

2025 Recycling Progress Report

Program Results Appendix

Overview

The Recycling Progress Report provides an annual update on Hennepin County’s zero-waste achievements, progress toward waste diversion goals, and detailed results from waste reduction and recycling programs. Detailed results included in this document:

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Reuse and repair

Fix-It Clinics and Fix-It Hubs

Learning how to repair items is an effective way to waste less and conserve the resources that go into manufacturing, packaging, transporting, and disposing of goods. Fix-It Clinics address common barriers to repair, including the fear of taking something apart and not being able to get it back together, worries about making the issue worse, safety concerns, and the knowledge and skill to troubleshoot and fix an item. The clinics provide free, hands-on assistance from knowledgeable volunteers in a collaborative, fun environment.

2025 results

- Held 12 clinics with 1,654 participants and 146 volunteers contributing 3,315 hours.
- Achieved an 84% repair rate, with 2,059 out of 2,464 items successfully repaired.
- Kept 12,538 pounds of household goods out of the waste stream. To date, more than 43 tons of waste have been prevented with this program.
- Continued the Neighborhood Fix-It Hub program at St. Anthony Library and opened a second hub in October at Richfield's Municipal Center. The hubs provide a hyperlocal, mini version of a Fix-It Clinic where residents can repair items, learn skills, and create community connections.
 - Held 23 sessions with 363 participants.
 - Achieved an 87% repair rate with 503 out of 581 items successfully repaired, preventing 2,741 pounds of waste.
 - Had 44 volunteers contribute 1,094 hours.

Fix-It Clinic attendees on their experience

"Great program – so useful, so empowering."

"It saved me money and kept a functional item out of the trash."

"Everyone I've ever met at a Fix-It Clinic was great. It's an extraordinary service to Hennepin County residents."

Swap-It Events

Hennepin County received a waste reduction and reuse grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to start holding Swap-It events in 2025. Swap events are free, and attendees are not required to bring anything to take something home with them.

2025 results

- Hosted the first event at the Brookdale Library focused on holiday décor.
- Had 135 attendees who swapped 889 pounds of items.

Outreach and education

Community Recycling Ambassadors

Personal connections 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 outreach 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.

2025 results

- Trained 64 volunteers through two classes, bringing the total of trained Community Recycling Ambassadors to 908 since fall 2011.
- Held a continuing education event for active volunteers focused on recycling and organics recycling.
- Supported volunteers in contributing 1,111 hours to recycling and waste reduction projects in their communities. In total, 1,158 residents were contacted by or impacted by the work of Community Recycling Ambassadors, and Community Recycling Ambassadors supported events attended by more than 58,300 residents.

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.

2025 results

- Wrapped up the annual Zero Waste Challenge with 19 households and 47 people total. Households marked their progress by either weighing their waste or taking photos and estimating its volume.
 - Households who completed data tracking reduced their waste on average by 36% by weight and 23% by volume. Households achieved an average diversion rate by the end of the challenge of 77% by weight and 69% by volume.
 - Three Community Recycling Ambassadors served as waste coaches for households.

- Monthly workshops were offered for participants to learn more about reducing waste and taking action within their communities.
- Held the Plastic-Free Challenge in September to educate residents on plastic recycling and reduction.
 - Engaged 1,687 participants who completed 21,494 actions.
 - Avoided the use of more than 9,900 single-use plastic items and prevented about 13,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions through these actions.
 - Motivated participants to share their opinions and ask for change by contacting 27 public officials or leaders and taking 243 advocacy actions.
 - Partnered with 46 local organizations, including workplaces, cities, watershed districts and low-waste stores, to promote the challenge, organize teams, recruit participants, and host 7 educational events.
- Held the Stop Food Waste Challenge in August to help residents better plan, prep, cook, and store their food.
 - Engaged 345 participants who completed 2,066 actions.
 - Prevented 967 pounds of wasted food and 1,900 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions through these actions.
 - Motivated participants to ask for change by taking 226 advocacy actions.
 - Partnered with 38 organizations who promoted the challenge, led teams, recruited participants, and held 15 events.

Reusable menstrual products pilot

Environment and Energy collaborated with Human Services and Public Health to pilot a creative strategy to reduce single-use disposable plastics – in this case, disposable menstrual products. These products cannot be diverted from the trash but can be replaced with reusable alternatives.

