city required this. There was some concern about whether there would be an adequate supply of material; however, this could be beneficial in terms of driving market development. Cities stressed that clear specifications from the county would make it easier to get internal support to implement this requirement and to ensure they are compliant.
- **Managing wood waste (required strategy #45):** The responses to this strategy reinforce the need for better coordination of wood waste management and the need for more reliable processing options. Cities said the county could help with this strategy by providing additional disposal options.
- **Curbside set-out of items for reuse (optional strategy #27):** A few cities expressed interest in this strategy, and several have recently collected some items for reuse at their cleanup events. Cities raised concerns about costs, staff capacity, vendor capacity to pick up items, weather, quality of materials set out, and how much of the material set out would actually get reused. They were most interested in adding a reuse component to their annual cleanup drop-off events or combining a curbside reuse event with a citywide garage sale, county hazardous waste collection event, or annual cleanup day.
- **Contract for residential recycling and organics (optional strategy #33):** Several cities are interested in or already exploring organized collection for organics recycling, while others said they are not considering the change at this time. Only one city has open collection for recycling. Several cities said the county putting requirements in place would pave the way for city staff and city council members to make the change.

Waste haulers

Staff invited all 161 Hennepin County licensed waste haulers to provide input on implementing zero-waste actions, 7 of which asked for individual meetings with staff.

Waste haulers provided feedback on the following strategies:

- **Same-day collection (required strategy #30):** Haulers said that same-day collection is already common and preferred by most customers, so this strategy is not viewed as a major challenge. They shared some ideas for how city coordination could help with traffic and logistics, and advocated for exemptions under certain circumstances.
- **Pre-processing of waste (required strategy #36):** Haulers expressed many concerns and questions about this strategy, including about definitions and expectations, standards, confusion among customers, contamination, quality of materials, ability to find end markets, and cost. They wondered if this was the best way to invest in zero-waste initiatives.
- **Wood waste (required strategy #45):** Most haulers said they don't handle tree waste. One hauler that owns a yard waste site agreed that more needs to be done to support capacity.
- **Hauler reporting (required strategy #1):** Haulers said they currently comply with the requirements and appreciate standardized requirements and enforcement to ensure a level playing field among haulers. Some noted the reporting process could be easier.
- **Organized collection (required strategy #33 and #34):** Haulers had mixed opinions about this strategy, with some strongly opposed, some neutral, and some supporting aspects of it. Small and medium sized haulers were concerned that large haulers would take over an organized system. Several haulers noted that organics participation was significantly higher in cities that contracted for the service.
- **Implementing Hennepin County Ordinance 13 (food waste requirements for large generators):** Some haulers said the county needs to improve compliance efforts, and most haulers support partnering with the county on communications. Haulers said more education and training is needed to minimize contamination.
- **Regional hauler licensing and licensing recycling haulers:** Most haulers are already licensed through cities, and haulers were generally supportive or neutral about this idea.

Educating residents on the amount of waste produced, engaging in solutions, and building support for needed policy and behavior change

To gather additional feedback from residents, the county conducted a statistically representative survey of approximately 500 residents across all 7 county commissioner districts in June 2024. The survey assessed opinions on residential recycling and organics recycling programs and level of support for various actions to meet the county's zero-waste goals. Key findings include:

- **There are notable differences in satisfaction with cost of trash and recycling across income and race/ethnicity.**

Residents from lower income households were less satisfied with the cost of trash and recycling than those from higher income households. Those who identify as Black or African American or Hispanic/Latino were less satisfied with the cost of trash and recycling than those who identified as white.

- **Use of recycling drop-off locations is low.**

Most respondents report never using a recycling drop-off location for most of the materials accepted. Fluorescent bulbs are the least recycled at drop-off centers (81% of respondents reported never dropping these off), while old paint is the most frequently recycled (only 38% of respondents reported never dropping this item off). Lower-income residents were more likely to report never using recycling drop-off centers.

- **Ease of finding information about disposal associated with race/ethnicity.**

Respondents who identify as white are more likely than people of any other race or ethnicity to find it easy to locate information about trash and recycling disposal.

- **Residents who use curbside organics recycling are satisfied with the frequency and costs of collection.**

42% of surveyed residents use the curbside organics recycling program as their primary means of disposing of food waste. Of those, 80% indicated that they were satisfied both with the frequency of collection and the cost of the program.

- **Residents are generally positive about organics recycling.**

Overall, Hennepin County residents have positive feelings with respect to organics recycling. Over 70% of residents find it easy to do, believe it is a high-impact way to reduce waste, or feel that it should be required of all residents. However, those who do not use organics recycling were more likely to find it unpleasant or expensive.

- **Participation in organics recycling differs across the county.**

Although awareness of organics recycling is consistent across the county, there are some differences in use of organics recycling in different areas of the county. These differences are expected given the variation in programming, including how long organics recycling has been available, the type of program available (i.e., curbside collection or drop-off site), whether the city contracts for service, whether the programs are opt-in or voluntary, and the level of education and outreach.

- **Residents are mostly supportive of policies that support waste reduction.**
Residents are generally supportive of policy measures that would reduce waste in Hennepin County. Residents are most supportive of allowing cities to contract for collection of recyclables and trash to reduce cost (84% support) and reduce the number of trucks on the road (87% support). They are less supportive, however, of punitive measures and policies that would prohibit disposing certain materials in the trash. Punitive measures and prohibitions are generally opposed by lower-income residents, while fee discounts to encourage recycling are strongly supported by lower-income residents. There was no association between commissioner district, race/ethnicity, or gender and policy support.

Additional insights from the resident survey are included with the applicable zero-waste priorities and county-specific strategies throughout the plan. Learn more about the residential survey on [BeHeardHennepin.org/solid-waste-plan](https://beheardhennepin.org/solid-waste-plan).

Leveraging outreach opportunities with partners to maximize community connections

Staff used existing outreach opportunities with partners to connect with community on zero-waste actions. Staff attended community events, engaged the county's Trusted Messengers program participants and several community groups that participated in the Zero Waste Plan process, and attended other meetings and events throughout the summer.

County staff presented to 25 Trusted Messenger participants in June 2024 to share information on the amount of waste produced and the county's Zero Waste Plan, including actions to expand the reach of county waste education, grants and other programming and create a materials management system that reduces racial disparities and advances equity. Participants were interested in learning about waste issues. Some participants shared that they hadn't given a lot of thought to waste issues before but were interested in learning more and sharing ideas and resources with their communities.

Trusted Messenger participants were invited to tour the county's drop-off facility in Brooklyn Park in July. Participants were glad to see the household hazardous waste collection process in action and expressed interest in doing more to promote the proper disposal of batteries, bulbs, and other hazardous items. Participants described opportunities to reduce waste in their own operations, for example reducing single-use water bottles for religious celebrations, and shared unique barriers for their communities, such as a distrust of public water service.

The county also used an online engagement tool and an email list to provide updates at key steps in the plan development process. Information about the plan was shared with 2,070 subscribers to Zero Waste Plan updates and 7,200 subscribers to Green Notes environmental news.

Additional information on engagement findings and the supporting documents referenced in this plan can be found online at beheardhennepin.org/solid-waste-plan

Responding to public comment

A draft of the plan was made available for public comment between August 13 and September 4, 2024. The county received 86 comments from cities, environmental advocacy groups, and residents. Edits to expand or clarify were made to the following strategies:

- #3. Require waste composition study at least once every 5 years at all landfills that are located within the county.
- #10. Commit to standardized outreach and education.
- #16. Implement a formal county sustainable purchasing policy using MPCA guidance.
- #21. Implement a green meeting policy.
- #22. Implement a county policy encouraging the use of reusable food and beverage service ware.
- #23. Adopt an ordinance with a mandatory consumer charge or ban for single-use items.
- #26. Establish a reuse location for residential drop-off and pick-up.
- #27. Establish a curbside set-out day to allow residents to set out used items for reuse.
- #33 & #34. Contracting for waste collection.
- #37. Provide assistance to multifamily properties to improve recycling.
- #55. Require food-derived compost in county construction and landscaping projects.

Additional edits were made to reference the policy plan objectives and add the county's zero-waste dashboard metrics and the legislative policies needed to reinvent the county's solid waste system.

Key findings from public feedback and a summary of changes made to the plan based on feedback is available at beheardhennepin.org/solid-waste-plan.

Section II: Zero-waste priorities

Each of the 62 actions in the Zero Waste Plan was analyzed to calculate the potential impacts on the county's overall diversion rate. Staff further prioritized the action items to identify what would accelerate the achievement of zero waste in Hennepin County. The 12 highest impact actions described in this section account for nearly 80% of the potential tons that could be diverted from the trash by implementing the actions in the Zero Waste Plan. Being able to successfully achieve these actions and the amount of time it will take to achieve them depends on bold leadership at the state, county, and city levels and willingness to change from manufacturers, businesses, and residents.

