



2024 Recycling Progress Report

ACHIEVING A ZERO-WASTE FUTURE



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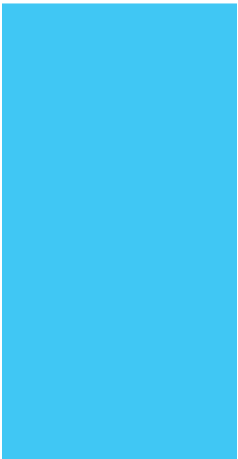
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Introduction

The Recycling Progress Report provides an annual update on Hennepin County's progress toward waste diversion goals, implementation of the Solid Waste Management Plan, and results from waste reduction and recycling programs.

In 2024, Hennepin County finalized its Plan to Reinvent the Solid Waste System and the state-required 2024-2029 Solid Waste Management Plan. The county continued to support zero-waste policies, and the state legislature passed a producer responsibility law for packaging and paper products.

Hennepin County increased its budget and staffing levels for zero-waste initiatives. Highlights include new grant programs for food rescue and community-led projects, campaigns to reduce food waste and inspire participation in recycling, and a neighborhood fix-it hub pilot.

Total waste generation in 2024 was almost the same as 2023. Not seeing an increase in waste generation during strong economic performance and robust job growth is encouraging. However, the county's recycling rate decreased by 1% to 42%. This change was caused by a substantial decrease in yard waste and a notable decrease in the amount of food donation reported.

The overall decrease in organics recycling obscures a positive trend: an increase in commercial organics recycling. Organics delivered to composting sites increased by 30%. Businesses drove this increase by diverting more food waste from the trash. This trend indicates the success of an approach that includes outreach, compliance with requirements, incentives, and support for implementation.

Minnesota's waste management hierarchy

Waste prevention and reuse

Don't create waste in the first place

Recycle

Turn the material in to a new product

Compost

Recycle organic material into compost

Waste-to-energy

Burn waste to produce electricity and steam to power our homes

Landfill

Bury waste

Progress toward goals

Hennepin County has established a zero-waste goal of diverting 90% or more of waste from landfills and incinerators. Minnesota statute requires metro counties achieve a 75% recycling rate by 2030. Although we've made incremental progress, significant changes in waste management policy, systems, and individual behaviors are needed to meet that goal.

Total waste generated

About 1.3 million tons of solid waste, which includes recycling, organics, and trash, were generated in Hennepin County in 2024. This is less than a 1% increase from 2023, or about 3,500 tons more.

Of the total tons generated, 42% was managed as recycling and organics. The remaining 58% was managed as trash at a waste-to-energy facility or landfill.

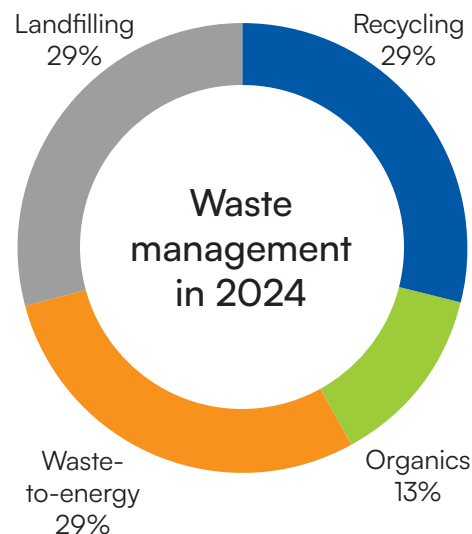
Changes in waste management

The amount of waste diverted to recycling increased by 2%, an incremental but encouraging increase. The amount managed as organics recycling decreased by 12% in 2024 compared to 2023. The change in organics recycling was caused by a substantial decrease in yard waste and a notable decrease in the amount of food donation reported. The amount of waste sent to waste-to-energy increased by 4%, while the amount landfilled increased by 2%, about 5,600 tons more.

Changes in waste management methods, 2023 to 2024

Management method	2023 (tons)	2024 (tons)	Percent change
Recycling	372,182	379,566	2%
Organics (includes yard waste)	190,057	166,468	-12%
Waste-to-energy*	361,625	375,700	4%
Landfill	380,911	386,489	2%
Total	1,304,775	1,308,223	<1%

*Waste from Hennepin County was managed at the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center and the Ramsey/Washington Recycling and Energy Center



A closer look at organics

Composting of food waste

increased 30%

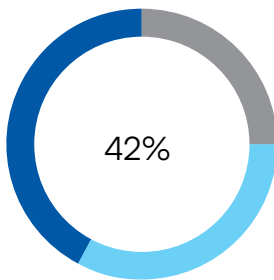
because more businesses started participating in organics recycling.

A dry yard waste season drove the overall decrease in organics.

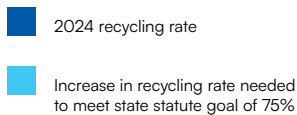
ZERO-WASTE DASHBOARD — 2024 RESULTS

Recycling rate

Goal: 75%

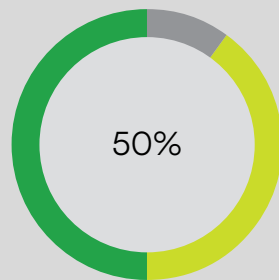


✓ State statute goal

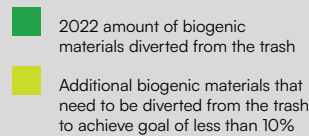


Amount of food, paper and other biogenic materials in the trash

Goal: less than 10%

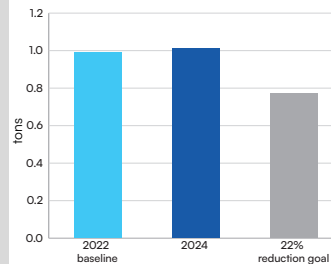


✓ Climate driven
 ✓ Critical to meeting recycling goals



Waste generated per capita

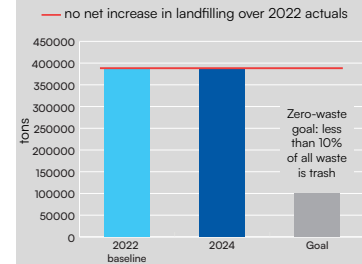
Goal: reduce waste generated per capita by 22%



✓ Climate driven
 ✓ Critical to meeting zero-waste goal

Landfill rates

Goal: no net increase in landfilling rates over 2022 actuals



✓ Climate driven
 ✓ Critical to meeting zero-waste goal

Zero-waste dashboard metrics: 2022 — 2024 and goals

Metric	2022	2023	2024	Goal
Recycling rate	41%	43%	42%	75%
Amount of food, paper, and other biogenic materials in the trash	About 50%	No study in 2023	No study in 2024	Less than 10%
Waste generated per capita (tons/person)	0.99	1.01	1.01	0.78
Landfill rates	386,110 tons	380,911 tons	386,489 tons	Less than 386,110 tons

2024 highlights and major accomplishments

Completed solid waste planning and established priorities

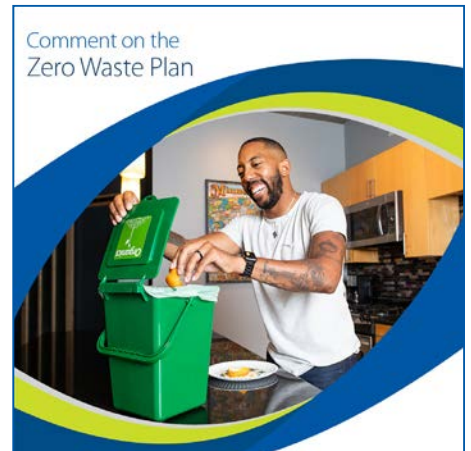
Finalized a plan to reinvent Hennepin County's solid waste system and adopted the county's 2024-2029 Solid Waste Management Plan. This process identified the 12 highest priority zero-waste actions and responded to the requirements in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Metro Policy Plan.

Adopted a zero-waste platform and made significant progress on zero-waste policy

The county adopted a 2024 state legislative platform that included priority policies for accelerating a zero-waste future. As part of its plan to reinvent the solid waste system, the county identified a comprehensive package of more than 20 additional policies needed to put Minnesota on-par with national zero-waste leaders. The passage of the state's Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act will create an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for packaging and paper products statewide. The law will incentivize more sustainable design and hold producers responsible for reducing the environmental impacts of the items they produce and managing them throughout the entire lifecycle.

Launched campaigns to raise awareness about high-priority zero-waste topics

The Trash or Cash campaign offers residents practical tips to reduce wasted food by using a retro gameshow theme and advice from local chefs across various media to creatively highlight the financial and environmental costs of food waste. The Recycling Exists campaign aims to dispel myths about recycling in Minnesota and increase public confidence in the recycling system.



Expanded the county's waste reduction and recycling team

Added staff who will focus on reducing single-use plastics and plastic packaging, expanding collection and drop-off options for hard-to-recycle items, increasing compliance with the county's recycling and food waste recycling requirements, and expanding capacity in the construction and demolition waste and school waste reduction and recycling programs. These positions will facilitate the adoption of best practices and motivate behavior change by providing more services, education, and assistance.