Through the Better Together Hennepin program, sexual-health educators provided teens with information about reusable period products and free supplies for them to try. The program focused on areas with high diversity and need, including Brooklyn Park and downtown and north Minneapolis.

According to a recent waste sort of residential trash, diapers and menstrual products make up about 4% of residential trash by weight. This pilot aimed to empower teens to make informed, sustainable choices that would reduce their reliance on single-use items.

Because purchasing disposable menstrual products can be expensive, the pilot also focused on reducing costs. About 30% of participants reported having had trouble paying for supplies.

Based on the success of the first year, the program expanded during the 2025-2026 school year and provided increased product options for students who need them.

2025 results

- Worked with 6 sexual-health educators to educate 190 youth from grades 6-12 about reusable period products and provide free supplies to 68 youth.

- Received feedback from 31 youth about their experience through an anonymous survey. Results showed:
 - 75% previously knew little to nothing about reusable products.
 - 70% had not tried reusable products before this program.
 - 52% felt more comfortable talking about menstruation.
 - 50% said they have reduced or stopped using disposables.
 - 45% would recommend trying reusable products to family or friends.
 - 40% said they would keep using their reusable products.
- Avoided about 2,040 single-use products during the pilot, with the potential to avoid 10,800 products over the next five years.

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. Hennepin County helps residents compost at home by providing information and educational opportunities.

2025 results

- Hosted two webinars on how to set up a backyard compost pile, what materials can be composted, how to get the mix right, and how to troubleshoot common issues.
- Sold compost bins and distributed lids.

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.

2025 results

- Published 15 articles on buying used and living a low-waste lifestyle.
- Connected more than 77,500 users to the Choose to Reuse website.
- Sent Choose to Reuse tips and event emails to 5,017 subscribers, a 27% increase over 2024.
- Generated more than 1.25 million impressions and 13,625 clicks through social media promotions and advertising.

Environmental education, outreach, and communication efforts

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

2025 results

- Supported 16 projects that included waste prevention, recycling, and composting activities through the Green Partners environmental education program. The program 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 2025 directly engaged 3,600 people, including 2,085 youth in environmental leadership and green jobs programming, and reached 70,000 people with environmental messages.
- 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. Held three virtual meetings and one in-person meeting with about 100 total attendees, shared resources and opportunities through 12 editions of environmental education news to more than 5,800 subscribers, and built connections in the Facebook group with 490 members.
- Gave 63 tours to 950 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 for diverse job seekers. Coordinated the third cohort of the Green Pathways Internship Program, which provided job-shadowing opportunities for three recent high school graduates and a recent college graduate 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 Hennepin County's downstream neighbor Goodhue County to pick up litter and protect lakes, rivers, and streams between April 15 and May 15, for the second year in a row. About 50 cleanup events and hundreds of drain cleanouts took place throughout the county during the challenge. Results were reported from 16 groups who had about 2,800 participants and picked up more than 20,500 pounds of litter.

Waste reduction, recycling, and organics recycling

City 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 in regional and statewide teams to improve consistency in recycling programs and education.

The county and cities are especially 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-off sites. Organics recycling availability, participation, and amounts 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.

2025 results

- Distributed \$4.47 million in state SCORE (Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment) 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 more than 141,900 tons of recycling, organics recycling, and yard waste from 368,200 households in 2025.
- Supported city recycling coordinators through quarterly meetings, sharing resources, and providing assistance and information.
- 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.
- Continued 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, radios, billboards, gas station TV, at grocery stores and restaurants, on Minnesota Vikings broadcasts, and at the National Sports Center received 25.6 million impressions, more than 20,600 clicks on digital media, and more than 50,000 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, which allow cities to communicate consistent educational messages, provide a variety of resources, and deliver the best overall price for service.
- Developed and gained Hennepin County board approval for the Residential Recycling Funding Policy for 2026-2028.