We all have a responsibility – government, businesses, institutions, and individuals – to support these actions, prevent waste, and recycle everything we can. Ultimately, the ability of the county to reach its zero-waste goals will be determined by the system we choose to create and the everyday choices and behaviors of the county's 1.3 million residents, 43,000 businesses, and all those who visit or work in Hennepin County.

To accelerate a zero-waste future and make meaningful progress toward reducing climate emissions, the county will advance the following zero-waste priorities by incorporating these actions into the county solid waste plan. These are more fully described in the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System.

Priority zero-waste actions

Ensure every individual has equitable access to zero-waste tools

In June 2020, the Hennepin County board declared racism as a public health crisis. This declaration supports the county's foundational work to develop strategies that mitigate personal bias and prejudice in the community, create systems that build equity, and reach a vision of a future where all residents are healthy and successful and all communities thrive. In the county's environmental work, efforts to reduce racial disparities is intersectional with climate actions, which will result in a more equitable and resilient Hennepin County.

Hennepin County is committed to making sure pollution does not have a disproportionate impact on any group of people – the principle of environmental justice. This means that all people – regardless of their race, color, national origin, or income – benefit from equal levels of environmental

protection, have opportunities to participate in decisions that may affect their environment or health, and have equitable access to zero-waste tools.

The county will expand program reach and support culturally appropriate outreach, explore developing a rate assistance program, address litter, increase green jobs, and fund community-centric solutions. These actions address both racism and climate change as critical public health issues.

Related actions and strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: A.5, A.6, A.7, A.11, A.12, A.13, A.14, C.3
- Metro policy plan: Not applicable

Secure adequate funding for zero-waste initiatives through SCORE and other sources

Fully implementing zero-waste actions comes with significant financial needs, including capital for zero-waste infrastructure and funding for programs. State funding needs to increase to match the scope of the challenges we face and meet zero-waste and state recycling goals.

Hennepin County currently passes all of its state recycling funds, called SCORE funds, through to cities to support their residential recycling programs. However, this funding only covers a fraction of the cost needed to run these programs, and the needs of today's recycling system are different than 30 years ago. Counties and cities have expanded services beyond traditional recycling to include new organics recycling programs, more work on multifamily recycling, additional education and outreach, and more emphasis on waste prevention and reuse, but SCORE funding hasn't increased to match the needs of today's system and state targets for counties.

Revenues from the Solid Waste Management Tax have increased over time, yet a shrinking percentage of those revenues is used for SCORE grants. At one time, 35% of revenues went to SCORE, but now it's less than 20%. Although extended producer responsibility laws will relieve some of this cost burden, they won't fully cover the cost of residential organics recycling programs, recycling and organics programs for commercial entities, organics recycling programs at multifamily properties, reduction, reuse, and repair programs and infrastructure, wood waste, or construction and demolition waste, all of which need to be addressed to reach zero waste and meet the requirements of the state's waste goals.

The county will:

- Advocate for all revenue from the Solid Waste Management Tax (SWMT) imposed on waste services be used for waste management activities, such as SCORE funding.
- Seek state bonding funds for zero-waste infrastructure, such recycling recovery facilities.

- Evaluate the county's recycling funding policy, which outlines how we provide funds to cities by considering how to best incentivize zero-waste priorities.
- Pursue policies and strategies that change the economics of waste while being mindful of what costs will mean for small businesses and residents.

One of the biggest issues with the current waste system is that the cheapest thing to do with trash is to bury it in the ground at landfills, which, once full, are closed and become the burden of the state and taxpayers. This system doesn't provide any incentive (or disincentive) for those managing waste at landfills to prioritize and maximize waste prevention and recycling.

There are many unknowns about what a transition to zero-waste will cost, but it will be a significant increase in investments. The county will explore policies that use economies of scale and make those who generate the most waste pay for their fair share while reducing the burden on individuals and local governments who currently have little influence on costs.

Related actions and strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: C.17
- Metro policy plan: Not applicable

Prioritize extended producer responsibility for packaging

Since 2021, Hennepin County and the Partnership on Waste and Energy have led efforts to develop a law that makes producers responsible for the packaging waste they create. In 2024, the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act passed and was signed into law. The MPCA will now lead implementation of a producer-funded system that requires producers to expand reuse, recycling, and composting of packaging and paper products building on the state's existing infrastructure.

The county will monitor implementation to keep needed zero-waste results in focus. We will assist cities in registering as service providers to ensure they are getting compensated for their investments in the recycling system. By 2029, producers will begin reimbursing service providers for the costs associated with reusing, recycling, and composting packaging and most paper products.

Additionally, as required in the metro policy plan, the county will continue to participate on the Product Stewardship Committee under the Solid Waste Administrators Association to identify and push for additional extended producer responsibility of problem materials (strategy #60).

Related actions and strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: C.12
- Metro policy plan: 60

Ban recyclable and organic materials from landfills

Landfill disposal bans on recyclable and organic materials are an essential component of a zero-waste system. The overarching goal is to increase recycling, capture valuable resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce the need for landfills and waste-to-energy. Implementing a landfill disposal ban is a complex process that involves major changes to the existing waste management system. Requirements apply to landfills, haulers, and waste generators. Compliance needs to be monitored through ongoing inspections at landfills, which are all privately owned. When a load has banned materials, the inspector identifies the responsible hauler and waste generators. The load may be rejected, charged an additional handling fee, and be subject to potential enforcement penalties. Having adequate staff is critical to successful implementation.

The county will conduct engagement, draft bill language, and advocate for passage. After bill passage, the county will participate in public input opportunities in rulemaking to ensure implementation keeps needed zero-waste results in focus. The county will also support education and outreach to waste generators about items banned from the trash.

Related actions and strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: C.6
- Metro policy plan: Not applicable

Survey highlight: Residents are less supportive of banning disposal of items in the trash compared to other zero-waste policies they were asked about (63% support disposal ban, 38% oppose)

Recover recyclable materials from the trash – recycling recovery facility

At recycling recovery facilities, also known as mixed waste processing facilities, trash goes through a highly automated process that combines mechanical and optical sorting to separate materials based on size, shape, and composition. Materials recovered from the trash may include cardboard, metals, #1 and #2 plastics, and organic materials. There is still trash to dispose of at the end of the process.

Some recycling recovery facilities, like Ramsey and Washington counties' facility, are paired with waste-to-energy technology to further recover energy from trash and avoid landfilling. These facilities are generally part of an integrated solid waste management system designed to maximize materials recovery and achieve zero-waste goals.

Although mixed waste processing could improve the recovery of recyclable materials, it also has challenges. These include limited potential recovery of materials, difficulty finding viable end markets due to high levels of contamination after being mixed with trash, need to design for processing flexibility as materials change, substantial project development costs, and the rapid evolution of processing equipment technologies.

A mixed waste processing facility does not replace the need to continue and expand existing recycling and organics programs. Collecting recyclables, food waste, and compostable materials separate from the trash is still the best, most cost-effective option for diverting these materials. Separating materials after they have been trashed significantly reduces their market value and is considered a last option for recovering materials not captured through curbside and drop-off recycling and organics programs.

The county has begun pursuing a recycling recovery facility adjacent to the county's Brooklyn Park Transfer Station and Recycling Center. The county will further study critical factors, including technology/equipment, waste composition, financing, designation, permitting, and end markets.

Related actions/strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: A.9, D.12
- Metro policy plan: 36

Support the transition to organized collection across Hennepin County

Leading zero-waste communities have a higher level of control over hauling and processing systems. Depending on the city and sector, this may include the adoption of hauler contracts, franchising, performance targets, expanded licensing requirements, and other organized collection strategies for multifamily and commercial customers.

The Zero Waste Plan includes an action to work alongside cities and haulers to define roles and responsibilities and establish a roadmap to transition the county to more organized hauler collection systems. This transition will help reduce hauling impacts on infrastructure and neighborhoods, increase cost efficiency, improve access and equity for rate payers, reduce climate impacts, reduce pollution, and provide consistency in service options.

All but one of the cities in Hennepin is organized for residential recycling, while almost half are organized for residential organics and trash service (strategies #33 and 34). The county will continue to support cities exploring contracting options for residential waste services while studying options for transitioning to organized hauling for the multifamily and commercial sectors.

Related actions/strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: C.1
- Metro policy plan: 33, 34

Survey highlight: Residents support allowing cities to contract for collection of recyclables and trash to reduce costs (84% support) and reduce number of trucks on the road (87% support). This had more support than some other zero-waste policies.