Made grant funding available for food rescue and community-based initiatives

Food rescue grants support the recovery and redistribution of surplus food from grocery stores and other donors to people in need. Community zero-waste grants support a variety of activities, including community-led swaps, repair clinics, special material collections, and recycling or organics recycling drop-off sites.

Piloted a neighborhood fix-it hub

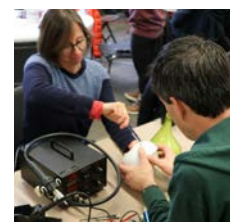
This new effort establishes smaller-scale, locally led repair hubs at regular locations to bring the joy and impact of the popular Fix-It Clinics to the community. The pilot location is at the St. Anthony Library and is held the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month.

Provided guidance on building material reuse on commercial projects

Collaborated with the University of Minnesota and other partners to create a project manager's guide for owners, architects, and contractors to help them build with reclaimed materials on a commercial scale. The guide contains specification language, procurement guidance, and case studies of successful reuse projects around the country.

Provided drop-offs for safe disposal and recycling

Served over 143,000 households at drop-off facilities and collection events to ensure safe disposal and recycling of materials like appliances, batteries, cleaners, electronics, mercury-containing items, paints, pesticides, and more.



Mapping a zero waste future

Reinventing the solid waste system

The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners heard a board briefing and discussion on January 25, 2024, on a plan to reinvent the county's solid waste system. This briefing responded to the resolution passed on October 24, 2023, to develop a closure plan for the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC).

Hennepin County plans to aggressively pursue zero-waste policies, programming, and infrastructure and advocate for policy changes at the state level to move toward zero waste and make meaningful progress toward reducing climate emissions.

A zero-waste dashboard was introduced at the briefing to define the criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC and to identify 22 policies that need to be accomplished by the state legislature to realize this zero-waste future. The four metrics in the dashboard are recycling rate, percent of food and other biogenic materials in the trash, waste generated per capita, and landfill rates.

Zero-waste priorities

The Reinventing the Solid Waste System briefing also laid out the 12 highest priority zero-waste actions. These actions were identified by staff from Hennepin County's Zero Waste Plan. That plan includes 62 actions that will move the county to a zero-waste future, which the county defines as preventing 90% or more of all discarded materials from being landfilled or incinerated.

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 account for nearly 80% of the potential tons that could be diverted from the trash by implementing the actions in the Zero Waste Plan.

12 highest priority zero-waste actions

1. Ensure every individual has equitable access to zero-waste tools
2. Secure adequate funding for zero-waste initiatives through SCORE and other sources
3. Prioritize extended producer responsibility for packaging
4. Ban recyclable and organic materials from landfills
5. Recover recyclable materials from the trash – recycling recovery facility
6. Support the transition to organized collection across Hennepin County
7. Increase compliance with the county's Recycling Ordinance 13 and expand requirements
8. Develop and implement a plan to eliminate food waste
9. Expand collection and drop-off options for hard-to-recycle items
10. Reduce single-use plastics and plastic packaging
11. Increase the reuse and recycling of construction and demolition waste
12. Mandate participation in recycling and composting programs

Solid Waste Management Plan

The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners adopted the 2024-2029 Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan, as required by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency based on the Metro Policy Plan.

The completion of this plan concluded a significant effort in solid waste planning for the county that began with the Climate Action Plan in 2021, the Zero Waste Plan in 2023, and a prioritization of the highest impact zero-waste actions in the Plan to Reinvent Hennepin County's Solid Waste System in early 2024.

These plans were developed with feedback from more than 2,300 participants, which included residents, businesses, industry stakeholders, and partners.

The county's waste reduction and recycling staff will now focus on implementing the various plans' actions. The success of these plans will be determined by the level of systemic change made.

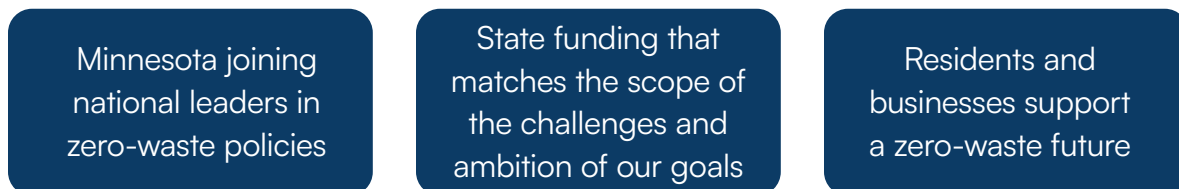
Systemic change depends on the ability for counties, cities, agencies, and environmental advocates to support behavior change by aligning efforts, state leadership on zero-waste policies, funding and infrastructure development that matches the scope of the challenges and the ambition of the goals, actions by residents and businesses to make zero waste a reality.

The county's investments and progress made on systemic changes will result in a circular economy, ensure an equitable system, and achieve climate and zero-waste goals.

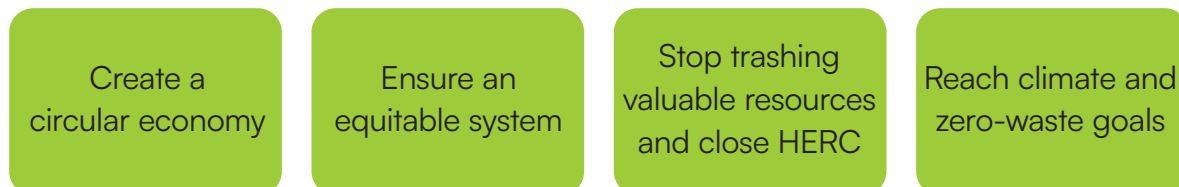
A VISION FOR A REINVENTED SYSTEM



This vision depends on:



With these dependencies met, we can:



Achieving more through collaboration

The Partnership on Waste and Energy (PWE) is a Joint Powers Agreement between the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board and Hennepin County. The partnership collaborates in areas of waste and energy management, including legislation and policy development, communication and outreach, planning and evaluation of waste processing, and other selected programs.

Legislative highlights

The Partnership's legislative advocacy seeks to end waste, promote renewable energy, and enhance the health and resiliency of its communities. Several policy objectives were achieved in 2024. The most substantial was the effort to pass the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act, which establishes extended producer responsibility for packaging and paper products in Minnesota.

The law was developed to meet the interests of residents, communities, and companies. It will prevent waste, increase recycling, and save local governments millions of dollars. Many view it as the state's most significant advance in waste and recycling policy since the SCORE law was enacted in 1989 to establish state recycling policy and funding.

The Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act will:

- Incentivize sustainable packaging
- Require packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2032
- Reduce the customer's cost of recycling by 90%
- Increase refill and reuse options
- Expand recycling service access and convenience
- Simplify and standardize recycling across the state

The Partnership played a pivotal role in shaping this policy, ensuring it met Minnesota's needs and securing broad support. The Governor signed the bill into law on May 19, 2024.

The Partnership also supported successful efforts to fund anaerobic digestion, respond to emerald ash borer, and establish nation-leading product stewardship for boat wrap.

Timeline for implementing the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act

2025-2026:

Build the foundation

- Establish producer responsibility organization
- Form advisory board
- Conduct needs assessment

2027-2028:

Establish the structure

- Create collection list
- Outline program requirements
- Submit stewardship plan

2029-2032:

Implement change

- Implement stewardship plan
- Producers begin covering program costs
- Create annual reports

2032: Final requirements go into effect

- Packaging and paper products must be refillable, reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2032

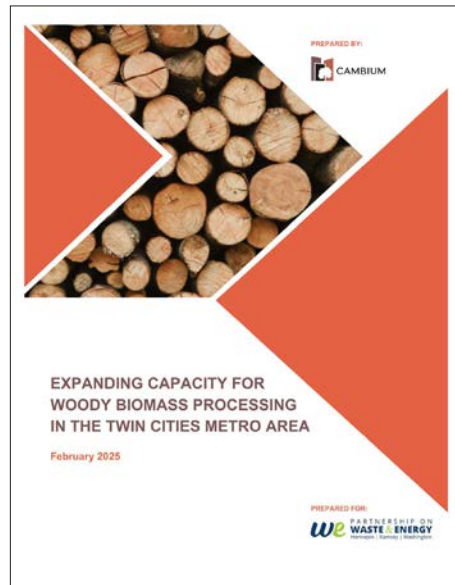
Expanding capacity for woody biomass processing

The Partnership commissioned Cambium Carbon to develop a new report, *Expanding Capacity for Woody Biomass Processing in the Twin Cities Metro Area*, to recommend near- and long-term opportunities for addressing wood waste in the Twin Cities region. Informed by feedback from over 25 stakeholders, it follows up on the Partnership's 2022 report, *Twin Cities Metro Area Emerald Ash Borer Wood Waste Study*.