Multifamily

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

2025 results

- Allocated \$355,664 in SCORE funds to support multifamily recycling and waste reduction efforts. Distributed multifamily funding to 16 cities: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Edina, Golden Valley, Greenwood, Hopkins, Medicine Lake, Minneapolis, Mound, New Hope, Plymouth, Richfield, Robbinsdale, and St. Louis Park. Funding was used to:
 - Create educational materials.
 - Collect data on multifamily properties.
 - Conduct outreach through mailers, newsletters, and social media.
 - Conduct site visits and provide technical assistance to properties.
 - Open organics recycling drop-off sites specifically for apartment residents.
- Introduced free mattress recycling program, targeting areas of environmental justice. Recycled 813 mattresses across 43 participating multifamily properties.
- Produced eight multifamily recycling and organics-recycling videos in four languages – English, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali – with The Other Media Group, an SBE (Small Minority-Owned Business Enterprise) organization.
- Provided technical support to improve waste reduction, recycling, and organics recycling at 238 properties, 140 of which had not been previously helped by the county.
- Awarded \$57,000 in funding to 35 multifamily properties.
 - Distributed free recycling and organics recycling bins and compostable bags to 28 multifamily properties.
 - Awarded 16 multifamily recycling grants, which helped three properties with recycling hauling start-up costs, eight properties with organics hauling start-up costs, four properties with building waste enclosures to expand collection services, and one property with bulky-item hauling.
- Sent a bi-monthly multifamily recycling newsletter to more than 2,854 subscribers, featuring topics such as helping residents to recycle correctly, reducing waste when moving, and reducing wasted food during the holiday season.

- Continued in-person programming at multifamily properties, including 39 presentations and training sessions on food waste prevention, recycling, and organics recycling.
- Continued partnership with Minnesota Waste Wise to provide additional outreach and technical assistance to multifamily properties.
- Completed the third year of the Apartment Recycling Champions program, an initiative that pays residents at multifamily buildings to become recycling champions and distribute educational materials, monitor trash and recycling areas for contamination, respond to resident questions, set up recycling bins in their building's common areas, and educate and inspire their neighbors to reduce waste and recycle more. Recruited and trained 11 residents of multifamily properties who reached people in about 1,500 units at 10 properties throughout the county.

Apartment Recycling Champions on their experience

"I had the opportunity to get to know more of my neighbors. It just feels good to try to make a difference in my community."

"There is so much bad news about the environment and climate that we can feel not just hopeless but helpless. Engaging my neighbors in the concrete things we can do that make a big positive difference, like recycling, was huge. It helped them feel part of a solution!"

2025 multifamily recycling grants

- 1225 LaSalle, Minneapolis
- 2725 Pleasant Ave, Minneapolis
- 608 Ridgewood, Minneapolis
- 803 Douglas Ave, Minneapolis
- Amira Minnetonka, Minnetonka
- Aquila Commons, St. Louis Park
- Artessa Mound Harbor, Mound
- Gateway Commons, Brooklyn Center
- Girard Place Apartments, Minneapolis
- Lake Nokomis North Condominiums, Minneapolis
- Lagoon Ave Estates, Minneapolis
- Lee Square Cooperative, Robbinsdale
- Timber & Tie, Minneapolis
- Trillium Woods, Plymouth
- Urban Rent, Minneapolis
- Wayzata Lake Apartments, Wayzata

2025 multifamily bin and bag grants

- 1225 LaSalle, Minneapolis
- 1800 Clinton Condominiums, Minneapolis
- 2112 Pillsbury Avenue, Minneapolis

- 803 Douglas Ave, Minneapolis
- Amira Minnetonka, Minnetonka
- Aquila Commons, St. Louis Park
- Artessa Mound Harbor, Mound
- Cedar Isles Condos, Minneapolis
- Edition Apartments, Minneapolis
- Emerson Flats, Minneapolis
- Gateway Commons, Brooklyn Center
- Huntly Flats, St. Louis Park
- Idaho Flats, St. Louis Park
- International Village, Bloomington
- L&E Apartments, St. Louis Park
- Lake Nokomis North Condominiums, Minneapolis
- Lee Square Cooperative, Robbinsdale
- Loring Green East, Minneapolis
- Loring Green West, Minneapolis
- Maison Green, Edina
- Midtown Condos on the Greenway, Minneapolis
- Mill City Quarter, Minneapolis
- Nina Flats, St. Louis Park
- Presbyterian Homes of Bloomington, Bloomington
- Shadow Hills Apartments, Plymouth
- St. Paul Homes Apartments, Minneapolis
- Trillium Woods, Plymouth
- York Condos West, Edina

Community zero waste

The new community zero-waste grants provide funding to community-based organizations to develop and lead waste prevention and diversion projects. This grant program embraces community-rooted projects and uses innovative solutions to reach zero waste in historically underserved communities.