Increase compliance with the county's Recycling Ordinance 13 and expand requirements

In 2018, Hennepin County updated its recycling ordinance, Ordinance 13, with several new requirements – food waste collection back-of-house for large food sector generators (strategy #42), residential curbside programs in cities with populations over 10,000, organics drop-off sites in cities under 10,000, and adequate recycling service at all businesses (strategy #35) and multifamily properties.

The gaps analysis for the Zero Waste Plan found that the county's enforcement of Ordinance 13 is not as robust as needed. In addition, existing language needs revisions to add clarity and support compliance efforts. The gaps analysis also found opportunities to expand the ordinance's reach.

The county has increased resources to support implementation of business food waste recycling requirements and improve compliance with recycling requirements at multifamily properties and businesses. The county will revise the ordinance to provide greater clarity to covered generators, and, as required in the policy plan, extend the requirement that cities with a population of 5,000 or more make organics recycling available to their residents (strategy #40) and require same day collection for residential trash, recycling, and organics (strategy #30).

Related actions/strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: B.5, B.6
- Metro policy plan: 30, 35, 40, 42

Develop and implement a plan to eliminate food waste

This action focuses upstream on eliminating the overproduction and wasting of edible food. The county is establishing a food waste prevention target and developing a long-term plan that identifies strategies, timeline, and needed resources for preventing wasted food at businesses, institutions, and homes. Strategies may include increasing the use and sale of imperfect produce, encouraging school lunch waste reduction programs, considering regulations on food production to reduce waste, improving data tracking, supporting community food hubs, and providing education on food labels and expiration dates.

The county will engage with partners to implement the food waste reduction plan and develop proposals for resources needed to implement the plan. A landfill ban on organics will be critical in the success of this priority action item.

As required in the metro policy plan, the county will continue to provide grants to businesses and non-profits to track food waste (strategy #13), continue to connect food rescue organizations with donors (strategy #14) and continue to offer its annual Stop Food Waste Challenge for residents (strategy #15).

Related actions/strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: B.10, C.8, C.9
- Metro policy plan: 13, 14, 15

Expand collection and drop-off options for hard-to-recycle items

Lack of equal access to recycling, composting, and diversion options for bulky and hard-to-recycle items, such as clothing, hazardous items, plastic wrap and appliances, is a limitation to an equitable zero-waste system. The Zero Waste Plan gaps analysis found that access is generally available for residents in single-family homes and the majority of businesses, but significant gaps were identified in access for residents in multifamily settings, particularly around organics recycling. Gaps were also identified for those without easy access to transportation and to services beyond conventional recycling. Because diversion options are not equally available to all community members, these gaps collectively contribute to system inequities.

The county will conduct an audit of waste diversion services, both collection and drop-offs, countywide and develop a plan for addressing the gaps and expanding resident and business reuse, recycling and composting options. This will include partnering with cities to roll out collection and drop-off pilots, such as curbside collection of household items for reuse (strategy #27) like the City of Bloomington's bulky item collection and swap events (strategy #26).

Additionally, the county will continue to partner with cities to offer organics drop-off sites (strategy #43), used building material collection events (strategy #67), and host and promote household hazardous waste collection (strategies #62, 63, 64).

Related actions/strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4, D.5, D.6, D.7
- Metro policy plan: 26, 27, 43, 62, 63, 64, 67

Survey highlight: Recycling drop-offs are infrequently used by residents, if at all. The majority of residents never recycle household items at drop-off centers, with the exception of old paint, which was slightly more common (63%). Fluorescent bulbs and plastic bags were least often to be dropped off for recycling, with 81% and 70% saying they never dropped these items off. Lower income residents were more likely to say they never use drop-off locations compared to higher income residents.

Reduce single-use plastics and plastic packaging

Plastics are unavoidable in our modern lives, and the use of plastics is projected to triple by 2050 from 2013 levels. Plastics will account for 20% of global oil use and 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions. About half of the plastics produced each year are intended for single use, and about a quarter of all plastics produced are for packaging. Plastics contribute to litter and climate pollution, harm water and wildlife, and have largely unknown human health impacts. During engagement for the Zero Waste Plan, residents reported great frustration with the amount of plastics they were dealing with, inability to avoid them, and confusion over how to recycle them. Businesses said they struggle to avoid plastics due to application needs, convenience, and low cost.

The county will develop new public-private strategies and research national and international policies to make recommendations for policies such as to-go packaging ordinances and bans on single-use plastics (strategy #23). While the county is developing statewide and local policy ideas, the state legislature must strike the ban on bag bans. Further, resources will need to be allocated for implementation, outreach and enforcement of policies.

The county will continue to offer grants and rebates for businesses transitioning from single-use plastics to reusables through business waste prevention grants and MNimize (strategy #19), explore adopting a countywide policy on reusables at county events (strategy #22), and work with cities to expand local to-go packaging ordinances (strategy #23).

Related actions/strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: C.5, C.7
- Metro policy plan: 19, 22, 23

Survey highlight: Residents support requiring to-go containers to be recyclable or compostable (80% support).

Increase the reuse and recycling of construction and demolition waste

Construction and demolition waste is a large waste stream – potentially equal to municipal solid waste generated by residents and businesses – and materials such as cement, aluminum, steel, and plastics have high climate impacts and significant diversion potential. About 85% of the materials in a typical residential demolition project could be salvaged or recycled, but only 30% of the construction and demolition waste generated in Minnesota is currently being recycled, according to state waste data.

Despite being a significant waste stream, Minnesota counties aren't responsible for managing construction and demolition waste. State recycling goals and county authority only apply to municipal solid waste (MSW). Regulation of construction and demolition waste falls on the state and cities, related to their role in permitting projects. Hennepin County, believing this waste stream is too significant to ignore, has been funding and implementing innovative programs and policies to divert building materials for decades. This includes job programs, subsidies, and incentives to facilitate deconstruction and encourage installation of used building materials. However, there's much work yet to do, as even after several decades of county investment, deconstruction and salvaging building materials for reuse or even recycling is far from the norm.

The county will advocate for a minimum diversion requirement for construction and demolition projects at the state level, support and encourage city adoption of deconstruction policies, support expansion of markets for building materials, and continue to fund and implement programs that divert used building materials from landfills (strategies #65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71).

Related actions and strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: B.3, B.13, D.2, D.3, D.4
- Metro policy plan: 65-71

Survey highlight: Residents support standards that require certain construction waste to be reused or recycled (81% support).

Mandate participation in recycling and composting programs

The Zero Waste Plan includes an action to work with cities to adopt requirements that would ban recyclable or organic materials from the trash and mandate the separation of recyclables from the trash by residents and businesses. Several zero-waste leaders have implemented stringent mandatory recycling ordinances with fines for noncompliance and improper recycling that go far beyond the county's targeted approach in the recycling ordinance. Enforcement would occur through inspections. The implementation of mandatory recycling requirements has faced pushback and negative reactions in various communities. This action is planned for the last phase of zero-waste implementation.

The county will approach this action by conducting a study of options to mandate participation and broadly educating residents and businesses about recycling programs in advance of any mandatory participation requirements.

Related actions and strategies:

- Zero Waste Plan: C.6
- Metro policy plan: Not applicable

Survey highlight: Residents are least supportive of using penalties and fines to get residents to recycle compared to other zero-waste policies (41% oppose).

Section III: Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan strategies

Hennepin County and other metro area counties are required to submit a county-specific plan that responds to the required and optional strategies in the Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan to reduce waste, increase recycling, and advance a zero-waste future.

The Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan aims to align with the Waste Management Act's hierarchy for managing solid waste, improve public health, reduce the reliance on landfills, conserve energy and natural resources, and reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

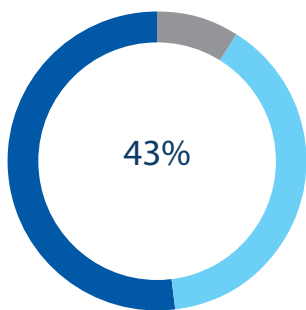
The state sets specific quantifiable objectives in Tables 1 and 2 of the Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan for abating the need for and practice of land disposal for the metro area over the next 20 years, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 473.149, subd. 2d. Landfill abatement is best achieved through an integrated solid waste management and sustainable materials management approach.

The state goal is to achieve a 75% recycling rate by 2030. The county is committed to achieving a zero-waste future and has defined zero waste as preventing 90% or more of all discarded materials from being landfilled or incinerated. The Zero Waste Plan and the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System identify the highest impact actions, provide a roadmap for implementation, and establish a dashboard with metrics for tracking progress toward metro policy plan objectives and the county's zero-waste goal.