The report found that wood waste generation is greater than what existing utilization and processing outlets can handle, and the problem is only getting bigger. Lack of adequate processing and utilization capacity has led to increased tree removal and disposal costs. It has also led to increased open burning of wood waste, which puts public health at risk and squanders a resource.

Proposed near-term solutions include energy recovery, mulch and compost, biochar, lumber production, and creating wood products such as pallets. Longer term solutions include processing wood waste for wood pellet fuel, sustainable aviation fuel, and green hydrogen.

Although the report focuses on the Twin Cities region, the recommendations will be vital to addressing the growing challenge of wood waste throughout Minnesota. State support to develop and maintain solutions is critical, and the scope of the problem demands regional collaboration.



Zero waste challenges

In 2024, the Partnership coordinated work by the three counties to continue to engage residents in waste reduction challenges, expanding efforts to include both food waste and plastics.

The Plastic-Free Challenge in February encouraged participants to reduce single-use plastics. Plastics made up an estimated 16% of the waste stream in 2022, according to data from Ramsey and Washington counties, and can be difficult to recycle. Additionally, plastics contribute to litter, harm water and wildlife, and have largely unknown health impacts. With support from 53 partner organizations, 1,757 participants took over 19,000 actions, helping prevent nearly 12,000 plastic items from entering the waste stream and avoiding 5,200 pounds of carbon emissions.

The Stop Food Waste Challenge in August focused on reducing household food waste, which makes up nearly half of all wasted food. With 32 partners, including co-ops, cities, corporations, and farmers markets, 771 participants completed over 6,700 actions, preventing about 3,500 pounds of food waste and avoiding 7,270 pounds of carbon emissions.

By engaging residents through these challenges, the counties continue to make waste reduction more accessible and impactful.



Progress on implementing solid waste management plan strategies

The Hennepin County Solid Waste Management Plan for 2018 to 2023 identifies strategies the county will pursue to reach the goals of recycling 75% of waste by 2030. The plan remained in effect for most of 2024, until the Hennepin County Board adopted the 2024-2029 Solid Waste Management Plan in October. in alignment with the release of the MPCA's new Metro Policy Plan.

The plan includes the following strategies to help meet our goals of increasing recycling, preventing waste, and minimizing waste sent to landfills:

- Focus on organics recycling by establishing requirements for cities and certain businesses, increasing local capacity to manage organics, and working to prevent food waste.
- Build momentum for waste prevention and reuse by better understanding consumption habits and promoting waste prevention actions.
- Engage residents through outreach and education by raising awareness about changes in recycling programs, generating excitement about recycling and waste reduction, motivating environmental actions, and empowering residents to become leaders in their communities.
- Continue to serve residents where they are, including at home, work, school, and on-the-go.
- Provide and expand drop-off disposal options for hazardous waste, problem materials, and additional recyclables.
- Recover resources from the trash.

The following section includes updates on our progress implementing these strategies.



Focus on organics

Organic materials – which includes food, food-soiled paper, and other compostable materials – make up about 30% of our trash, so recycling them is key to achieving a 75% recycling rate and reducing the amount of waste we send to landfills. Diverting organics from the trash also helps address climate change by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, especially methane, which is generated from the decomposition of organic materials in landfills.



Infrastructure development

Hennepin County has identified a recycling recovery facility as a way to reduce landfilling quickly and significantly. Recycling recovery facilities pull recyclables from the trash using a highly automated process that combines mechanical and optical sorting to separate materials based on size, shape, and composition. These facilities remove materials like cardboard, metals, plastics, and organic material prior to disposal. Initial scoping estimates this facility could divert approximately 25% of material currently in the trash.

2024 results

- Conducted a preliminary study of mixed waste processing.
- Released a solicitation for an operational planning and pre-design study for a Recycling Recovery Facility adjacent to the county's Brooklyn Park Transfer Station. The project includes the following tasks:
 - Waste forecasting
 - End market analysis
 - Processing systems evaluation
 - Organics recovery evaluation
 - Reference facility evaluation
 - Site visits
 - Layout options
 - Concept design and costing

Food waste prevention

About 40% of food in the U.S. is wasted somewhere along the supply chain. Wasted food has both upstream and downstream impacts, from the energy used to grow, transport, process, and refrigerate it to the methane generated when food waste is landfilled.

The amount of food, particularly edible food, that ends up in the trash represents an opportunity to significantly reduce waste, take action on climate change, and address food insecurity. Preventing wasted food is a zero-waste and climate-action priority for the county. It also supports increased food security by getting food to people in need, which is a pillar of the county's disparity reduction efforts in the health domain.

2024 results

- Created a Wasted Food Prevention Plan that focuses specifically on how to get edible food eaten and meet the county's zero-waste and climate-action goals and established a target of cutting the amount of edible food in the waste stream in half.
- Launched the Trash or Cash campaign during Food Waste Prevention Week (April 1-7) with new tools and resources:
 - **Trashorcash.org**, the campaign website, had more than 5,000 visitors.
 - Fridge Check Fridays, which are weekly email reminders to use up food and offer simple tips on better food storage, cooking, and shopping, gained more than 1,600 subscribers. Around 80 percent of Fridge Check Friday subscribers who responded to a survey said they have tried a tip mentioned.
 - Three gameshow style segments and five short interviews with local celebrity chefs describing what they do in their kitchens to not waste food were created, posted online, and shared via online advertising. The gameshow segments were engaging for the audience, achieving a 96% video-completion rate.
 - New resources – the Fridge Check Guide, food storage cheat sheet, and Eat First signs – are available to order, download, or grab during in-person education events. Resources were downloaded from the website more than 500 times.
 - The campaign launch generated in-depth coverage in five media outlets with a reach of over 400,000 people.
 - Campaign ads generated more than 10 million impressions, successfully reaching a broad audience with multiple touchpoints.

Our wasted food prevention target



Cut discarded
edible food in half



Hennepin County's
Wasted Food Prevention
Plan is a first of its kind
in the U.S. because the
strategies focus solely on
prevention rather than
disposal of wasted food

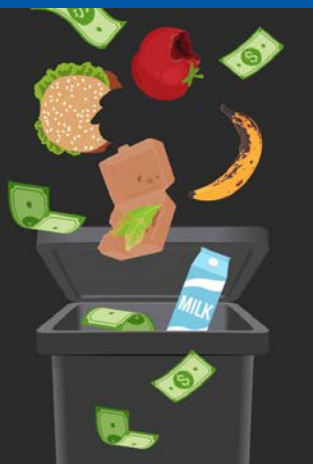
- Awarded 12 grants to increase food rescue in partnership with the county's Human Services and Public Health departments.
- Helped create the new Minnesota Wasted Food Prevention Peer Network, a bimonthly space for government staff to share resources and ideas.
- Offered the Stop Food Waste Challenge in collaboration with Ramsey and Washington counties through the Partnership on Waste and Energy.
- Spoke directly with 714 residents on how to store food properly and use up food to not waste it.

Campaign spotlight: Choose cash over trash by wasting less food

WASTED FOOD IS A WASTE OF MONEY

Get wasted food facts, cash hacks, and more.

TRASH OR CASH



We're all playing Trash or Cash, whether we know it or not. That's because when you throw away food, you throw away money.

Nearly 40% of all food in America is wasted – much of it coming from our homes. If you won in cash the amount of money you spent on food you threw away last year, you'd be thrilled. An average family of four loses more than \$2,500 to wasted food every year!

In an effort to keep that food out of the trash and keep that cash in consumers' pockets, Hennepin County launched a public education campaign during Food Waste Prevention Week in April 2024. The Trash or Cash campaign uses a game show theme to help people learn ways to save money by not wasting food.

Organics recycling requirements

The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners approved revisions to the county's recycling ordinance (Ordinance 13) in November 2018.

These changes required businesses that generate large quantities of food waste to implement food waste recycling by 2020, and cities to provide residents access to curbside organics recycling service by 2022. Smaller cities can meet the requirement by providing an organics recycling drop-off site.

2024 results

- Conducted over 100 inspections of businesses for Ordinance 13 compliance and to provide education and resources.
- Worked with cities to develop organics recycling programs to comply with ordinance requirements. Curbside organics collection is offered in 30 cities through citywide contracts or by requiring haulers to offer the service, and organics recycling drop-offs are offered in 24 cities.