2025 results

- Awarded six Community Zero Waste Grants totaling \$450,000.

2025 grants awarded

- **African Career Education & Resource Inc. (ACER):** \$35,000 to make the annual Shingle Creek Center Fair in Brooklyn Center a low-waste event and promote low-waste actions and recycling beyond the event.
- **Free Geek Twin Cities:** \$110,000 to further reduce electronic waste and increase reuse and recycling by holding collection events and expanding business hours.

- **Little Earth Residents Association:** \$125,000 to improve recycling, start organics recycling, and incorporate repair clinics at clothing swaps to further reduce waste.
- **Lyndale Neighborhood Association:** \$9,000 to host swap events to facilitate and promote reuse among residents, including Free Fest, focused on household items, and Book Fest, focused on recirculating books. Funding will also help make the annual Wheels & Bike Rodeo a low-waste event.
- **Oromo Diaspora Media:** \$95,000 to start recycling and organics recycling at three religious institutions that serve the Oromo community and host events.
- **Zone For Integrated Resources and Alliances with Nature (ZIRAN):** \$76,000 to start recycling and organics recycling at three businesses that primarily serve Asian-American populations. Other activities include facilitating low-waste event planning at 10 events including Twin Cities West Metro Asian Fair.

Schools

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 recycling and organics recycling, the county provides grants and technical assistance, distributes educational resources and signage, and offers presentations to students and staff.

The county partners with Twin Cities Road Crew to provide assemblies on waste reduction and recycling for elementary students and with the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program to help schools improve their recycling programs.

2025 results

- Awarded \$50,450 in recycling grants to five schools to expand recycling and organics recycling, reduce waste, and compost on-site. Grant recipients include two charter schools, two preschools, and one university.
- Funded educational performances on recycling and waste reduction for more than 5,900 students at 21 schools through a partnership with Twin Cities Road Crew. Received positive feedback from school staff, including that 100% would recommend the program to another school and 100% felt that the students learned new behaviors to help the environment.
- Delivered 73 cubic yards of free compost in partnership with Dakota Prairie Composting to 21 schools across the county to close the loop on organics recycling. Students used compost in their flower, vegetable, and native planting gardens.

Teacher feedback on school recycling assemblies

“This show was amazing. My students loved the energy. My students learned so much, and so many of their parents messaged me say their child was raving about the show.”

2025 school recycling grantees

- **Casa de Corazón Centennial Lakes, Edina:** \$1,700 to start collecting organics in the classrooms and kitchen.
- **Fraser School, Richfield:** \$12,250 to improve their recycling program and start collecting organics in the kitchen, classrooms, and bathrooms.
- **Lincoln International High School, Minneapolis:** \$14,400 to add recycling containers in classrooms and offices and start collecting organics in the kitchen and cafeteria.
- **Noble Academy, Brooklyn Park:** \$7,100 to reduce cafeteria waste by introducing stainless steel trays and trash lids with magnetic catchers and expanding their reusable flatware inventory.
- **University of Minnesota, Minneapolis:** \$15,000 to improve waste sorting practices at the 3M Arena at Mariucci through unified collection bins.

Highlights from school recycling grant projects that wrapped up in 2025

Aurora Charter School

Aurora Charter School is a pre-K through 8 charter school authorized by Osprey Wilds that offers a bilingual English/Spanish learning model.

They received \$7,800 to install six new recycling bins and updated signage throughout the school to provide clear, consistent guidance. In an end-of-year survey, 97% of students said they believe recycling is important and 73% reported being able to find a recycling bin when needed.

Bloom Early Learning and Childcare

Bloom Early Learning and Childcare has been housed at Messiah Church in Plymouth for 25 years. Half of the children come from low-income families and receive financial support from the church and individuals to attend daycare.

Bloom was awarded \$12,300 to introduce organics collection throughout the building. They initially launched in the childcare spaces and later expanded to all areas of the building and congregation.