Zero-waste dashboard

Recycling rate

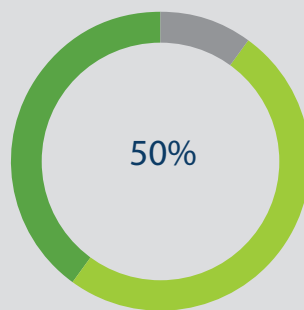
Goal: 75%



✓ State statute goal

Amount of food, paper and other biogenic materials in the trash

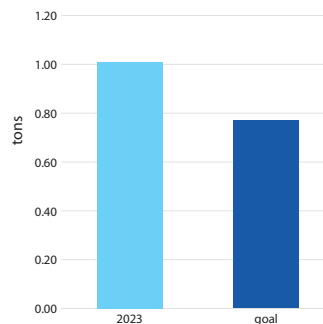
Goal: less than 10%



✓ Climate driven
✓ Critical to meeting recycling goals

Waste generated per capita

Goal: reduce waste generated per capita by 22%



✓ Climate driven
✓ Critical to meeting zero-waste goals

Landfill rates

Goal: no net increase in landfilling rates over 2022 actuals



✓ Climate driven
✓ Critical to meeting zero-waste goals

The Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan is organized into the following categories, each seen as being instrumental to reaching the objectives of the metro policy plan:

- Improving the reliability of the data
- Regional solutions
- Waste reduction
- Reuse
- Collection best practices
- Recycling management
- Recycling market development
- Organics management
- Wood waste
- Organics market development
- Emerging technology
- Waste-to-energy
- Landfilling
- Household hazardous waste
- Sustainable building and deconstruction

Each category includes key strategies that are required to be incorporated into the county’s solid waste management plan. Optional strategies are assigned a point value. Counties pick from any of the optional strategies to reach a minimum of 75 points.

The strategies are weighted by difficulty and by management strategy in accordance with the state’s Waste Management Hierarchy. This incentivizes environmental and human health outcomes while allowing counties the flexibility to design and adapt their solid waste programs. The optional strategies are worth 4 to 9 points. The optional strategy point total is 194 points, and counties must have a minimum of 75 points for their county solid waste management plan to be approved.

The 2024 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan incorporates 52 strategies totaling 148 points. The following table summarizes the policy plan strategies and status of implementation the county.

Metro policy plan strategy and implementation status	# of strategies	Point value
Required - already implementing	21	NA
Required - not applicable	1	NA
Required - planning to implement	10	NA
Optional - already implementing	14	86
Optional - planning to implement	7	62
Optional - not planning to implement	7	46
State led	15	NA
Total in metro policy plan	59	194
Total in 2024 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan	52	148

Improving the reliability of the data

1. Increase compliance with hauler reporting per Minn. Stat. § 115A.93.

Planning to implement

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.8, C.4

The county will assist with hauler reporting efforts by sending reminders to licensed haulers about the MPCA's requirements, reviewing submitted data, and communicating to the MPCA about missing or incorrect data. The county encourages the MPCA to focus compliance efforts on:

1. The largest haulers that collect the most waste
2. Recycling data, especially commercial recycling
3. Taking enforcement action when necessary

2. Provide required county reporting.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.8, C.4

Hennepin County provides the MPCA with reports on an annual basis for the SCORE program, Local Recycling Development Grant (LRDG) application, Solid Waste Facility and Utilization Reporting (for the Brooklyn Park Transfer Station), electronic waste collector and recycler program, household hazardous waste program, and the Metro County Solid Waste Plan. The county also creates an annual Recycling Progress Report that provides details on program results and achievements throughout the previous year.

3. Require waste composition study at least once every 5 years at all landfills that are located within your county.

This requirement does not apply to Hennepin County because there are no operating landfills in the county. However, the county is committed to collecting data to measure our progress and inform our approach to program implementation and policy development. The county will conduct at least two waste sorts at a county facility or in collaboration with partners during the term of the solid waste management plan.

4. Improve recycling data collection at businesses within the county.

Planning to implement

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.8, C.4

Hennepin County and the Partnership on Waste and Energy (PWE) – a partnership between Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington counties – plan to conduct a study on how to improve recycling data. Recycling data, particularly commercial recycling data, is underreported, and metro county reporting methodologies are inconsistent. The study will include analyzing MPCA hauler and facility data to identify gaps and barriers to better reporting, comparing metro county reporting methodologies, and providing recommendations on next steps.

Hennepin County encourages the MPCA to coordinate efforts to establish a consistent reporting methodology for metro counties. This would address issues related to using state hauler and facility reporting data, conducting business surveys, avoiding double counting, and tracking self-hauling.

State-led strategies:

5. Require waste composition study at all landfills.
6. Develop appropriate and consistent waste reporting systems to measure all waste.
7. Continue to explore options for growing the agency's Life Cycle Analysis data, modeling, and resources to better support counties in measuring and tracking environmental and human health impacts.
8. Continue to engage with counties in the development of an environmental target that better accounts for and incentivizes programming and actions higher on the hierarchy.

Regional solutions

9. Participate in an annual joint commissioner/ staff meeting on solid waste.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions:
C.2

The Partnership on Waste and Energy has proactively organized a biannual metro county staff meeting for the past several years. We acknowledge that the MPCA will take the lead in organizing this meeting.

10. Commit to standardized outreach and education.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions:
C.2, C.11, C.14

The county will continue to participate in the Recycling Education Committee (REC), a statewide group formed by the MPCA to support the development of better recycling education and outreach. The county has participated in meetings with representatives from the recycling industry, local government, and other organizations to build consensus on what is universally accepted, coordinate consistent messaging to the public, and improve communication. In addition, Hennepin County recently collaborated with Carver, Dakota, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties to launch the Recycling Exists campaign to dispel myths about recycling in Minnesota.

The county is also expanding partnerships to provide culturally relevant outreach. These partnerships are helping the county understand what zero waste means for different communities and how to customize strategies, approaches, and messaging to resonate with different audiences. The county will provide culturally appropriate strategies based on community needs, such as recycling training sessions in different languages and interpreters when offering technical assistance to non-English speaking business owners.

11. Engage in efficient and value-added infrastructure planning.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions:
C.2

The Partnership on Waste and Energy recognizes that infrastructure development must keep pace with growing recycling and organics collection programs. Local projects help meet statewide policy goals, and state investment is critical for their success. PWE submitted a letter of support for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's new organics recycling facility in Scott County.

In addition to collaboration through PWE, Hennepin County connects with other metro counties and private entities to discuss processing capacity and facility development. Hennepin County has submitted letters of support for organics management grant applications from SET, the Minnesota Composting Council, and Waste Management.

12. Develop plans for large facility closures to reduce landfill reliance.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions:
A.10

The county has developed a Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System that identifies priority zero-waste actions to manage waste higher up on the hierarchy and prioritize reduction. Policy, program, and infrastructure changes needed to eliminate reliance on landfills and waste-to-energy are described in the first section of this plan. The county acknowledges that the closure of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Facility (HERC) would require additional planning, including but not limited to the following components as described in the metro policy plan:

- Issuing a letter assuring waste to one or more of the alternative locations suitable as part of the Certificate of Need (CON) process for landfill expansions when necessary.
- Acknowledging the liability associated with increased landfilling including the understanding that at some point in the future the county may be identified as a responsible party for a superfund cleanup investigation.
- Identifying and evaluating potential locations within the county or region for a disposal facility that can be developed within the timeline of the facility closure. Any new facilities that are sited should take clear and effective measure to ensure that they are not located in environmental justice areas.

The Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County’s Solid Waste System also provides an overview of the key operational and legal steps that would need to be completed to stop incinerating trash at HERC at any point in time.

Further, the county has established a zero-waste dashboard to define the criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC (Resolution 24-0061). The four metrics – recycling rate, percent of food and other biogenic materials in the trash, waste generated per capita, and landfill rate – will be tracked and reported on annually.

Waste reduction

13. Provide grants for or access to software that can track food waste.

Already implementing

Required
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.2, C.13

Businesses, nonprofit organizations, and schools can currently apply for county funding to use software for food waste tracking, though few entities have requested this assistance. Eligible expenses in the county’s business and school waste prevention grants for food waste prevention include up to one year of costs for food-waste tracking technology, staff training on how to use the technology, and equipment or other methods that put food byproducts to better use.

Hennepin County plans to leverage new and existing relationships to encourage more organizations to adopt food waste tracking programs. Staff will evaluate potential contracts with a person or organization trusted in each food sector to recruit more entities to track food waste as well as assess other resources, incentives, and new tracking technology, such as inventory systems.

14. Establish partnerships between food rescue organizations and restaurants/stores to increase food rescue.

Already implementing

Required
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.14

The county completed a year-long audit of its food recovery system in 2023. The audit included surveys and interviews with food recovery organizations, donors, and the users that rely on the system for food security. The audit report identified strategies for increasing food recovery, such as increasing education, outreach and training on food donation through food safety and waste inspections and increasing financial support to food recovery organizations. Implementing the strategies identified in the food rescue audit will expand our partnerships in food rescue and donation and increase the amount of food recovered.