Waste prevention and reuse

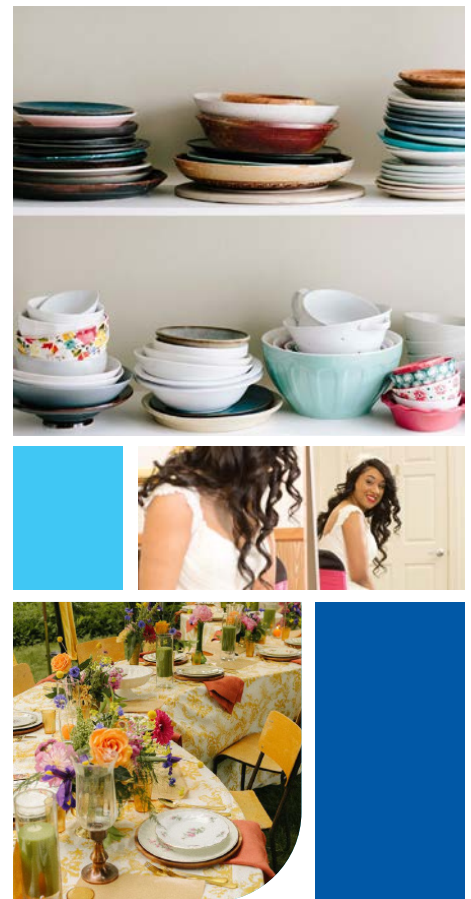
Preventing waste in the first place is the highest impact step to take in managing waste and the top priority on the state's waste management hierarchy. Hennepin County offers several programs to encourage waste reduction and reuse. To reach its waste reduction goals, the county also targets specific materials that represent the largest percentage of reusable goods found in the trash, including food waste, wood, textiles, furniture, and household goods.

Choose to Reuse

Residents' buying choices and where they shop can protect the environment and support the local economy. Choose to Reuse aims to increase awareness of buying used goods and ultimately drive residents to purchase from their local reuse retailers.

2024 results

- Published 14 articles on buying used and living a low-waste lifestyle. Content highlights included reuse in the kitchen, thrifting for your big day, refillable product alternatives are on the rise, items to donate to an animal shelter, low-waste dishwashing, and what to look for at holiday craft fairs.
- Connected more than 128,750 users to the Choose to Reuse website, a 32% increase from 2023.
- Had 3,651 subscribers to the Choose to Reuse website emails, a 22% increase over 2023.
- Generated almost 2.5 million impressions and more than 26,000 clicks through social media promotions and advertising.
- Promoted Hennepin County's Business Waste Reduction grants to reuse retailers and awarded 7 grants to reuse businesses.



Deconstruction and pre-demolition inspections

Construction and demolition projects can generate a lot of waste – but they don't have to. About 85 percent of the materials in a typical residential demolition project could be kept out of landfills, but currently only about 30 percent of building materials are reused or recycled. Building materials have the highest climate impacts of any single material.

Hennepin County works to divert building materials from the trash by promoting and incentivizing deconstruction and used building material installation. Deconstruction is essentially construction backwards – carefully disassembling and extracting materials from a building to reuse in other projects. Deconstruction prevents usable materials from going to the landfill, makes used building materials available to the community, creates jobs, and supports local reuse retailers. Deconstruction also creates an opportunity to put salvaged materials back into projects. Incorporating used building materials into project designs reduces embodied carbon associated with new materials and increases demand for used building materials, therefore supporting local reuse retailers.

2024 results

- Awarded 23 grants totaling over \$100,000 for projects that reused and recycled materials in the removal or renovation of a building. Grants were awarded to 13 residential deconstruction projects, 1 commercial deconstruction, and 9 used building material installation projects. From the 15 projects completed in 2024, 147 tons of building material were salvaged for reuse and 232 tons were recycled, totaling over 379 tons of building material diverted from landfills.
- Hosted the second-annual Salvage Crawl to increase awareness of building material reuse and retailers. Throughout May, 222 participants visited and entered to win prizes across 13 retail locations. About half (47%) of the Salvage Crawl participants were first-time salvage store visitors.

Salvage Crawl encourages reuse and supports local businesses

Throughout May 2024, more than 200 people – double the amount from 2023 – shopped for used building materials for home remodeling projects. Of the participants: 47% were first-time visitors to salvage stores, 37% made a purchase, and 44% visited more than one retailer.



Participating retailers:

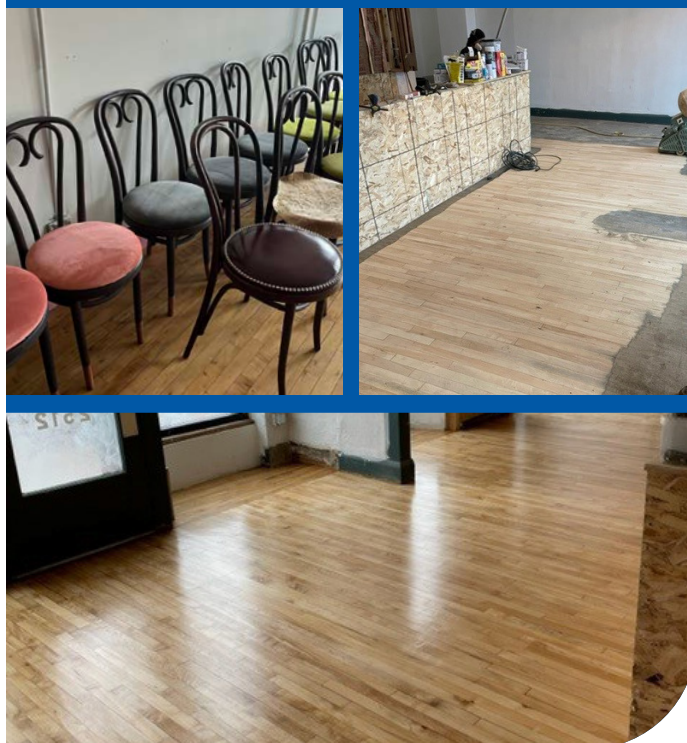
- Architectural Antiques
- Art & Architecture
- Bauer Brothers Salvage
- Better Futures MN
- City Salvage
- Furnish Office & Home
- Habitat for Humanity ReStore – Minneapolis
- Habitat for Humanity ReStore – New Brighton
- Historic Stone Co
- MN Tool Library
- Wood from the Hood

- Continued to support local deconstruction efforts by contracting with two Minneapolis-based nonprofit organizations, Better Futures Minnesota and Birch Group, who prioritize job training and employment for underserved communities. Through contracts totaling \$166,000, these organizations fully deconstructed 6 buildings and partially deconstructed 17 buildings, diverting over 511 tons of material from the landfill, including 263 tons of building materials for reuse and 248 tons of material for recycling.
- Partnered with four cities to coordinate five collection events for residents to donate usable building materials, collecting over 13 tons of building materials for reuse.
- Created the Project Manager's Guide to Building Material Reuse in Commercial Buildings in collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Center for Sustainable Building Research, MSR Design, and Doors Unhinged through the Hennepin-University Partnership and received an MPCA grant to expand upon this work.
- Provided education and outreach on reusing and recycling building materials to residents, contractors, architect and design firms, and other partners through training, webinars, and conference presentations.
- Continued to conduct pre-demolition inspections, ensuring proper management of hazardous materials prior to demolition.

Guide aims to overcome barriers to building material reuse at a commercial scale

The Project Manager's Guide to Building Material Reuse in Commercial Buildings helps building owners, architects, and contractors build with reclaimed materials on a commercial scale. The guide contains specification language, guidance for procurement, and case studies of successful reuse projects around the country. Templates included in the guide help address barriers in current construction documents and workflows.

The guide was created in collaboration with Hennepin County, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities Center for Sustainable Building Research, MSR Design, and Doors Unhinged through the Hennepin-University Partnership. Access the guide at hennepin.us/salvage.





Fix-It Clinics

Learning how to repair items is an effective way to produce less waste and conserve the resources that go into manufacturing, packaging, transporting, and disposing of goods. 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.

2024 results

- Held 12 clinics with 1,512 participants and 134 volunteers contributing 3,377 hours.
- Achieved an 80% fix rate, with 1,820 out of 2,297 items successfully repaired. Kept 10,414 pounds of household goods out of the waste stream
- Launched the first Neighborhood Fix-It Hub program at the St. Anthony Library, providing residents an ongoing, mini version of a Fix-It Clinic where they can repair items, learn skills, and create community connections. The seven hub sessions drew 123 people and 31 volunteers who contributed 332 hours. Residents brought in 164 items, 150 of which were repaired, for a 91% repair rate, preventing 859 pounds of waste.



Waste prevention at businesses

Businesses and organizations produce more than half of the waste in the county. Preventing waste conserves natural resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, can help a business' bottom line, and demonstrates commitment to the community. Common areas of focus for businesses include prevention of food waste, reuse and recovery of goods and materials, and development and use of recovered products.

2024 results

- Awarded 13 business waste prevention grants totaling \$341,100 for projects focused on reuse and repair, replacing disposables with reusables, food waste prevention, and research and development to prevent waste.
- Continued to support MNimize, a single-use plastic reduction pledge and certification program for food businesses run by Minnesota Waste Wise in partnership with the county. MNimize added 30 new participating businesses and awarded 18 rebates totaling \$13,980 to help businesses reduce single-use plastic. MNimize staff made 954 outreach contacts, conducted 46 site visits, and offered 69 instances of technical assistance. Changes made by participating businesses avoided the use of 507,000 single-use plastic items, estimated at more than 29,000 pounds of waste reduced annually.