By the end of their project, Bloom had reduced their trash by 50% by offering sorting stations and education, and they are looking forward to continuing the work in coming years.

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. Hennepin County offers grants, signage, and technical assistance to help businesses reduce waste and improve recycling.

2025 results

- Awarded 12 business waste prevention grants totaling \$165,215 for projects focused on reuse and repair, replacing disposables with reusables, and research and development to prevent waste.
- Distributed free bins and compostable bags to 54 businesses and organizations to start or improve recycling or organics recycling.
- Contracted with Minnesota Waste Wise to assist with business recycling outreach. Waste Wise visited more than 200 businesses to promote Hennepin County resources or provide technical assistance.
- Continued to support MNimize, a single-use plastic reduction pledge and certification program for food businesses run by Minnesota Waste Wise in partnership with Hennepin County. MNimize added 50 new participating businesses and awarded 15 rebates totaling \$11,822 to help businesses buy reusables and compostables to replace single-use plastics. MNimize staff also conducted outreach and provided technical assistance and site visits.

2025 business waste prevention grants

- **Andrea's Vintage Bridal, Minneapolis:** \$2,500 to clean vintage wedding gowns to facilitate reuse.
- **AudreyRose Vintage, Minneapolis:** \$2,500 for signage to drive store traffic and equipment to process secondhand goods.
- **Cool Trash, Minneapolis:** \$50,000 to produce recycled plastics from other businesses' plastic waste.
- **Curiosity Studio, Minneapolis:** \$7,650 to teach mending and sewing classes to reduce textile waste.
- **Curiouser Foods, St. Anthony:** \$3,900 for a dishwasher to be able to offer reusable foodservice ware.
- **Gastrotruck, Minneapolis:** \$3,300 to expand reusable foodservice ware.
- **Kiwi Cares, Minneapolis:** \$50,000 to increase collection of strollers for reuse.
- **Photo Letter Project, Minneapolis:** \$2,500 to salvage and resell damaged products otherwise destined for the trash.
- **Prevailing Medical, Plymouth:** \$4,065 to repair a water-deionizing system to eliminate bottled water and provide reusable cleanroom footwear to replace disposable shoe covers.
- **r.World Reusables, Hopkins:** \$20,000 to increase reusable cups at venues, events, or businesses throughout Hennepin County.
- **Spark Youth, Minneapolis:** \$2,800 to offer reusable foodservice ware and food storage containers to reduce single-use disposables.
- **The Workshop, Minneapolis:** \$16,000 for equipment to collect pottery waste for reusing onsite instead of being trashed.

2025 business bin and compostable bag grants

- Abbott Northwestern Hospital, Minneapolis
- Animal Humane Society, Golden Valley
- Beth El Synagogue, St Louis Park
- Broken Clock Brewing Cooperative, Minneapolis
- Brooklyn United Methodist Church, Brooklyn Center
- Caphin, Minneapolis
- Cross of Glory Baptist Church, Hopkins
- Dancing Bear Chocolate, Minneapolis
- Dreamstate Café, Minneapolis
- East Side Neighborhood Services, Minneapolis
- Eat for Equity Catering, Minneapolis
- Fellowship Baptist Church, Minneapolis
- Fit 1st Running, Minneapolis
- Flour and Friends, Crystal
- Good Samaritan United Methodist Church, Edina
- Grassfield RC Club, Brooklyn Park
- Gro's Smoke Shop, Hopkins
- Helping Paws, Eden Prairie
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Minneapolis
- Hook & Ladder Theater, Minneapolis
- Impact Orthodontics, Minneapolis
- Jam Hope Café, Champlin
- Kiddie Academy of Edina, Edina
- Lake Harriet United Methodist Church, Minneapolis
- Lake State Mountaineering, Minneapolis
- Masjid An-Nur, Minneapolis
- Mercado Central, Minneapolis
- Midtown Farmers Market, Minneapolis
- Minne's by Veli'D, Minneapolis
- Minneapolis Climate Action, Minneapolis
- Minnesota Opera, Minneapolis
- Mixly Cocktail Co, New Hope
- Moroccan Flavors, Minneapolis
- Normandale Lutheran Church, Edina
- Northside Epicenter, Minneapolis
- Oh Food Group, Minneapolis
- Old School by Steeple People, Minneapolis
- Painted Turtle, Minneapolis
- Rosalux Gallery, Minneapolis
- SEWA- AIFW, Brooklyn Center