The county also started a food recovery grant in 2024 to help organizations collect and redistribute surplus food to feed people. Previously the county funded food recovery through the business waste prevention grant program. This funding is now being combined with the Public Health and Human Services food security funding to streamline assistance and allow food security organizations to access both funding streams in one application.

To support this work, the county hired a full-time food waste prevention specialist whose work includes food recovery. The county is also hiring a food security coordinator who will work with organizations that recover food.

15. Launch bi-annual sustainable consumption challenges for residents.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.7

Hennepin County hosts three sustainable consumption challenges for residents:

- A personalized, eight-month Zero Waste Challenge is open to approximately 50 households per round. This challenge offers one-on-one support and accountability from trained waste experts.
- An online, month-long Plastic-Free Challenge with unlimited participation that directs households to focus on actions to reduce single-use plastics.
- An online, month-long Stop Food Waste Challenge with unlimited participation that directs households to focus on actions to prevent wasting food.

The two online challenges recently expanded to include Ramsey and Washington counties through the Partnership on Waste and Energy.

16. Implement a formal county sustainable purchasing policy using MPCA guidance.

Planning to implement

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.10

The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution in 2001 that directed the county administrator to designate recycled-content products for procurement and develop procedures to continuously evaluate product purchases for environmentally preferable alternatives. The board adopted revised purchasing rules in 2019 that included a purpose statement on facilitating the purchase of sustainable goods and services. The rules also include a list of environmentally preferable attributes.

The county will engage its internal departments to develop and implement a formal county sustainable purchasing policy using MPCA guidance. This also aligns with the following strategies in the county's Climate Action Plan:

- Develop and implement a county sustainable purchasing policy on par with other leading public entities and provide sustainable purchasing best practices
- Implement a sustainable purchasing policy, especially for the use of concrete and steel

In addition to using MPCA guidance on sustainable purchasing, the county will review and consider integrating policies and practices similar to what has been adopted at the federal level, including the recently released Mobilizing Federal Action on Plastic Pollution: Progress, Principles, and Priorities. Through this policy, federal agencies have been directed to reduce and phase out procurement of single-use plastic products to the maximum extent practicable in order to minimize waste, advance pollution prevention and environmental justice, and promote a transition to circular economy approaches.

17. Participate in Responsible Public Purchasing Council meetings.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.10

The county previously participated in the MPCA's GREEN Group, where members discussed timely sustainable purchasing topics, shared sustainable purchasing experiences, and worked on group projects to help meet their organization's sustainability goals.

Representatives from the county's Solid Waste Division and Purchasing Department participate on the Responsible Public Purchasing Council hosted by the MPCA.

18. Work with health inspectors to educate restaurants and other establishments that have excess prepared food to donate.

Already implementing

Optional (7 points)
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.18

Hennepin County is already supporting health inspectors at the city, county, and state level through training and facilitated conversations. Unlike other metro counties, Hennepin County has several local health authorities who are responsible for conducting health inspections in restaurants and other food establishments.

Hennepin County and Minneapolis Health Department staff are working together to educate food business owners and managers on the importance of food rescue and food waste prevention in licensed food establishments and on business Ordinance 13 requirements. With Hennepin County input, the Minneapolis Health Department, in conjunction with Minnesota Homegrown, created resources for inspectors to share with restaurants that highlight food waste diversion, food waste prevention, and food rescue best practices and resources.

Using what was created for the Minneapolis Health Department, the county will train health inspectors at other municipal health departments on food waste prevention, food rescue, and Ordinance 13 requirements. Certain businesses within Hennepin County are regulated by state-level health inspectors from Minnesota Departments of Agriculture and Health, and Hennepin County staff will help coordinate conversations among state-level entities as needed.

Reuse

19. Offer grants or rebates for organizations to transition to reusable food and beverage service ware.

Already implementing

Required
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.2, C.19

Hennepin County's business waste prevention and school recycling grants support businesses and schools in purchasing reusable food ware to replace single-use disposables. Common areas of focus for businesses and schools include prevention of food waste, reuse and recovery of goods and materials, and development and use of recovered products.

The county also funded the development of MNimize, a single-use plastic reduction pledge, certification, and rebate program for food businesses run by Minnesota Waste Wise in partnership with the county. The program had 50 new participating business in 2023, which was significant growth from the 7 businesses participating by the end of the program's first year in 2022.

20. Offer grants for waste reduction, reuse, and repair.

Already implementing

Required
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.2

Hennepin County's business waste prevention and school recycling grants support businesses and schools in implementing waste reduction, reuse, and repair initiatives. Any project that prevents, reduces, or reuses waste, including trash, recycling, and organics, may be eligible. Projects to start or improve recycling or organics programs do not qualify for this funding. In 2024, \$400,000 is available to fund these grants.

21. Implement a green meeting policy.

Planning to implement

Required
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.5, C.10

The county will engage internal departments to create an administrative policy for green meetings. While this will be a county-level policy, the county will share its green meetings policy with cities and encourage implementation of similar policies at the city level.

22. Implement a county policy encouraging the use of reusable food and beverage service ware.

Planning to implement

Optional (6 points)
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.5, C.10, C.19

Through engagement with internal departments, the county will evaluate incorporating this strategy in the required green meeting policy or the sustainable purchasing policy. The policy will apply to county-hosted events and county spaces. The evaluation will include how to track and report on implementation of this policy at county events and meetings. As with strategy #16, the county will review and consider incorporating policies similar to new federal policies for single-use plastics.

23. Adopt an ordinance with a mandatory consumer charge or ban for single-use items.

Planning to implement

Optional (9 points)
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.7, C.13

The cities of Edina, Minneapolis, and St. Louis Park have ordinance requirements that apply to packaging. These ordinances restrict the use of single-use packaging items in favor of materials that are reusable, recyclable or compostable. The county will work with cities to explore implementation of similar packaging ordinances in other communities. Additionally, the county recently hired a plastic waste reduction specialist who will explore policy options for countywide consumer charges to

increase reusable serviceware over disposable and/or bans on single-use items.

The county will continue to allocate resources to existing programs that address single-use plastics. The MNinimize campaign, business, school, and multifamily waste prevention and recycling grants, and new zero-waste community grants all provide incentives to switch from single-use plastics to reusables. In addition, the new extended producer responsibility for packaging legislation has the potential to help address this issue.

24. Join and/or actively participate in a reuse network, like Reuse Minnesota, to provide county and city staff with learning opportunities to broaden their reuse expertise.

Already implementing

Optional (6 points)
Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.16, D.7

Hennepin County is a member of Reuse Minnesota and sponsors their annual conference. Staff regularly attends conferences and workshops held by Reuse Minnesota as well as reuse-related sessions offered at other conferences hosted by the Recycling Association of Minnesota and SWANA, Build Reuse, and others. The county also has staff serving as board members on both the Reuse Minnesota and Build Reuse boards.

The county encourages residents to support local reuse, rental, and repair retailers and highlights community reuse efforts through the Choose to Reuse program, which includes the Choose to Reuse website. Since establishing this program in 2002, Hennepin County has established relationships with reuse retailers across the county, looking to them for feedback and expertise.

25. Establish a Repair Ambassador program, like the Recycler/Composters (RCAs) Ambassador programs.

Already implementing

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: D.5

Hennepin County has a well-established Fix It Clinic program with over 100 volunteers who lend their time and expertise to monthly Fix-it Clinic events. Hennepin County Fix-It Clinics address common barriers to repair, including the fear of taking something apart and not being able to get it back together and the knowledge and skill to troubleshoot and fix an item, by providing free, hands-on assistance from knowledgeable volunteers.

Additionally, in fall 2024, the county will be launching the first brick-and-mortar Fix-It Clinic at the St Anthony Village Library. The clinic will have regular hours for residents to stop in for free repairs of household items.

26. Establish a reuse location for residential drop-off and pick-up.

Already implementing

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: D.6, D.7

Both of the county's drop-off facilities have Free Product Centers where residents can pick up usable products that were previously dropped off. The products are screened for quality before being placed on the shelves for reuse. Examples of products that may be found at the centers include adhesives and glues, aerosols, automotive products, cleaners, paints, and stains.

In 2024 the county will roll out a new grant program for community groups created based on community feedback heard during development of the Zero Waste Plan. The grant program will focus on expanding access in hard-to-reach communities to reuse, recycling and composting opportunities by funding projects that are developed and run by communities to address community need. Drop-off sites and swap events for reuse will be eligible projects. The county will also explore options for establishing a reuse hub.