2024 business waste prevention grantees

- Better Futures in Minneapolis (\$37,500)
- Boston Scientific in Maple Grove (\$50,000)
- Bro Bros Closet in Minneapolis (\$28,700)
- Eat for Equity in Minneapolis (\$3,000)
- Entegris in Bloomington (\$40,000)
- Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity (\$30,000)
- Loaves n Fishes in Minneapolis (\$27,000)
- MN Toy Library in Minneapolis (\$9,000)
- Moth Oddities in Minneapolis (\$7,200)
- Outta Wax Records in Minneapolis (\$25,000)
- Recovery Bicycle in Minneapolis (\$50,000)
- RETHINK Tailoring in Minneapolis (\$24,000)
- We Love Kids in Minneapolis (\$9,700)



Waste prevention grant highlights

The following grantee success stories were used to promote availability of waste prevention grants in 2024. These stories highlight how the funding can fuel relatively simple solutions that have a big impact.

Tortilleria La Perla avoids 200,000 pounds of food waste

Tortilleria La Perla in Minneapolis received a \$47,500 waste prevention grant from Hennepin County in 2022 to help with the purchase of a food-grade machine to improve tortilla manufacturing in their factory. This prevented 200,000 pounds of food waste in 2023!



Nikkolette's Macarons eliminates over 38,000 boxes every year

Nikkolette's Macarons in Plymouth received a \$9,600 waste prevention grant from Hennepin County in 2023 to purchase reusable storage containers to replace disposable paper bakery boxes. This change is avoiding the use of 38,400 paper boxes every year! They are also serving as a model and mentor for start-up food businesses to reduce their packaging waste.



Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge avoids 52,000 disposable cups annually

Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge used a Hennepin County waste prevention grant to make the switch from single-use paper coffee cups to reusable coffee mugs. With this change, they are eliminating the use of at least 52,000 disposable cups every year.



Engaging residents through education and outreach

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 impact the county's ability to reach its solid waste management goals. The impact of people choosing to use less, recycle more, and properly dispose of waste is reflected in the county's waste management data and results.

Hennepin County promotes environmental stewardship by raising awareness about changes in recycling programs, generating excitement about waste reduction, and partnering with organizations in the community to motivate behavior change.

Zero Waste Challenge programs

Many people are interested in taking steps to prevent waste, declutter, and recycle more, but they aren't sure where to start. Zero Waste Challenge programs help participants live lower waste lifestyles by supporting them in exploring their waste and consumption habits, identifying the most effective actions for their household to take, reducing the amount of waste they generate, and motivating others to take action

2024 results

- Engaged 24 households in starting the Zero Waste Challenge by attending an intro training and committing to tracking and reducing the amount of recycling and trash they produce. Households will complete the challenge in spring 2025.
 - Had three Community Recycling Ambassadors and eight staff serve as personal mentors for participating households.
 - Offered monthly virtual or in-person workshops for participants as well as regular opportunities to learn more about local low-waste efforts and build community across Hennepin County waste programs.
- Offered two month-long online challenges in collaboration with Ramsey and Washington counties through the Partnership on Waste and Energy.



- Engaged 1,757 participants in the Plastic-Free Challenge in February.
 - Participants completed almost 19,100 actions to learn more about plastic and reduce the use of single-use items.
 - Cumulatively, those actions avoided over 11,900 plastic straws, cups, utensils, and bottles and prevented over 5,200 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions
 - Partnered with 54 organizations that helped recruit and engage participants, hosted kickoff events, and offered multiple other educational opportunities.
- Engaged 771 participants in the Stop Food Waste Challenge in August.
 - Participants completed over 6,700 actions contributing to less food being wasted.
 - Cumulatively, these actions prevented 3,503 pounds of food waste and 7,270 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions
 - Partnered with 32 organizations to expand the challenge's reach by sharing with their audiences and hosting multiple events that covered topics such as food preservation, using up scraps, and watching related documentaries and having group discussions.

Kudos to the 1,757 people who took the Plastic-Free Challenge!

Together, the 19,098 actions you completed to reduce your reliance on plastics had a big impact:

over **5,200**
pounds of carbon dioxide emissions avoided

over **11,900**
plastic straws, cups, utensils, and bottles avoided

over **360**
advocacy actions completed

over **29,300**
minutes spent learning



Thank you to the 771 participants in the Stop Food Waste Challenge!

Together, you completed 6,728 actions to reduce food waste in your home and community and made a big impact!

7,270
pounds of carbon dioxide emissions avoided

3,503
pounds of food waste prevented

1,362
zero waste meals consumed

2,739
minutes spent learning



Community Recycling Ambassadors

Personal connection paired with specific information and resources that address barriers is a powerful way to inspire action. Community Recycling Ambassadors help bridge the gap between awareness and action by motivating their friends, family, co-workers, and communities to recycle more and reduce waste.

Community Recycling Ambassadors are trained on waste prevention, recycling, composting, and effective communication skills through a six-week course taught by industry experts and community leaders. They then commit to volunteering 30 hours inspiring others in their communities to reduce waste, recycle more, and compost through activities such as answering questions at events and designing and implementing waste reduction and recycling projects.

2024 Results

- Trained 26 volunteers through one hybrid class, bringing the total number of trained Community Recycling Ambassadors to 859.
- Held a continuing education event for active volunteers focused on food rescue.
- Supported volunteers in contributing 847 hours to recycling and waste reduction projects in their communities. In total, 6,200 residents were contacted by or impacted by the work of Community Recycling Ambassadors, and Community Recycling Ambassadors helped out at events attended by nearly 23,000 residents.



Environmental education, outreach, and communication efforts

Environmental education, outreach, and communication efforts engage our community and partners in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation to work individually and collectively towards sustaining a healthy environment.

2024 results

- Supported 55 projects through the Green Partners environmental education program, which provides funding and support to organizations to actively educate, engage and motivate residents to become environmental stewards and make positive behavior changes. The projects supported in 2024 will directly engage nearly 19,000 people, reach 336,000 people with environmental messages, and employ more than 120 youth in green jobs exploration and training.
- Supported the environmental education network, which is open to anyone working to engage their community in learning about and taking action to protect the environment, by holding two virtual and two in-person meetings, sharing resources and opportunities through 12 editions of environmental education news, and building connections in the Facebook group.
- Gave 63 tours to 888 people at the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) and the Brooklyn Park Transfer Station.
- Supported green jobs pathways programs to increase access to environmental careers to diverse job seekers. Coordinated the third cohort of the Green Pathways Internship Program, which provided job shadowing opportunities for three recent high school grads and a recent college grad coordinator. Continued the operator apprenticeship program at the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center with three diverse candidates participating in the training program.
- Won the Mighty Mississippi Cleanup Challenge, a challenge from our downstream neighbor Goodhue County to pick up litter and protect lakes, rivers, and streams between April 15 and May 15. At least 64 cleanup events happened throughout the county during the challenge, and 355 people reported cleaning out storm drains 816 times and removing over 6,300 pounds of debris.



Serving residents where they are

At home

Recycling, organics, and trash service depends on where you live. Cities provide recycling service to most houses and smaller multifamily buildings (those with two to eight units). This service is commonly referred to as single-family curbside recycling. Larger, multi-unit residential buildings have waste services provided by the property owner or manager.

City recycling programs

Cities play an important role in the solid waste management system by making recycling easy and convenient for residents.

Hennepin County provides funding to support city recycling programs and assists with educational efforts and contracting. The county also participates on regional and statewide teams to improve consistency in recycling programs and education.

2024 results

- Distributed \$4.4 million in SCORE funding to support curbside recycling and organics recycling programs, organics drop-off sites, and multifamily recycling. To receive a grant, cities were required to meet the terms of the county's residential recycling funding policy. Cities collected over 143,000 tons of recycling, organics recycling, and yard waste from 367,708 households in 2024.
- Supported city recycling coordinators through quarterly meetings, sharing resources, and providing assistance and information.
- Assisted cities with promotional efforts and sending recycling guides to residents to increase consistent use of terminology and awareness of recycling messages.
- Developed the Recycling Exists campaign in partnership with metro counties to address residents' concerns about what happens to their recycling and dispel in-market messaging and news that recycling doesn't work. Campaign advertising on social media, billboards, streaming TV, radio, at grocery stores and restaurants, and at Gopher stadium and game broadcasts garnered over 37 million impressions, over 33,000 clicks on digital media, and over 31,000 visits to **RecyclingExists.com**.
- Continued to participate in the Recycling Education Committee, a statewide group formed by the MPCA to support the development and coordination of recycling education and outreach materials. 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.
- Provided technical assistance to cities on recycling RFPs and contracts. City recycling contracts allow cities to communicate consistent educational messages, provide a variety of resources, and deliver the best overall price for service.

