

HENNEPIN COUNTY  
MINNESOTA

**Solid Waste Management Master Plan:  
Summary of formal public comments**

*October 15, 2017*

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# Engagement approach

A draft of the Solid Waste Management Master Plan was available online September 18 to October 9, 2017, for public comment. A survey was created to gauge support for strategies included in the master plan. Respondents could provide additional comments via email. Feedback was solicited from various stakeholders including residents and representatives from businesses, cities, haulers, waste industries and community groups through e-newsletters, emails, a news release, social media posts and social media advertising.

The county received 167 survey responses and 7 emails during the public comment period.

Stakeholder type	Survey	Email comments
Residents	136	1
City representatives	14	2 - St. Louis Park and Bloomington
Haulers and waste industry representatives	3	2 - Eureka Recycling, Minnesota Composting Council
Business representatives/ trade associations	4	2 - Minnesota Grocers Association, Building Owners Management Association Greater Minneapolis (BOMA)
Not specified	10	n/a

The county also gathered input from 1,526 participants prior to drafting the plan. A summary report of those findings can be found online at [hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning](http://hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning).

# Residential organics recycling requirement

Proposal: Require cities to provide residents the opportunity recycle organics by 2022.

**Residents expressed very strong support** (average rating of 92 out of 100) for this strategy. Residents either want the opportunity to recycle organics or they already participate and find it worthwhile. Some residents expressed concerns such as increased costs and truck traffic, using compostable bags, and fears of smells or pests. Other residents didn't think they had enough organic waste to make it worthwhile.

*Quote from resident: "Everyone should have the opportunity to recycle organics."*

**City representatives expressed moderate to low support** (average rating of 57 out of 100) for this strategy. Some cities strongly supported an organics requirement while others were strongly opposed. Concerns included costs, administrative burden, education, and infrastructure development. Cities indicated that the county should provide technical and financial support for drop offs as an interim strategy.

*Quote from city representative: "We need to do a lot more education of residents and working with haulers before it becomes a requirement."*

**Waste industry representatives expressed moderate support** (average rating of 72 out of 100) for this strategy through the online survey. The Minnesota Composting Council gave strong support but requested clarification on what is meant by the opportunity to recycle organics. Waste haulers voiced concerns about cost and whether customers would be willing to pay. Others had questions about whether or not participation would be high enough to support the route density to make collection cost effective. Some proposed that participation in organics recycling service should be mandatory rather than offer organics as a subscription service.

*Quote from waste hauler: "There has to be enough route density."*

**An exemption for smaller cities did not receive strong support.** Most residents (63%) and almost half the cities (43%) don't support an exemption from the organics recycling requirement for cities with 10,000 residents or less. Most of the remaining respondents were not sure. Small cities that already offer organics recycling were not sure why there should be different requirements.

# Business organics recycling requirement

Proposal: Require businesses that generate large quantities of food waste to implement organics recycling by 2020.

**Residents expressed very strong support** (average rating of 95 out of 100) for the business organics recycling requirement. Residents think this requirement will make a big impact on waste diversion. Many residents suggested providing technical and financial support for these businesses to make the necessary changes. Some residents wanted all food-related businesses to be included or suggested schools and/or churches also be included. Some residents commented on the timing, suggesting that implementation be done in phases or, in contrast, that the requirement be implemented sooner.

*Quote from resident: "This seems like an easy win - larger waste producers should be looking for ways to reduce and should be able to afford it."*

**Business representatives and trade associations offered mixed support** for this strategy. There was strong support (average rating of 80 out of 100) from respondents to the online survey.

BOMA Greater Minneapolis voiced concerns that the plan did not adequately address differences between residential and commercial organics recycling programs. They also asked for a systematic approach to gather waste data to measure success. They suggested that further engagement, analysis, and dialogue is necessary and offered to assist with these efforts.

The Minnesota Grocers Association urged the county meet strategic objectives by developing voluntary partnerships that emphasize education and best practices.

*Quote from BOMA: "Additional time, input, thought, and dialogue is necessary to achieve a result that is best for all stakeholders."*

**City representatives expressed strong to moderate support** (average rating of 77 out of 100) for this strategy. Cities recommend targeting large generators such as restaurants and companies involved in food production. Cities suggested that businesses will still need assistance to start organics recycling programs even if a requirement is implemented. Some cities thought that a requirement was not necessary because adequate incentives and services already exist.

*Quote from city representative: "Restaurants and other food-oriented businesses create huge amounts of organic waste. This issue should be addressed as soon as possible."*

**Waste industry representatives expressed moderate support** (average rating of 76 out of 100) from online respondents. Eureka Recycling offered strong support but encouraged a large generator to be defined by trash volume per week instead of weight per week. Waste haulers voiced concerns about the potential cost of service and suggested the county provide assistance to identify organics generators in an effort to build route density. Compost sites want to make sure the material is clean.

*Quote from hauler: "Concerned about cost considerations."*

# Improve organics infrastructure

Proposal: Increase local capacity by: (1) expanding the county's transfer station in Brooklyn Park to be able to accept more organics, (2) working with private transfer stations to accept organics and (3) developing additional processing capacity through methods such as anaerobic digestion that can produce renewable energy, compost, and fertilizer from organics.

**Residents expressed very strong support** (average rating on 92 out of 100) to improve organics infrastructure. Residents understand the need for infrastructure to support organics recycling programs. Some residents were enthusiastic about anaerobic digestion for the energy and green jobs potential. Others were concerned about cost, location, and other impacts from a new processing technology.