- Shop My Closet, Minneapolis
- St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Bloomington
- Tandoor Restaurant, Bloomington
- Textile Center, Minneapolis
- The Arthouse, Minneapolis
- The Coven, Minneapolis
- Voyageur Environmental Center, Mound
- Wat Thai of Minnesota, St Louis Park
- Wayzata Yacht Club, Wayzata
- West Metro Chinese Church, Plymouth
- Yellowbird Coffee Bar NE, Minneapolis
- YogaFit Linden Hills, Minneapolis
- YogaFit Uptown, Minneapolis
- Zone for Integrated Resources and Alliances with Nature, Minnetonka

Results since MNimize began in 2022

- 917,000 single-use plastic items avoided
- 81,000 pounds of waste reduced
- \$87,000 saved

Recycling ordinance compliance

Hennepin County's recycling ordinance (Ordinance 13) requires businesses to provide recycling service, pair recycling bins with trash bins, and label bins. Certain businesses in sectors that generate a lot of food waste are required to have food waste recycling.

Hennepin County Ordinance 13 inspectors visit businesses to conduct compliance evaluations. Inspections ensure businesses are properly managing their waste and are an opportunity for businesses to learn more about recycling strategies.

2025 results

- Completed 120 inspections, of which 90 were initial visits and 30 were follow-up visits. Inspections focused on grocery stores, food manufacturers, sports venues, nursing and residential care facilities, hospitals, and colleges and universities with dining services.
- Added 1 inspector to the staff.
- Achieved a 90% compliance rate for businesses inspected in 2025, meaning businesses met the recycling requirement and food waste diversion requirement, if required.

Food waste prevention

About 40% of food in the United States 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.

2025 results

- Continued the Trash or Cash campaign, with ads generating more than 8 million impressions and 36,000 click-throughs to TrashorCash.org.
 - Created a new resource – the Meal Planning Personality Quiz – to give consumers personalized strategies based on what they are good at already and what kitchen habits to tweak to make the most of their food.
 - Increased subscribers to Fridge Check Friday emails, which provide weekly tips and reminders to save money by wasting less food, to 2,700.
- Offered the Stop Food Waste Challenge in collaboration with Ramsey and Washington counties through the Partnership on Waste and Energy. The 628 participants (456 from Hennepin County) saved 3,156 pounds of food and avoided 6,797 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions.
- Educated 1,120 people about preventing wasted food at in-person and virtual events.
- Celebrated national Food Waste Prevention Week, including with a resolution passed by the Hennepin County board in April.
- Distributed \$540,000 in food rescue grants to 12 organizations for 2024-2025.
- Hosted three 86 Food Waste Series events with Homegrown Minneapolis attended by service staff from 80 food businesses.
- Had 11,000 tons of food donated by Hennepin County businesses and residents to food rescue organizations.

Building materials

Construction and demolition waste is a large waste stream – potentially equal to the amount of trash and recycling generated from homes and businesses. Additionally, building materials have the highest climate impacts of any single material.

Hennepin County works to divert building materials from landfills 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 or recycle. Deconstruction prevents usable

materials from going to landfills, makes used building materials available to the community, creates jobs, and supports local reuse retailers.

Incorporating used building materials into projects reduces carbon emissions associated with new materials, increases demand for used building materials, and supports local reuse retailers.