Recycling Exists campaign dispels myths and shares what happens with our recycling

What happens to our recyclables when they leave our homes has become an increasingly common question from residents. They want to know that their recyclables are getting recycled and that their efforts are worth it. Metro counties worked together in 2024 to develop the Recycling Exists campaign and assure residents that recycling is no myth. The campaign juxtaposes mythical creatures that are not real with something we can all agree on – recycling is real and it works in the Twin Cities.

The campaign shares how Minnesota and the Midwest are home to many recycling facilities that collect, sort, process, and manufacture items made from the bottles, boxes, and other containers we put in our recycling bins.

- Plastic milk and laundry detergent jugs are made into durable decking, fencing and landscaping products in Paynesville, and plastic drink bottles and produce containers are made into new plastic bottles in Wisconsin and Ohio.
- Glass bottles and jars are sorted by color in Saint Paul, and the clear glass is sent to Shakopee to make bottles for drinks, pickles, salad dressing and more.
- Recycled paper and cardboard are made into cereal and cracker boxes in Saint Paul.
- Recycled food cans are made into new products like wire and parts for cars and appliances at facilities in the Midwest.

Campaign messages also raise awareness about how our efforts to recycle and reduce waste save energy, protect resources, and support local businesses and jobs. About 78,000 jobs in Minnesota are supported by the recycling industry.

Throughout 2024, campaign messages were shared on social media, streaming TV, at stadiums and game broadcasts through a partnership with Gopher Athletics, at grocery stores and restaurants, on billboards, and on both top hits radio and culturally specific radio.



Multifamily recycling

Per Hennepin County's recycling ordinance, property owners and associations are required to provide adequate recycling service, ensure residents have easy access to recycle, and give residents recycling information annually. The county offers resources to improve recycling at multifamily properties, including grants, educational materials, container labels, and staff assistance.

2024 results

- Allocated \$323,000 in SCORE funds to support multifamily recycling and waste reduction efforts. Distributed multifamily funding to 14 cities: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Edina, Golden Valley, Greenwood, Hopkins, Minneapolis, New Hope, Plymouth, Richfield, Robbinsdale, and St. Louis Park. Efforts supported by this funding include:
 - Creating educational materials
 - Collecting data on multifamily properties
 - Conducting outreach through mailers, newsletters, and social media
 - Conducting site visits and providing technical assistance to properties
 - Opening organics recycling drop-off sites specifically for apartment residents
- Provided technical support to improve waste reduction, recycling, and organics recycling at 306 properties with more than 19,000 units. Served 133 new properties and provided follow-up assistance to 173 properties.
- Awarded \$67,000 in funding to multifamily properties to start or improve recycling or organics recycling efforts
 - Distributed free recycling and organics recycling bins and compostable bags to 31 multifamily properties through the bin and compostable bag grants.
 - Awarded 18 multifamily recycling grants, which helped nine properties with recycling hauling start-up costs, six properties with organics recycling hauling start-up costs, and three properties with building waste enclosures to expand collection services.
- Sent a bi-monthly multifamily recycling newsletter to more than 2,800 subscribers, featuring topics such as helping residents recycle more, reducing waste when moving, and reducing waste during the holiday season.
- Continued in-person programming at multifamily properties, including 45 presentations and training on food waste prevention, recycling, and organics recycling.
- Continued another two-year partnership with Minnesota Waste Wise to provide additional outreach and technical assistance to multifamily properties.
- Launched the second year of the Apartment Recycling Champions, a zero-waste initiative that pays residents at multifamily buildings to become champions, help educate their neighbors about recycling, and motivate them to reduce waste. Recruited and trained 13 residents of multifamily properties who reached people in about 900 units at 11 multifamily properties.

Apartment Recycling Champions improve recycling by serving as a trusted resource

Hennepin County launched the second year of the Apartment Recycling Champions program in 2024. Through the program, 13 residents at multifamily properties were hired for two to six months to distribute education materials, monitor trash and recycling areas for contamination, respond to resident questions on recycling, set up recycling bins in their building's common areas, and educate and inspire their neighbors to reduce waste and recycle more.

Champions reached people in over 900 units at 11 multifamily properties across the county. These properties ranged in size from a small 6-unit building to a complex with 351 units across 8 buildings.

Champions served as a trusted resource, communicating with their neighbors in culturally relevant ways.

“Throughout my time as a champion, I found establishing communication with residents was key to a successful recycling program - they knew and trusted me, and I could then build on that relationship,” shared one of the champions.

Overall, champions were proud of the work they completed and saw the impacts in their buildings. “It makes a huge difference when people are able to take tiny steps in the right direction to make a change in our communities.” said another champion.

Continuing the Apartment Recycling Champions program is a priority for implementing the county's Zero Waste Plan goal of improving access to and participation in recycling and organics recycling at multifamily buildings



Highlights from multifamily recycling education and grant projects

The following stories highlight successful resident education and multifamily grant projects and promote resources available to property managers. These stories highlight how small grants, improved signage, and focused education and outreach can make a big impact on improving recycling at apartment buildings and condos.

New Life Properties adds recycling service to eight properties in Minneapolis



New Life Properties used a \$4,000 grant to add recycling service to eight properties in Minneapolis. Funding helped pay for start-up hauling costs for recycling service and provide a stipend for lead maintenance staff to manage resident education efforts. The project involved labeling existing recycling bins, adding posters in common areas, and distributing reusable recycling tote bags and recycling guides in English, Spanish, and Somali directly to residents' doors. With these improvements, the properties expect to recycle an additional 65,000 pounds annually.

Five properties in Uptown Lakes get new signage

Hennepin County staff worked with the property management company, DM Companies, to install educational signage and distribute reusable recycling tote bags and recycling guides to residents at five properties in the Uptown Lakes area. An initial site visit found that lack of signage on dumpsters was leading residents to incorrectly dispose of their recycling and trash. Improving signage and providing educational materials reduced contamination and helped residents feel more confident participating in recycling.

Laurel Hill East condo community starts organics recycling



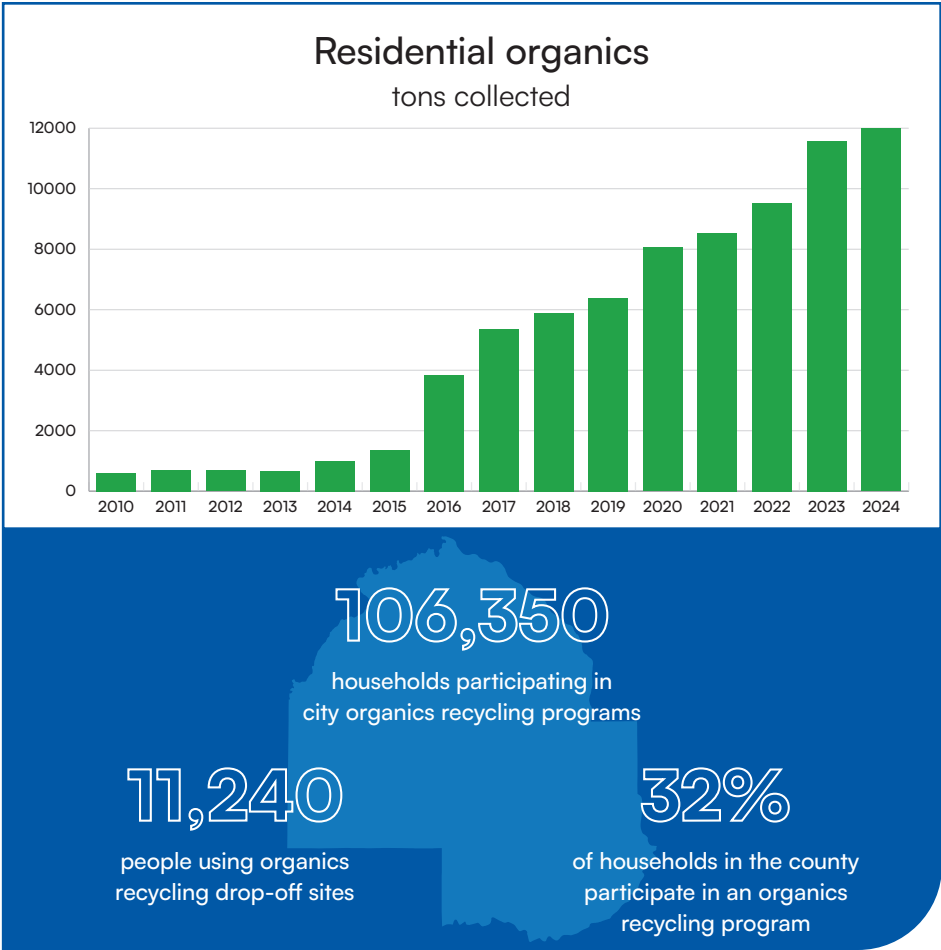
The recycling committee at Laurel Hill East, a condo community with 54 units in Golden Valley, worked with Hennepin County to add organics recycling service to their building through their existing waste hauler then received a grant to make participating in organics recycling as seamless and simple as possible for residents. They used grant funding to provide countertop organics bins and compostable bags to residents and cover the organics hauling fees for six months. About 40 percent of the units in the building now participate in organics recycling.