*Quote from resident: "Support is there, but want to understand cost and impacts."*

**Cities expressed strong support** (average rating on 82 out of 100) to improve organics infrastructure. Cities commented on the need to develop infrastructure in conjunction with ordinances requiring organics recycling. Adequate infrastructure was seen as the key to making organics recycling cost effective for residents and haulers. Some cities pointed out the need for infrastructure serving all geographic areas.

Cities asked the county to consider ways to support communities interested in Blue Bag organics recycling programs. Others thought anaerobic digestion would provide the most benefits in terms of processing capacity and climate change mitigation.

*Quote from city representative: "In order to make processing organics economically feasible, more options need to be available."*

**Waste industry representatives expressed mixed support for strategies proposed to increase local capacity.** There is strong support to expand transfer capacity, including support for expanding the Brooklyn Park Transfer Station and using existing private sector transfer stations. There is interest in addressing processing capacity through anaerobic digestion, but comments expressed the need for further study and input before long-term decisions are made about infrastructure investments.

Eureka Recycling expressed concerns about investments in co-collection of bagged organics and anaerobic digestion. They asked for careful consideration of the impacts to accessibility for community compost programs.

**Representatives from businesses and trade associations said more details were needed** on how the county plans to grow processing capacity. BOMA Greater Minneapolis said the plan does not adequately address how transfer capacity will be increased.

# Preventing wasted food

Proposal: Prevent wasted food by providing assistance to businesses and schools and educating residents.

**Residents expressed very strong support** (average rating of 90 out of 100) for new efforts to prevent wasted food by providing assistance to businesses and schools and educating residents. Residents want to see more food diverted to hunger relief organizations. They also emphasized more assistance to schools and increased education efforts.

*Quote from resident: "Food waste is a significant and solvable problem; we can do better."*

**Cities expressed strong support (average rating of 85 out of 100)** for new efforts to prevent wasted food by providing assistance to businesses and schools and educating residents. Cities see an opportunity to pair this message with outreach on organics recycling. Cities are also interested in supporting food donations and addressing food waste at schools.

*Quote from city representative: "This campaign should go along with the organics recycling campaign."*

# Diverting construction waste

Proposal: New efforts to divert construction and demolition waste, including developing waste diversion practices for county facilities and county-funded projects.

**Residents expressed very strong support** (average rating of 92 out of 100) for new efforts to divert construction and demolition waste. Residents wanted more details about what diversion would include. They were enthusiastic about deconstruction and reusing building materials. They would like to see more drop-offs or reuse opportunities for their usable building materials. Some residents wondered who would pay for these efforts. Some suggested the building owner should incur the costs and not taxpayers. Others indicated that contractors were cost-sensitive, so programs, taxes or other incentives would be needed.

*Quote from resident "I believe there is a lot of waste in demolition when the market shows that there is a huge demand for reuse of old building materials."*

**City representatives offered moderate support** (average rating of 76 out of 100) for new efforts to divert construction and demolition waste. Cities recognize that construction waste needs attention because of all the building and redevelopment taking place in the county. Cities suggested that clean-up programs should be revamped to reduce construction and demolition waste. Some cities think regulation and enforcement is needed while others think the county should provide better disposal options.

*Quote from city representative: "This should absolutely become part of standard recycling practices."*

# Seeking environmental justice

Proposal: New actions to support the MPCA's environmental justice policy.

Environmental justice (EJ) is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. The county will act on the three principles of environmental justice, which are full and fair participation, equal sharing of benefits and mitigation of disproportionate adverse effects.

**Residents offered very strong support** (average rating of 92 out of 100) for environmental justice actions. Residents wanted more information about environmental justice. Some residents want more consideration of the health impacts associated with waste programs. Others suggested offering more assistance to low-income residents or improving recycling services in apartment buildings.

*Quote from resident: "Environmental pollution disproportionately impacts areas of lower income and peoples of color, we need to fix this as a top priority."*

**City representatives expressed strong support** (average rating of 89 out of 100) for environmental justice actions. Cities commented that environmental justice is important but that little is known about what it means and how it should be addressed. Cities suggested assessing programs for how they may create or perpetuate inequities. They encouraged changing the paradigm to think about accessibility and consideration of health impacts.

*Quote from city representative: "Equity and the environment are complementary and should always be considered together."*

# Improving access to recycling services

While a specific question about new strategies for apartments was not asked, a theme emerged in many of the open-ended questions about equitable access to services, especially for renters. Residents want improved recycling and the opportunity to recycle organics at multifamily buildings. Residents also mentioned increasing convenience by offering more drop off options for items that can be reused or recycled but are not accepted in curbside programs.

*Quote from resident: "We need to stop requiring vehicle access or home-ownership to access basic recycling and hazardous waste disposal. Too much of our recycling system is predicated on owning a home and a car and that's not the reality for many of us (nor can it be, if we want a livable planet)."*



# Recovering energy and metals at the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center

More than 75 percent of residents indicated strong support for processing waste to recover energy and metal from waste at the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC). However, a few residents were concerned with HERC's air emissions and impacts on residents nearby.

*Quote from a resident: "I am concerned about pollution/emissions around the HERC and the people affected who live nearby. At the same time, I appreciate that it gives us an alternative to landfill, and that it helps heat part of downtown Minneapolis."*

Eureka Recycling encourages the county to drop the language of "zero waste to landfill" and instead focus on a plan with concrete goals to eliminate waste-to-energy incineration. They encourage more transparency on the financial costs of incineration and suggest there should be parity in spending for waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy

[hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning](http://hennepin.us/solidwasteplanning)