The county also recently received an MPCA grant to host swap events. Several cities, including Edina, Minneapolis, and St Louis Park, have hosted swap events in recent years for residents to exchange goods like garden tools and clothing. The grant funding will build on those efforts and expand swaps throughout the county.

27. Establish a curbside set-out day to allow residents to set out used items for reuse.

Planning to implement

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.1, A.2, A.3

This strategy was discussed with cities to better understand how different cities could successfully implement this type of reuse effort. A few cities expressed interest in adopting the model created by the City of Bloomington. Some cities would prefer to add or expand a reuse component at their annual cleanup drop-off event rather than having residents set out reusable items for curbside collection. Concerns cities raised with this model of collection include duplicating existing options like neighborhood Buy Nothing groups, items becoming unusable due to weather, and items not collected being left out after collection day.

As cited in the metro policy plan, the City of Bloomington has already implemented this program. The county will commit funding to pilot and expand this program with interested cities identified during the engagement process. The county will also consider incentives to recruit additional cities and encourage cities to combine their curbside reuse event with a citywide garage sale and annual cleanup drop-off event, as suggested by some cities.

State-led strategies:

28. Develop standardized guidance and methodology for tracking waste reduction and reuse activities and their resulting benefits.

29. Research and pursue financial strategies to best incentivize waste reduction and reuse, such as grants and loans.

Collection best practices

30. Collect recyclables, organics, and trash on the same day.

Planning to implement

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.1

Most cities in Hennepin County already have trash, recycling, and organics recycling collection on the same day. For cities that don't already have same-day collection, the change would need to be made by amending their ordinances and/or hauler licensing requirements.

The county will modify its recycling ordinance, Ordinance 13, to require cities collect recyclables, organics, and trash on the same day. The county will offer technical assistance to cities that need to amend their ordinances and/or hauler licensing requirements to implement this change.

Engagement highlight: Haulers had suggestions for how cities could improve logistics of same-day collection of waste.

31. Collect recycling weekly by 2030.

Not planning to implement

Optional (7 points)

All city recycling programs in the county collect recycling every other week. Many cities have explored weekly collection through their contracting processes and opted against it due to cost. Most cities provide an option for residents to upgrade to a larger recycling cart or add an extra cart.

Weekly recycling collection would cost Hennepin County residents at least \$22 million per year without any data to show it would result in a significant increase in recyclables collected. In addition, weekly recycling would double greenhouse gas emissions from trucks, increase damage to roads, and potentially exacerbate the ongoing shortage of drivers in the solid waste industry. The MPCA should conduct a cost-benefit analysis that compares this strategy to alternatives.

32. Pair the option of bi-weekly trash collection with weekly recycling and organics collection.

Not planning to implement

Optional (7 points)

The county is not planning to implement this strategy at this time, but will explore it in the future as we pursue hauler licensing changes and as organics participation rates increase.

33. Contract for residential recycling and organics by 2030.

Already implementing

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.1

All but one of Hennepin County's cities contract for recycling service, and 18 contract for organics service. The county will continue to work with cities to encourage contracts for curbside organics programs. The county's residential recycling funding policy, which allocates SCORE funds to cities for their curbside programs, incentivizes this by providing more funding to cities that contract for organics than those that don't.

Engagement highlight: Several cities support the county putting requirements in place. Several haulers noted that organics participation was significantly higher in cities that contracted for the service.

34. Contract for residential mixed municipal solid waste collection by 2030.

Already implementing

Optional (7 points)
Related Zero Waste Plan actions:
C.1

Currently, 18 cities in Hennepin County contract for residential trash collection (mixed municipal solid waste): Bloomington, Champlin, Deephaven, Excelsior, Hopkins, Loretto, Maple Plain, Medicine Lake, Medina, Minneapolis, Osseo, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Rockford, St. Anthony, St. Louis Park, Tonka Bay, and Wayzata. The county will continue to advocate for contracted waste collection for both residential and commercial.

The county will commit resources to engage with cities and other partners on the organized collection process to identify and push for legislative changes to make the process easier.

Engagement highlight: Haulers had mixed opinions about this strategy. Small and medium sized haulers were concerned that large haulers would take over an organized system.

Recycling management

35. Recruit a minimum of 12 commercial businesses a year to recycle at least three materials from their operations and promote the environmental and resource benefits.

Already implementing

Required
Related Zero Waste Plan actions:
B.5, B.12

Hennepin County has provided grants, technical assistance, and educational materials to businesses and nonprofit organizations since 2013. Businesses that have received grants have increased the amount of materials they divert from the trash. The county regularly shares business waste success stories with the public to increase awareness around business waste prevention and recycling through the business recycling quarterly newsletter and our social media accounts.

In 2024, the county hired Minnesota Waste Wise to provide technical assistance to businesses, greatly increasing the number of businesses the county works with each year to reduce waste and increase recycling.

The county added a requirement that all businesses must recycle when the recycling ordinance (Ordinance 13) was revised in 2018. This requirement is more comprehensive than the state requirements for commercial recycling and applies to all of the estimated 43,000 businesses in the county. In 2023, Hennepin County conducted 88 inspections of businesses throughout Hennepin County for Ordinance 13 compliance and to provide education and resources. Additional staffing in 2024 will vastly expand the number of businesses inspected in the coming years.

36. Establish mandatory pre-processing of waste at resource recovery facilities and landfills by 2030.

Planning to implement

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.9, B.14, B.16, D.12

The county will pursue development of a recycling recovery facility, also known as a mixed waste processing facility, to recover materials from the trash for recycling. At recycling recovery facilities, trash goes through a highly automated process that combines mechanical and optical sorting to separate materials based on size, shape, and composition. Materials recovered from the trash include cardboard, metals, #1 and #2 plastics, and organic materials.

The Hennepin County board has already approved initial capital funding to develop a recycling recovery facility by 2030. Next steps for the county are doing site visits of recycling recovery facilities and conducting further analysis of the critical factors.

The county will rely on the MPCA to help this project stay on schedule. Important roles for the MPCA will be approving the county's waste designation plan and streamlining permitting.

Engagement highlight: Haulers expressed concerns about this strategy, related to definitions and expectations, standards, confusion among customers, contamination, quality of materials, and ability to find end markets. Additional factors they said should be considered include how mixed waste processing would increase costs and how the technology fits with the recently passed producer responsibility for packaging law.

37. Provide assistance to multifamily properties to improve recycling (4 or more units with shared walls).

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.14, B.12, C.3

Hennepin County's recycling ordinance (Ordinance 13) requires property owners and associations to provide adequate recycling service and ensure residents have annual recycling information and easy access to recycling.

The county offers grants, educational materials, container labels, and staff assistance to improve recycling at multifamily properties. Grant funding can be used for recycling and organics recycling bins, compostable bags, organics hauling start-up costs, bulky item and mattress recycling hauling, and building waste enclosures to expanding collection services. The county works with Minnesota Waste Wise to provide additional outreach and technical assistance to multifamily properties. The county also allocates a portion of SCORE funding to cities to support multifamily recycling and waste reduction.

In 2023, the county started the Apartment Recycling Champions program, a new initiative that pays residents at multifamily buildings to educate their neighbors about recycling and motivate them to reduce waste.

The county will continue to explore ways to provide the same level of and access to waste services at multifamily properties that are available to residents on city programs.

State-led strategies:

38. Assist with tracking commercial recycling self-hauling activities.

Recycling market development

State-led strategies:

39. Support and invest in new facilities and retain processors of recycled material for end markets.

Organics management

40. Make residential curbside organics collection available in cities with a population greater than 5,000 by 2030.

Planning to implement

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.6

Hennepin County's recycling ordinance (Ordinance 13) required cities with a population over 10,000 to make organics recycling service available to all households with curbside recycling service in 2022. All of the required cities have implemented residential curbside organics collection programs.

The county will amend Ordinance 13 to expand the requirement to cities with populations of 5,000 or more. When amending the ordinance, the county will also propose an exemption for residents that live in areas that are zoned rural residential by the Met Council. This zoning designation applies to areas that are largely agricultural and discourages future development. Approximately 19,000 Hennepin County residents would be affected by the proposed exemption.

There are seven cities in Hennepin County with populations between 5,000 and 9,999 that will be impacted by this requirement. Some of the affected cities plan to include curbside organics collection in their recycling contract renewal discussions. Some of the affected cities have already established organics drop-off sites. Maintaining these drop-off sites will be encouraged to ensure residents in multifamily properties continue to have access to organics recycling.

The county will help these cities transition to curbside collection by:

- Working with cities to incorporate organics collection into their new hauling contracts.
- Continuing to provide SCORE funding to cities to reduce the cost residents pay for curbside organics service and provide more funding to cities that implement organized collection.