City organics recycling programs

The county and cities are focused on offering more organics recycling opportunities and increasing participation in organics recycling programs. Cities offer different ways to participate in organics recycling, including through citywide programs, through specific haulers, and with drop-offs. Organics recycling availability, participation, and amount collected have been gradually increasing over the last decade. All cities in the county were required to make organics recycling service available to households with curbside recycling service by 2022.

2024 results

- Distributed \$4.4 million in SCORE funds to support curbside recycling and organics recycling programs, organics drop-off sites, and multifamily recycling.
- Assisted cities with promotional efforts and sending recycling and organics recycling guides to residents. Cities used county terminology and images and provided messages through a variety of channels including direct mail, newsletters, websites, social media, and events.
- Awarded the City of Edina a \$12,000 organics recycling drop-off grant to expand their organics



Backyard composting

Composting at home is a great way to turn fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, leaves, and grass clippings into a nutrient-rich compost that can be used to improve soil and help plants grow. To increase backyard composting, the county sells compost bins at a discounted rate at the drop-off facilities and offers workshops to help residents learn how to compost.

2024 results

- Held four online and two in-person backyard composting workshops, providing education to 55 residents.
- Sold 76 compost bins at the drop-off facilities in Bloomington and Brooklyn Park. As of 2025, bins will no longer be available.

At work

The commercial sector generates more than half of the total waste in Hennepin County, and nearly two-thirds of the waste created at businesses and nonprofits is recyclable. A strong recycling program conserves natural resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, can help a business' bottom line, and demonstrates the organization's commitment to sustainability and the community.

2024 results

- Distributed free recycling bins to 40 businesses and organizations to start or improve recycling or organics recycling. Bin and compostable bag grants are intended for smaller businesses (less than \$1 million annual revenue) and nonprofit organizations.
- Awarded \$30,000 in business waste prevention grants to four businesses. Waste prevention grants are available to all businesses and nonprofit organizations
- Contracted with Minnesota Waste Wise to assist with business recycling outreach. Waste Wise visited 180 businesses to promote Hennepin County resources.

2024 business bin and bag grant recipients

- Aliveness (Minneapolis)
- All Nations Indian Church (Minneapolis)
- Allina Edina Clinics (Edina)
- Baseline (Minneapolis)
- Bicycle Alliance (Minneapolis)
- Big Brother Big Sister (Minneapolis)
- Big Hill Books (Minneapolis)
- Bohm Real Estate Thorpe Building (Minneapolis)
- Brooklyn United Methodist Church (Brooklyn Center)
- Cavalla Travel (Brooklyn Center)
- Chicago Ave Fine Arts (Minneapolis)
- Cooperative Energy Futures (Minneapolis)
- Crosswinds United Methodist Church (Maple Grove)
- Faith Presbyterian (Minnetonka)
- Family Childhood Development Center (Plymouth)
- Flourish Pacemaking Collective (Minneapolis)
- Flow Hair (Minneapolis)
- Freedom Works (Minneapolis)
- Gastrotruck (Minneapolis)
- Gichitwaa Kateri (Minneapolis)
- Happy Earth Cleaning (Minneapolis)
- Helping Paws (Hopkins)
- Hi-Gate Urgent Care (Minneapolis)
- House of Prayer (Minneapolis)
- Lake Minnetonka Farmers Market (Minnetonka)
- Minnesota Valley Unitarian (Bloomington)
- Nature's Syrup (Brooklyn Park)
- Osseo United Methodist Church (Osseo)
- Premier Health of South Minneapolis (Minneapolis)
- Project for Pride in Living (Minneapolis)
- Project Success (Minneapolis)

At school

Nearly 80% of school waste is recyclable or compostable. Schools are required by state statute to have a recycling program. More than half of the K-12 schools in Hennepin County voluntarily divert additional waste from the trash by having an organics recycling program.

Providing youth with the opportunity to recycle and compost at school helps encourage future generations to be environmental stewards.

To help schools reduce waste and increase diversion to recycling and organics recycling programs, the county provides grants and technical assistance, distributes educational resources and signage, presents to students and staff, and offers school-wide assemblies through a partnership with Twin Cities Road Crew.

2024 results

- Awarded school recycling grants to 13 schools to expand recycling and organics recycling, reduce waste, and compost on-site.
- Awarded grants to one preschool and two colleges and universities for the first time after expanding grant guidelines and eligibility.
- Offered educational performances on recycling and waste reduction to over 7,300 students at 25 schools through a partnership with Twin Cities Road Crew. Received positive feedback from school staff, including that 100% would definitely recommend the program to another school and 100% felt that the students learned new behaviors to help the environment.
- Delivered 146 cubic yards of free compost in partnership with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community compost site to 34 schools to close the loop on organics recycling.

School recycling assemblies



Hennepin County partnered with Twin Cities Road Crew during the 2023

to 2024 school year to provide assemblies on waste reduction and recycling for elementary students. The Twin Cities Road Crew performed at 24 schools, reaching approximately 7,000 students. Each student received a Recyclo activity book to reinforce the messaging after the performance.

Free compost provided to schools



In May 2024, Hennepin County provided 143 yards of free compost to 33 schools that

currently have an organics recycling program. The county partnered with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) Organics Facility to source the compost.

The finished compost is meant to “close the loop” and show gratitude to the schools that helped generate it. The compost was added to vegetable and pollinator gardens, flowers, and trees to improve the soil and help plants grow.

2024 school recycling grantees

Andersen Middle School, Minneapolis Public Schools

\$7,900 to improve recycling and restart organics in the cafeteria and kitchen.

Aurora Charter School, Minneapolis

\$7,800 to improve and expand recycling in classrooms, the cafeteria, and common areas.

Bloom Early Learning at Messiah United Methodist Church, Plymouth

\$12,300 to start an organics recycling program.

Eagle Ridge Academy, Minnetonka

\$3,400 to improve recycling and provide reusable trays and condiment dispensers to reduce waste in their cafeteria.

Friendship Academy, Minneapolis

\$20,000 to provide reusable food ware in the cafeteria, introduce an organics recycling program, and enhance their current recycling program.

Hope Academy, Minneapolis

\$20,000 to supply their building expansion with recycling and organics recycling bins and their new cafeteria with reusable food ware.

Normandale Community College, Bloomington

\$14,200 to improve organics recycling collection across campus buildings.

Our Lady of Peace, Minneapolis

\$7,100 to implement organics recycling in the school cafeteria.

Richfield Public Schools ISD 280, Richfield

\$4,500 to set up sharing tables at four elementary schools and the middle school.

Spero Academy, Brooklyn Park and Minneapolis

\$7,500 to install a dishwasher and start using reusable trays and utensils to reduce waste at their Brooklyn Park location, to improve recycling in the cafeteria at their Minneapolis location, and to start recycling and organics recycling in the cafeteria at their Brooklyn Park location.

Stonebridge World School, Minneapolis

\$20,000 to improve recycling, start organics recycling, and reduce waste by installing a dishwasher and using reusable food ware.

SciTech Academy, Minneapolis

\$9,900 to establish recycling in the cafeteria and classrooms.

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

\$14,920 to improve recycling and organics recycling at Williams Arena.

Wayzata Transition ISD 284, Wayzata

\$2,550 to establish “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” and organics recycling programming that will help students learn about the environment and build work and life skills

At Hennepin County workplaces

Hennepin County knows that we must lead by example when it comes to waste management. Several county departments oversee different aspects of the county's internal waste management program.

- Environment and Energy coordinates in-house recycling programs. This includes working with Facility Services to ensure a robust recycling program in county offices and facilities, educating staff, and managing an in-house media recycling program for all county departments.
- Central Services handles the recycling of toner cartridges from county departments, and Purchasing maintains office supply listservs to facilitate the reuse of office supplies and furniture within county departments.
- Information Technology handles the recycling of non-usable and obsolete electronic equipment.

2024 results

- Started the launch of organics recycling in county buildings with six office buildings that reach many employees: Central Library, Government Center, 625 Building, Ridgedale Regional Center, Brookdale Regional Center, and the Health Services Building.
- Created print and video content to educate county employees and janitorial staff on proper organics recycling management.
- Updated the Hennepin County Recycles Sharepoint page to include information on organics recycling, 50 years of in-house recycling at Hennepin County, and how to recycle right from your home office.
- Responded to questions and concerns from staff on how to best manage waste and materials generated at county offices and facilities and fielded special requests for additional pickups.
- Had discussions with library staff on environmentally preferable purchasing with a new supply ordering system.
- Recycled over 3 tons of media from county offices and libraries; recycled over 20.5 tons and reused over 1.5 tons of IT equipment; recycled almost 350 pounds of batteries, 2 tons of plastic, glass, and metal containers, and 254 tons of cardboard and paper, including almost 57 tons of books.