2025 results

- Awarded 28 building material reuse grants totaling more than \$130,000 for projects that reused and recycled materials in the removal or renovation of a building. Grants included:
 - 22 residential deconstruction projects.
 - 6 used building material installation projects.
- Closed out 14 grant projects that diverted 2,200 tons of building materials from landfills, including 66 tons salvaged for reuse and 2,133 tons recycled.
- Contracted with Better Futures Minnesota and the Birch Group to deconstruct buildings and offer job training and employment for people from underserved communities. Provided \$115,465 to these nonprofit organizations to fully deconstruct 4 buildings and partially deconstruct 26 buildings, diverting more than 429 tons of material from landfills, including 256 tons of building materials for reuse and 173 tons of material for recycling.
- Hosted the third annual Salvage Crawl to increase awareness of building material reuse and retailers, with 285 participants entering to win prizes across 12 retail locations throughout May. Kicked off the Salvage Crawl with a first-of-its-kind Reuse Ride, where more than 30 participants biked to participating retailers. Earned media coverage on the Salvage Crawl in the Star Tribune and on Minnesota Public Radio's Morning Edition.
- Partnered with 6 cities to hold collection events for residents to donate usable building materials. Collected more than 1.83 tons of building materials for reuse.
- Launched Building Circularity MN, a two-year initiative funded by the MPCA focused on helping Minnesota designers and building owners increase circularity and reduce waste on construction and renovation projects. The collaboration offers project-level technical support to architects to incorporate used building materials and a Material Reuse Pro training program for businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Coordinated 8 presentations to more than 440 architects, designers, property owners, and contractors on how to design with reclaimed building materials, including a presentation at the national Build Reuse conference.
- Provided education and outreach on reusing and recycling building materials to residents, contractors, architect and design firms, and other partners through training sessions, webinars, and conference presentations.
- Conducted pre-demolition inspections to ensure proper management of hazardous materials prior to demolition. Managing these types of hazardous wastes properly is important for protecting public health and the environment and is required by law.

Internal Hennepin County programs

Hennepin County knows 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 works with Facility Services to ensure a robust recycling program in county offices and facilities, educates staff, and manages media recycling.
- Central Services recycles toner cartridges.
- Purchasing maintains office supply listservs to facilitate the reuse of office supplies and furniture within county departments.
- Information Technology recycles non-usable and obsolete electronic equipment.

2025 results

- Expanded organics recycling in county buildings with 14 office buildings added: Public Safety, Public Works, South Minneapolis Human Services, Juvenile Detention, Juvenile Justice, Adult Correctional Facilities, 1800 Chicago, NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Regional Medical Examiner, Forensic Sciences, Emergency Communications, and the Eden Prairie Library.
- Responded to staff on how best to manage waste and materials generated at county offices and facilities and fielded requests for additional pickups.
- Attended New Employee Orientation to highlight recycling at work.
- Recycled and reused more than 700 tons of material from county office buildings and libraries, including:
 - Batteries: 2,679 pounds recycled
 - Cardboard and paper: 325 tons recycled, including 74 tons of books
 - Glass, metal, and plastic containers: 6.5 tons recycled
 - IT equipment: More than 32 tons reused and nearly 78 tons recycled
 - Media: 6.5 tons recycled
 - Organics: More than 111 tons composted
 - Scrap metal: 148 tons recycled

Drop-offs and special collections

County 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 waste. The county also holds two-day collection events at sites throughout the county to give residents more convenient, local disposal options for unwanted garden and household hazardous waste.

The county's Brooklyn Park Transfer Station and Hennepin Energy Recovery Center not only provide disposal services for residents, but are also vital facilities for keeping the solid waste system operational.

2025 results

- Served 144,973 residents and collected 7.25 million pounds of household hazardous waste, problem materials, and recycling at drop-off facilities and collection events.
- Held 4 household hazardous waste collection events, where 3,265 residents dropped off more than 168,000 pounds of waste, or 52 pounds per participant.
- Collected 544 tons of cardboard, 548 tons of appliances, 571 tons of electronics and 340 tons of scrap metal at the drop-off facilities.
- Fielded more than 5,461 calls from residents, with call center staff spending more than 145 hours responding to resident questions.

Furniture and building material collection

Hennepin County combined two ideas into one event in 2025 by holding a collection for both used building materials and furniture for reuse and recycling.

2025 results

- Held the first combined building material and furniture collection event in Brooklyn Park.
- Collected 9,820 pounds of materials for reuse by Bridging to support their mission of providing housing stability and 1,157 pounds of materials for recycling by Certified Recycling.

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 Hennepin County's drop-off facility in Brooklyn Park, and pick-up 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.

2025 results

- Collected 6,547 mattresses and box springs from residents at the Brooklyn Park Transfer Station.
- Picked up 1,627 mattresses and box springs from apartments, condos, and single-family homes.
- Collected 808 mattresses and box springs through the Hennepin County multifamily mattress recycling pilot program.

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.