- Assisting with development and distribution of education and outreach materials
- Encouraging participation by providing free supplies and incentivizes to residents, such as food scrap collection containers, initial supply of compostable plastic bags, and compost.

Survey highlight: Less than one-third of residents (29%) report disposing of their food waste primarily in the trash.

41. Expand backyard composting outreach and resources for residents.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.6

Hennepin County offers in-person and online workshops to help residents learn how to compost. Backyard composting information is also offered on our website and through handouts distributed at public events.

Survey highlight: 25% of residents report using backyard or on-site composting as their primary way to dispose of food waste.

42. Require management of organics from large commercial food generators by 2033.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.6

Hennepin County's recycling ordinance (Ordinance 13) required businesses that generate large quantities of food waste to implement food waste recycling by 2020.

Commercial generators covered under this ordinance include: restaurants; grocery stores; food wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers; hotels; hospitals; sports venues; event centers; caterers; nursing and residential care facilities; office buildings with dining services; farmers markets; food shelves and food banks; colleges and universities with dining

services; shopping centers; airports; golf clubs and country clubs; and rental kitchens or shared use commercial kitchens. The county board can designate additional business classifications.

The requirements apply to public, nonprofit, and for-profit businesses that generate one ton of trash per week or contract for eight cubic yards or more per week of trash collection service.

43. Establish additional organics recycling drop-off sites.

Already implementing

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.5

The county will continue to support cities in establishing organics recycling drop-off sites. As of 2023, 25 cities have organics recycling drop-off locations. Cities with populations less than 10,000 are eligible for SCORE funds for their drop-off sites, and the county provides grants to cities, businesses, multifamily properties and nonprofit organizations to establish organics drop-off sites for the public.

Survey highlight: 26% of residents use organics recycling drop-off sites as their primary way to dispose of food waste.

State-led strategies:

44. Standardize the role of compostable products in organics recycling programs by 2025.

Wood waste and emerald ash borer

Managing wood waste was added to the metro policy plan that was added due to the increase in wood waste caused by the emerald ash borer and other threats to the urban tree canopy. According to the most recent projections from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, wood waste generation resulting from the emerald ash borer infestation should peak around 2030. Whether the peak is actually reached around that time and how fast wood waste generation declines is largely unknown. Managing wood waste is an ongoing challenge because there are few options for wood waste processing, mulch markets are saturated, and demand for products made from urban wood is low.

Recognizing the complexity of wood waste management and the need for state-level leadership and coordination to develop near- and long-term solutions, the MPCA recently created a wood waste stakeholder group that Hennepin County participates on. Effective solutions will require ongoing collaboration among cities, counties, the state, and the private sector.

Unlike other metro counties, Hennepin County does not operate any wood waste sites, but instead relies on cities and the private sector to manage wood waste. Hennepin County is currently working with the Partnership on Waste and Energy to better understand how much wood waste will be generated in the metro area and the capacity to manage this waste through various options.

45. Develop plans to prevent and manage wood waste in each county and throughout the region.

Planning to implement

Required

Hennepin County's current efforts related to wood waste and emerald ash borer include providing tree inventory, replacement, and planning assistance for cities, schools, and nonprofit organizations, tree removal and

replacement assistance for residents with lower incomes, and education and outreach.

Hennepin County welcomes the formation of the statewide wood waste stakeholder group and is a member. The county is hopeful that the outcomes of the stakeholder group will inform the county's planning process, outlined below, for wood waste prevention and management. Next steps in the development of Hennepin County's wood waste management plan, to be completed by the end of 2026, include:

- Establish a planning steering group, which will include county staff, city staff, tree care companies, wood waste processors, sawmills, and wood product businesses.
- Conduct research to better understand the issue, including wood waste quantity and flow and inventory of wood waste outlets.
- Identify potential actions to increase reuse, recycling, and processing of wood waste. This could include modifying existing licensing requirements and changing current efforts.

Engagement highlight: The varied responses from partners confirmed the need for better coordination of wood waste management. Lack of local processing capacity is the biggest issue.

46. Promote existing programs that use EAB-affected wood for furniture, home goods, flooring, and other purposes.

Already implementing

Required

Hennepin County currently promotes and supports programs that use EAB-affected wood and will continue doing so. For example, the county has given grants to Wood from the Hood and promotes them in our building material reuse materials. To lead by example, the county also purchases and installs furniture made from EAB-affected wood.

47. Composting and mulching operations must continue to be supported.

Already implementing

Required

Hennepin County has supported local composting and mulching operations for many years and will continue to do so. The county has been sending source-separated organics to local composting sites to be recycled into beneficial soil amendments since the county's first residential and school organics collection pilot projects more than 20 years ago.

Hennepin County supports the local organics composting sites by directly and indirectly delivering thousands of tons of source-separated organics to each site annually. The county has processing agreements in place with the two largest organics composting facilities in the metro area. Source-separated organics are accepted at the county's transfer station at a significantly subsidized tipping fee and then transferred to a local composting site. The county also allows approved haulers to directly deliver source-separated organics to one of the composting sites at a significantly subsidized tipping fee.

48. Update ordinances that address wood burning.

Not planning to implement

Optional (4 points)

The county will review how its existing ordinances address the burning of wood and will explore updating ordinances related to the open burning of wood waste by businesses and cities (not residents) to minimize negative impacts to environmental and human health and incentivize the proper management of wood waste.

49. Develop and distribute EAB tree care education programs for privately owned land.

Already implementing

Optional (8 points)

Hennepin County already provides a variety of tree care and emerald ash borer information and assistance to residents. Information on the benefits of trees, the threat posed by emerald ash borer, how to identify ash trees, and options for managing ash trees are shared on an ash trees web page and trees and forestry web page, on printed educational materials, and through newsletters and social media. The county encourages partners to use and share these resources and provides printed materials free to partners and residents.

County foresters also started a trees and forestry learning series with monthly workshops on a variety of topics, including tree identification, diagnosing common trees defects and health issues, tree planting, and tree care. The county is starting a program to provide tree removal and replacement assistance for residents with lower incomes.

50. Incentivize tree treatment as a cost-effective strategy to extend the life of ash trees and to reduce the volume of wood waste generated over the next 20 years.

Not planning to implement

Optional (8 points)

The county's Emerald Ash Borer Plan limits the treatment of ash trees on county property to specimen trees that are a central feature of a landscape design or where the removal of all ash trees would leave a property bare. County foresters advise residents to only treat large trees that provide significant landscape and/or cooling benefits. Trees need to be treated every few years, so it can be hard for residents to maintain treatments over the long term.

51. Allow assessments on property taxes to spread the cost of tree care over a multi-year timeframe.

Not planning to implement

Optional (9 points)

The county is not currently considering this strategy. Minneapolis and some other cities already allow assessments for tree removal over a multi-year timeframe.

52. Expand composting and mulching capacity beyond existing markets.

Planning to implement

Optional (5 points)

For many years, the county has provided finished compost made from food scraps at no cost to schools that have organics recycling programs. Many schools use this compost in school gardens where students get involved in planting and growing vegetables, herbs, and flowers. In the fall, some schools have used the harvested produce from their gardens in school meals, providing a tangible example of the circularity of their organics recycling program. The county will continue to make compost available to schools.

The county's Climate Action Plan includes a strategy to use compost and biochar as a soil amendment on county projects. Hennepin County's Transportation Department conducted its first pilot project to demonstrate the benefits of using food-derived compost more than 15 years ago. In recent years, the department's design and construction engineers have received training from MnDOT on the most effective applications of compost in road construction projects. The county regularly purchases and uses compost in projects to improve site revegetation and stormwater management. A standard specification for the use of food-derived compost in road construction projects has been developed so that design engineers can easily incorporate it into their projects. The county will continue these efforts.

However, expanding the use of compost faces challenges that the MPCA needs to address. Ambiguity in the MnDOT specification for what constitutes food-derived material in Grade 2 compost creates a loophole that contractors use to attempt to substitute lower cost yard waste compost when food-derived compost is specified for a project. Additionally, there is no quick and easy way for on-site county engineers to verify that the compost received is food-derived compost from a properly permitted organics composting site. Resolving these issues needs to be a priority for the MPCA to facilitate the expansion of local markets for food-derived compost.

The metro policy plan suggests developing the capacity for biochar or other new technologies. Biochar is a carbon-rich soil amendment and agricultural byproduct that is made from waste wood. Biochar operations are in early stages in the metro area. In July 2024, the City of Minneapolis committed funding to invest in a facility that would produce biochar from wood waste from managing the city’s public trees. The county will track the development of biochar technology and University of Minnesota research on the how long and how much carbon can be sequestered in biochar in public construction project uses.

53. Support development of systems that use wood fuel.

Not planning to implement

Optional (4 points)

This strategy is about retrofitting/replacing inefficient wood-burning home heating appliances with new, more efficient ones. The county is not considering this strategy due to the limited number of residents that rely on wood-burning for home heating.

