



HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA



Tips and resources for food waste reduction and green events

Environment and Energy Department, Green Partners, Patience Caso

Event recycling resources

Visit the Hennepin County website and search:

“event recycling”

www.hennepin.us

Recycling at events

Hundreds of fairs, markets, races and block parties are held in Hennepin County each year. With all the food waste, packaging and beverage containers, a lot of waste can be generated at events of any size.

Event recycling program coordinator, Amy Maas
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Need help greening your event?

Hennepin County has resources for event coordinators to develop waste-reduction plans, educate vendors, train volunteers and find collection options.

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+ Event recycling containers

+ Green event planning

+ Signage and communication tools

+ Haulers and drop-off locations

[Open all](#)

Before the event – waste management

- Use our green event checklist
- Who will coordinate waste management?
- Check your city's rules and resources for event waste, organics and recycling
- Evaluate the food and materials that will be at the event
- Check with the event venue to see if they offer recycling and organics collection service. If recycling and organics collection is not provided, coordinators can either hire a hauler or self-haul recyclables to a drop-off site. Depending on what is being collected, it may be economical to do a combination of both.



Before the event – waste management

- Determine how many and the size of the waste containers you need, and where they will be located?
- Purchase compostable products, if needed
- Recruit and train volunteer waste monitors



Before the event – waste management

Communicate early and set expectations with vendors

- Start your planning early in the process. Ask questions, set criteria and select vendors that can support your low-waste goals.
- If you already have a vendor relationship or don't have choice over which businesses you use, inform vendors of waste-diversion efforts early to ensure they have adequate time to prepare for the event.
- Set the expectation! Include information about your waste prevention and recycling efforts in news releases, event programs, marketing and advertising materials.

Before the event – waste management

- Communicate early and set expectations with vendors
 - [Sample vendor letter \(for events collecting food waste\) \(DOC\)](#)
 - [Sample vendor letter \(for events not collecting food waste\) \(DOC\)](#)
 - [Sample letter for presenters \(DOC\)](#)



Before the event – waste management

If your venue does not provide recycling or organics bins, you may rent portable bins for your event.

Portable recycling containers are available through a partnership between the county and the cities of Brooklyn Park, Golden Valley and Richfield.



Before the event – food

- Avoid items wrapped in plastic wrap or Styrofoam. (Ask before you purchase.)
- Purchase condiments in bulk, a bottle of mayo instead of packets.
- Avoid individually packaged items, like small candies.
- Buffet style can be less wasteful.
- Be thoughtful about what you order and have a donation plan for left over food.
- Generally, follow the advice from vendors about food. But you can minimize food waste by anticipating what won't be eaten. Perhaps you only need one pan of rice, instead of the two the vendor recommends. Keep track of food waste to inform planning for future events.

Before the event – beverages

- Provide a water refill station with a reusable water dispenser instead of bottled water. Ask people to bring their own cups and tally the cups they bring! Provide reusable or compostable cups.
 - The City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County have dispensers you can borrow.
- Find a vendor that provides reusable/washable coffee carafes or containers.
 - Avoid the cardboard/bubble pack coffee dispensers since the plastic insert is not recyclable.
 - Generally, you can follow the advice from the vendor about how much coffee to purchase.
- Purchase a carton of cream and bring sugar for coffee.



Before the event – food and beverage

- Purchase or support local and sustainably grown food
- Use reusable food service items.
 - Avoid plastic stir sticks. Use wood stir sticks if you don't have access to reusables and be sure to compost them with organic waste.
- Make a plan to share or donate leftover food
- Avoid unnecessary or non-recyclable packaging, like Styrofoam and disposable plates, utensils, and cups



Before the event – transport and energy

- Adjust the thermostat
- Use solar energy to power your event by renting the solar power trailer from the Minnesota Renewable Energy Society.
- Include information about transit and biking options to get to the event. Encourage or organize carpools.



At the event – waste management

Label recycling, composting and trash containers with large, clear and specific signs.

If possible, include pictures or post examples of what goes in each container.

Download and use our event recycling signs found on the website.



At the event – waste management

Download and use our event recycling signs

<https://www.hennepin.us/business/recycling-hazardous-waste/recycling-at-events>

Recycle – cans, bottles, cups, cartons, paper

- [English \(PDF\)](#)
- [Spanish \(PDF\)](#)

Organics for composting – food, paper and compostable products

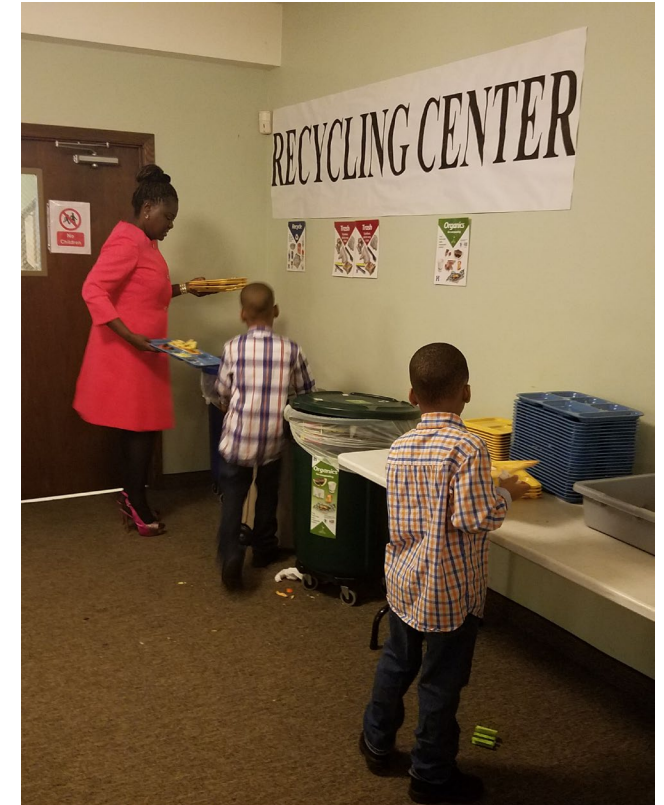
- [English \(PDF\)](#)
- [Spanish \(PDF\)](#)