2025 results

- Promoted medicine disposal options at 63 medicine drop boxes – 22 of the boxes are operated in partnership with the county and 41 are operated by independent pharmacies.
- Properly disposed of 17,149 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.

2025 results

- Collected nearly 1.2 million pounds of paint at county drop-off facilities and events.
- Promoted availability of paint disposal at 39 independent sites that partner with PaintCare, including hardware stores and paint stores. These independent sites collected 723,956 pounds of paint.
- Received \$605,754 from PaintCare for costs related to paint disposal.

Yard signs

Hennepin County is working to find ways to recycle more difficult waste streams. This includes collecting corrugated plastic yard signs, often used during political campaigns and high school graduations, for recycling.

2025 results

- Collected almost 1 ton of yard signs at convenient drop-off locations in Minneapolis, Minnetonka, St. Louis Park, and the county's drop-off facilities in Bloomington and Brooklyn Park. This included 39 pounds in the spring and 1,928 pounds in the fall.

Organics recycling drop-off grants

Funding is available to businesses, cities, multifamily properties, nonprofit organizations, and institutions in Hennepin County to establish organics recycling drop-off sites. Priority is given to drop-off sites that increase access to organics recycling for residents in apartments and condos.

Up to \$15,000 is available for each drop-off site. Funding can be used for hauling and disposal costs, construction, dumpsters or carts, and promotions and educational materials.

2025 results

- Awarded funding to 4 cities:
 - Brooklyn Center: \$15,000
 - Bloomington: \$15,000
 - Hopkins: \$6,100
 - Robbinsdale: \$5,000
- Supported the City of Edina in making piloted drop-off sites from a previous grant permanent. The 4 sites (Centennial Lakes, Bluebird and Blooms, Edina Senior Center, and Lewis Park) have 1,600 users per week and a contamination rate of less than 5%.

Event recycling

The county partners with the cities of Brooklyn Park, Golden Valley, and Richfield to make portable recycling and organics-recycling containers available for events throughout the county.

2025 results

- Distributed containers for use at 50 events with approximately 81,545 attendees.

Recovering recyclables from the trash

Recycling Recovery Facilities

Recovering recyclables from the trash is identified as one of the highest-impact zero-waste actions in the county's Plan to Reinvent the Solid Waste System. This approach complements source separation and acknowledges the reality that there are a lot of recyclables in the trash despite the robust efforts of existing recycling and organics-recycling programs.

Recycling recovery facilities have the potential to divert the most tons from the trash on the shortest timeline and at the lowest cost compared with all other strategies in the Zero Waste Plan. These facilities sort recyclables from the trash using mechanical, optical, and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. The feasibility study will evaluate similar facilities, types of equipment and technology, staffing, capital and operating costs, projected recovery rates, end markets, design options, and more.

To inform this work, staff visited leading facilities in California where mixed-waste processing systems are mature and operate at scale. These visits provided valuable insights into equipment performance, material recovery rates, operational considerations, and market development strategies. Lessons learned will be incorporated into local planning to ensure the proposed system is grounded in proven approaches while tailored to the county's needs.

2025 results

- Advanced work to complete a feasibility 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

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 almost 800,000 tons of stuff in the trash in 2025. This is nearly 1,223 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 jobs for 55 full-time positions and 300 contractors to complete facility maintenance and improvement projects.

2025 results

- Met state law to process trash before landfilling with more than 347,300 tons of trash delivered to HERC.
- Recovered 16,390 tons of metal for recycling.
- Offset the use of fossil fuels by producing enough 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.

Landfilling increased by approximately 54,000 tons in 2025. That increase was due to less trash processed at waste-to-energy facilities and a reporting correction to properly attribute Wright County disposal tonnage to Hennepin County.

Municipal solid waste landfilled in Minnesota in 2025

Landfill	Owner	Tons
Burnsville	Waste Management	171,077
Pine Bend (Inver Grove Heights)	Republic	125,503
Elk River	Waste Management	76,724

Municipal solid waste landfilled out of state in 2025

Landfill	Owner	Tons
Lake Area Landfill (Sarona, Wisconsin)	Republic	26,244
Central Disposal (Lake Mills, Iowa)	Waste Management	21,488
7-Mile Creek Landfill (Eau Claire, Wisconsin)	GFL Environmental	5,116