Celebrating 50 years of in-house recycling

Hennepin County became a sustainability trailblazer when it launched its in-house recycling program in 1974, starting with office paper recycling. This was years before curbside programs started in Minnesota, and public drop-offs were limited.

Hennepin County was and continues to be a leader in local and national sustainability efforts. Over the years, the recycling program has expanded to include all paper, metal, plastic, media, pallets, metal, and more.

At events and on the go

The county partners with the cities of Brooklyn Park and Hopkins to make portable recycling and organics recycling containers available for events throughout the county.

2024 results

- Distributed containers for use at 46 events with approximately 75,980 attendees.

Ensuring recycling success at Colombia Independence Day

Hennepin County waste reduction and recycling staff coordinated supplies and volunteers to make recycling efforts a success at the Colombia Independence Day Celebration at Veterans' Park in Richfield on July 20. Staff and volunteers helped the 2,000 attendees sort waste for recycling and organics recycling.

During the event, about 1,500 pounds of food and paper were collected for composting and about 600 pounds of plastics, metal, and glass bottles and containers were collected for recycling.



Promoting drop-offs for hazardous waste and additional recyclables

Drop-off facilities and events

Many items that aren't accepted in residential recycling programs can be recycled through drop-offs. There are also items that contain hazardous materials that must be kept out of the trash because they can harm our health or the environment.

To ensure proper disposal of hazardous items, the county operates permanent drop-off facilities in Bloomington and Brooklyn Park for residents to bring appliances, electronics, excess recycling, and household hazardous wastes.

In addition to disposal services for residents, the county's Brooklyn Park Transfer Station and Hennepin Energy Recovery Center are vital facilities in keeping the solid waste system operational.

2024 results

- Served 143,788 residents and collected 7.5 million pounds of household hazardous waste, problem materials, and recycling at county drop-off facilities and collection events.
- Held four, two-day household hazardous waste collection events where 3,345 residents dropped off 175,000 pounds of waste, or 52 pounds per participant.
- Collected 541 tons of cardboard, 557 tons of appliances, 645 tons of electronics, and 341 tons of scrap metal at the drop-off facilities.
- Fielded more than 19,300 calls from residents. Call center staff continue to receive an increase in call year over year and spent more than 525 hours responding to residents' questions.
- Provided special recycling drop-off collection for yard signs in November after the election, collecting 9,921 signs for recycling.

Nearly 10,000
yard signs
collected for
recycling



Yard sign recycling drop off

The results are in!

9921 signs collected

During 2 weeks, November 12 to 26, 2024

At four locations: Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Minneapolis, and Minnetonka/Hopkins

Special drop-off recycling for yard signs was offered for two weeks in November following the election. Drop-off boxes were available at four county and city locations. More than 9,900 corrugated plastic signs totaling about 4,300 pounds were recycled.

The signs were brought to Choice Plastics in Mound where they were turned into pellets and then recycled into new material.

Mattress recycling

More than 90% of the materials in a mattress, including cotton, foam, steel springs, and wood, can be recycled. Mattresses are collected for recycling at the Hennepin County drop-off facility in Brooklyn Park, and pickup service is available through Second Chance Recycling. Second Chance is a Minneapolis-based nonprofit run by EMERGE that provides transitional employment opportunities for people with barriers to employment.

2024 results

- Collected 6,237 mattresses and box springs from residents at the Brooklyn Park Transfer Station.
- Picked up 1,363 mattresses and box springs from apartments, condos, and single-family homes.

Medicine

Proper disposal of unused and unwanted medicines is important for protecting water and wildlife and preventing misuse and addiction. To facilitate the safe disposal of unwanted medicine, Hennepin County operates and promotes medicine drop boxes available throughout the county.

2024 results

- Promoted medicine disposal options at 65 medicine drop boxes – 22 of the boxes are operated in partnership with the county and 43 are operated by independent pharmacies.
- Properly disposed of 17,484 pounds of medicine at drop boxes operated in partnership with the county.

Paint

Paint is one of the most common materials brought to the Hennepin County drop-off facilities or collection events for recycling.

2024 results

- Collected over 1.25 million pounds of paint at county drop-off facilities and events.
- Promoted availability of paint disposal at 39 independent sites, including hardware stores and paint stores, that partner with PaintCare. These independent sites collected 787,340 pounds of paint.
- Received \$610,356 from PaintCare for costs related to paint disposal.

Managing the trash that remains

Waste-to-energy

Despite the focus on diverting materials from the trash through waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and organics recycling, residents and businesses put over 762,000 tons of stuff in the trash in 2024. This is nearly 1,175 pounds per person. State statute requires counties to manage waste according to the state's waste management hierarchy, which prioritizes waste processing and waste-to-energy methods over landfilling.

Hennepin County owns and operates the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC), a waste-to-energy facility in downtown Minneapolis. In January 2024, the county developed a plan to reinvent the county's solid waste system to accelerate closure and repurposing of the HERC by aggressively pursuing zero-waste policies, programming and infrastructure. This plan established a zero-waste dashboard to define the criteria to be met to responsibly close HERC and identified policies that need to be adopted by the Minnesota State Legislature to realize this zero-waste future.

Until the county achieves its zero-waste goals and state-mandated recycling rates, operating HERC keeps the county in compliance with state statutes, makes progress toward climate action goals, generates revenue for natural resources programming, keeps trash bills stable for residents and businesses, and provides more than 350 high-wage jobs.

2024 results

- Met state law to process trash before landfilling with over 363,000 tons of trash delivered to HERC.
- Recovered 16,491 tons of metal for recycling.
- Offset the use of fossil fuels for electricity for 25,000 homes and natural gas to heat 1,500 homes.
- Cleaned and treated air emissions at HERC to remain well below MPCA permitted levels.

Landfills

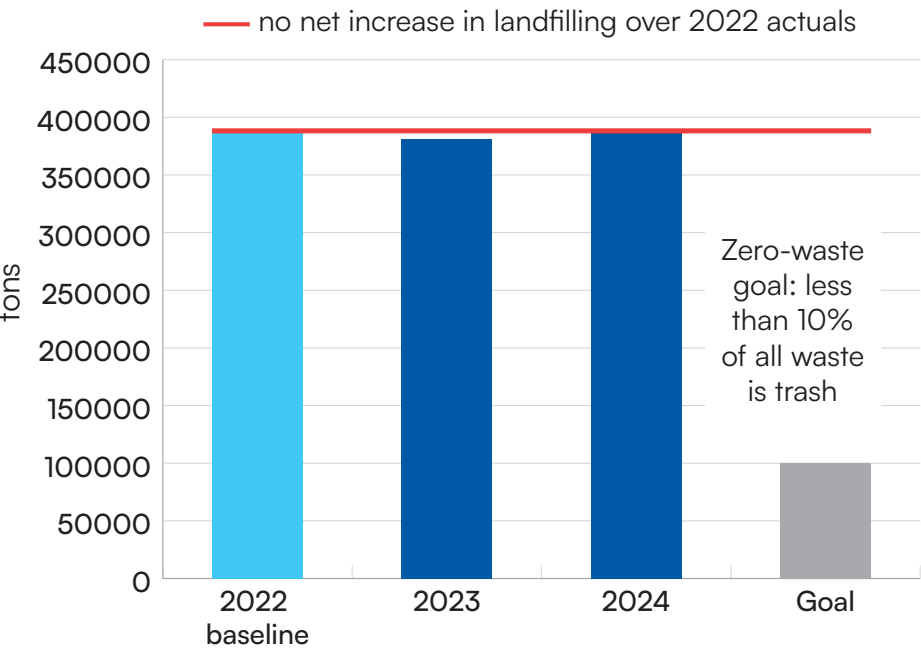
Disposing of trash in landfills is the least preferred way to manage waste. To track progress toward zero waste and reduce the burden of county trash on communities outside of the county, the zero-waste dashboard includes a goal of no net increase in landfilling rates over 2022 actuals.

Ultimately, achieving the county’s goal of zero waste would mean that 90% or more of all discarded materials are diverted from landfills or incinerators and less than 10% of all waste generated needs to be disposed of as trash.

Despite the efforts of the county and various partners, the 2024 tons landfilled exceeded the red line for landfilling by about 300 tons. Although this is not a large amount in terms of total waste landfilled, the trend is going in the wrong direction.

Municipal solid waste in landfills

2024 tons to landfill = 386,489



Municipal solid waste landfilled in Minnesota in 2024

Landfill	Owner	Tons
Elk River	Waste Management	146,440
Pine Bend (Inver Grove Heights)	Republic	131,690
Burnsville	Waste Management	57,989
Spruce Ridge (Glencoe)	Waste Management	8,901
Nobles County (Rushmore)	Nobles County	460

Municipal solid waste landfilled out-of-state in 2024

Landfill	Owner	Tons
7-Mile Creek (Eau Claire, Wisconsin)	GFL Environmental	16,245
Central Disposal (Lake Mills, Iowa)	Waste Management	5,219
Lake Area Landfill (Sarona, Wisconsin)	Republic	19,545