State-led strategies:

54. MPCA will continue state agency coordination to address wood waste.

Organics market development

55. Require food-derived compost in county construction and landscaping projects.

Planning to implement

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: D.11

The county’s Climate Action Plan includes a strategy to increase the use of compost in county projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When comparing road construction, building construction, and landscaping projects, road construction has the greatest potential to use larger amounts of food-derived compost on a regular basis. As described in strategy #52, Hennepin County has already normalized and standardized the use of food-derived compost in its road construction projects.

The county will work with Purchasing, Transportation and Facilities Services departments to incorporate requirements into purchasing bids and specs to ensure that all applicable road construction projects use food-derived compost as well as identifying and implementing actions to ensure all applicable landscaping projects use food-derived compost. The county will also work with cities to encourage use of food-derived compost in infrastructure projects, share specification language, provide technical assistance, and explore requiring this of cities.

56. Find new outlets to increase food-to-animal operations.

Not planning to implement

Optional (7 points)

While the promotion of available food-to-animal outlets is mentioned in the guidance for this strategy in the metro policy plan, the guidance primarily focuses on finding, soliciting, and assisting partners to become new licensed food-to-animal operations. As far as the county is aware, no new food-to-animal operations have been licensed in or near the metro area for more than 20 years due to lack of interest in the

local agricultural community. Initiation of policy changes and/or financial incentives would need to come from the state level to encourage the opening of new food-to-animal operations.

Emerging technology

State-led strategies:

57. Develop a process for gathering the information necessary to make timelier and consistent policy decisions.

Waste-to-energy

58. Counties must continue to support the implementation of Minn. Stat. § 473.848 Restriction on Disposal.

Already implementing

Required

Minnesota’s Restriction on Disposal law requires metro counties to ensure that waste is sent to processing facilities, like HERC, before disposing of it at landfills (*Minn. Stat. § 473.848*). To enforce this law, the MPCA needs to know whether waste processing facilities are operating at capacity. The county will continue to comply with its statutory requirements by providing monthly capacity and yearly certification reports to the MPCA.

Landfilling

59. Implement additional fees to better account for the externalities of land disposal.

Already implementing

Optional (4 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: D.8

The Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Fee (Ordinance 15) was established in 1994 to fund environmental programs that protect human and environmental health. These programs include waste prevention, recycling and organics recycling, environmental education, and environmental protection programs. The ordinance requires waste haulers

to charge a fee on trash service and remit this fee to the county. The fee is not applied to recycling or organics recycling services. Effective April 1, 2019, the percentage rate of the Solid Waste Management Fee for all mixed waste services provided in Hennepin County is:

- Residential: 15.5%
- Non-residential: 21.5%

Product stewardship

60. Participate with the Product Stewardship Committee under the Solid Waste Administrators Association (SWAA).

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.12, C.18

Hennepin County staff currently serve as the Chair of the Solid Waste Administrator Association’s Product Stewardship Committee. This group continues to work to identify and prioritize problem materials that would benefit from product stewardship policies. This group tracks, reviews, and responds to proposed product stewardship policies and shares that information among counties.

Household hazardous waste (HHW)

61. Encourage retailers to increase consumer awareness of responsible end-of-life handling for products containing lithium-ion batteries.

Planning to implement

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.1, A.2, A.3

Hennepin County will educate retailers on the proper management and disposal of lithium-ion batteries and devices containing lithium-ion batteries. The county will provide retailers with education materials and resources on proper battery management to distribute to their customers.

Survey highlight: Most residents (77%) rarely or never used a drop-off location to recycle batteries.

62. Continue participation in the reciprocal use agreement for HHW collection sites.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.1, A.2, A.3

Hennepin County and the other six metro household hazardous waste programs are continuing the reciprocal use partnership with a five-year agreement, effective December 31, 2024, to December 31, 2029. The HHW reciprocal agreement allows residents to use any of the HHW sites in the seven-county metro area.

63. Partner with cities to increase participation in HHW collection.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.1, A.2, A.3

The county provides educational resources, including printed factsheets and brochures, online information and disposal guide, and sample articles, web content, and social media posts for cities to use in educating their residents on proper disposal of HHW. The county partners with cities to promote local HHW collection events. The county provides supplies for and coordinates the management of fluorescent lamps collected from residents at city cleanup events.

64. Host monthly drop-off sites in locations other than a permanent HHW site.

Already implementing

Optional (8 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: A.1, A.2, A.3

Hennepin County offers 4 collection events in the spring, summer, and fall to provide residents a convenient, local option for disposing of household hazardous waste in addition to its 2 permanent collection sites in Bloomington and Brooklyn Park. The county will prioritize collection events in areas identified for environmental justice concerns when choosing event locations throughout the county.

Sustainable building and deconstruction

65. Implement the use of a Building Material Management Plan.

Already implementing

Required

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.13, C.15, D.2

In 2023, the county adopted an internal construction and demolition waste policy to increase reuse and recycling of building materials. The policy requires building material management plans for all county-funded building, road, and bridge projects. Additionally, all county-funded building projects are required to meet a minimum 60% diversion rate.

In addition to implementing this policy, the county will encourage cities to adopt similar policies.

66. Prior to demolition of county-owned buildings, require that sustainable materials management strategies are considered.

Already implementing

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.13, C.15, D.2

The county's recently adopted construction and demolition waste policy requires landfill diversion rates of 60% to 80% for all county-funded projects. Diversion rate requirements vary based on the type of project. All new construction, renovation, rehabilitation, and remodeling projects are encouraged to incorporate reused and recycled-content building materials in their designs.

67. Host a building material collection event or swap.

Already implementing

Optional (8 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.13

The county supported the City of St Louis Park in hosting its first building material collection event in 2019 and has since expanded to support events in Brooklyn Park, Minnetonka, Minnetrista, Mound, and Orono. Cities have expressed great interest in hosting these events, and the county will continue to work on expanding building material collection events to additional cities.

68. Provide financial assistance to offset the additional cost of building deconstruction, used building material installation, and/or structural moving.

Already implementing

Optional (8 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.3

The county launched its building reuse grant program in 2019, the first of its kind in the region. Since then, three counties have replicated the program. The county initially only funded partial and full deconstruction of residential dwellings and building moves but in 2022, the county expanded the program to include grants for commercial dwellings and used building material installation.

69. Provide deconstruction training.

Already implementing

Optional (8 points)

Zero Waste Plan related actions B.13

The county has been contracting with organizations that have done deconstruction for decades to make the cost competitive with traditional demolition, build demand for the service, and provide workforce training on deconstruction techniques. The county currently contracts with 2 nonprofit organizations that provide workforce training on deconstruction to individuals facing employment barriers.

70. Annually host or aid with home and building repair and refurbishment trainings.

Already implementing

Optional (8 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: B.13

The county has partnered with Rethos for several years to provide training on home and building repair and refurbishment, such as their Old Home Certified course. The county also supports the Minnesota Tool Library to engage residents in learning a variety of repair-focused trade skills that will reduce household waste through repair – either via the repair of personal property and/or on behalf of the community. The county will continue to partner with entities such as Rethos and the Minnesota Tool Library to offer home and building repair and refurbishment training to residents.

71. Use purchasing guidelines to require environmental product declaration for concrete.

Planning to implement

Optional (7 points)

Related Zero Waste Plan actions: C.10

An environmental product declaration (EPD) for concrete is a document that transparently communicates the environmental performance or impact of any product or material over its lifetime. Concrete has the highest climate impact of any single material, and finding and using lower-impact concrete is important to reaching the county's climate and zero-waste goals. Hennepin County's solid waste management team will work with the county's Purchasing, Transportation and Facilities Services departments to explore the feasibility of requiring EPD for concrete. Hennepin County already voluntarily receives EPDs on some projects, such as those pursuing the Minnesota B3 Guidelines.

State-led strategies:

72. Study waste classification practices.
73. Propose changes to B3 guidelines to strengthen deconstruction requirements.
74. Incentivize deconstruction over landfilling MMSW and demolition debris.
75. Lead Sustainable Building Group (SBG) developments.

Supporting materials

The following supporting materials provide more context and in-depth information for the plan. These materials are available at hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning

- Description of the existing solid waste management system
- Minneapolis capture rate study 2022
- HERC waste sort report 2022
- Residential Recycling Funding Policy 2022-2025
- Waste delivery agreement template 2024-2025
- Description of county solid waste ordinances
- County solid waste system operating manual 2024
- Hennepin County Climate Action Plan
- Hennepin County Zero Waste Plan
- The Hennepin Energy Recovery Center and its role in the solid waste system
- Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System
- Legislative zero-waste priorities