Trash

- [English \(PDF\)](#)
- [Spanish \(PDF\)](#)

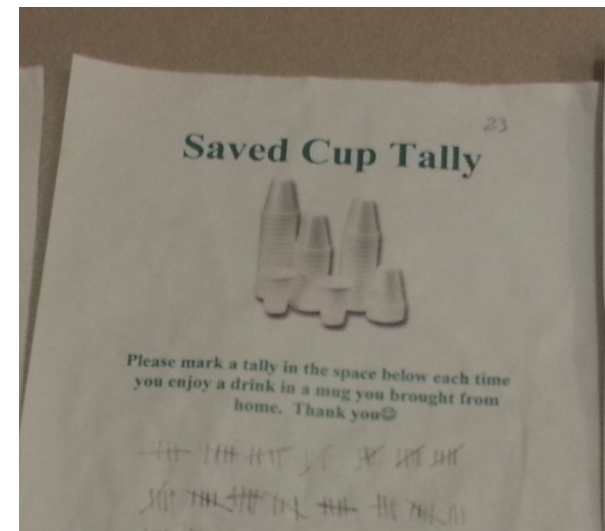
At the event – waste management

- Greet each vendor and exhibitor during set-up.
 - Provide clear instructions for separating and preparing their materials, such as rinsing food out of containers, flattening cardboard boxes, where to bring full bags, etc.
- Staff recycling stations at all times to help event participants place their waste in the correct container.
 - If this is not possible, assign someone to check each area periodically. Community Recycling Ambassadors (formerly Master Recycler/Composters) may be available to help with your event. Visit the Community Recycling Ambassador webpage to make a request.
- Empty bins often.
 - To prevent breakage and non-compliance, empty bins often, especially during the summer when bees and odors can discourage recycling.



At the event – waste management

- Ask attendees to indicate how they reduced waste. For example, provide a “saved cup tally” to track the number of reusable containers participants brought to the meeting or event.
- Ask attendees to indicate how they got to the event. Provide incentives to those who walk, bus, bike, or carpool.



At the event – waste management

- Look for problem materials.
- Remind attendees to reduce, reuse, and recycle.
- Make it fun!



After the event – waste management

- Calculate your diversion rate
 - Amount recycled / (Amount recycled + Amount of organics + Amount of trash) = % of waste recycled
 - Amount of organic waste diverted / (Amount recycled + Amount of organics + Amount of trash) = % of waste composted

We have scales you can borrow! Or use luggage scales.

Waste Sort Data Tracking Sheet
YouthCARE Waste Sort, August 10, 2015

TRASH COMPOSITION		
Material	Weight (lbs)	Proportion (%)
Trash	2.6, 2.1, 1.7, 1.5	
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)	8.9 + 0.41 9.7 4, 3.4, 4.5, 1.5, 1.8, 0.2	2 18.9
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)	15.4 + 0.11 3.1, 5.8, 5	15.4 14.9
Hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)	14.9 + 0.11	39.2
Reusable items	0.4 (5 nit + 1 battery)	
Other		
Total		

RECYCLING COMPOSITION		
Material	Weight (lbs)	Proportion (%)
Trash	10.5, 0.4 6.4 + 0.4	0.4 24.5
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)	4, 2.7, 8.9, 1.8, 5.6, 1.5 24.5 + 0.11	24.9
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)	X	
Hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)		
Reusable items		
Other		
Total		

nasty avalado pads - maggots green bagel compost - lots of R

After the event – waste management

Before and after waste sort tracking sheet

Date/time/waste source:

Trash composition				
<i>Material</i>	<i>Weight (lbs) - BEFORE</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>Weight (lbs) - AFTER</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>
Trash				
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)				
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)				
Hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)				
Reusable items (list items found)				
Total				
Recycling composition				
<i>Material</i>	<i>Weight (lbs) - BEFORE</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>Weight (lbs) - AFTER</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>
Trash				
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)				
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)				
Hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)				
Reusable items (list items found)				
Total				
Organics composition				
<i>Material</i>	<i>Weight (lbs) - BEFORE</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>Weight (lbs) - AFTER</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>
Trash				
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)				
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)				
Hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)				
Reusable items (list items found)				
Total				

After the event – waste management

- Share your success with sponsors, participants and coordinators!
- Take note of what, if anything, you can improve for next year.
- Do a waste sort to plan for next year and identify problems areas and opportunities.



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Questions



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