



**BEST PRACTICE AREA 1: ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING,
BEST PRACTICE AREA 2: PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP, AND
BEST PRACTICE AREA 10: WASTE REDUCTION (REDUCE, REUSE RECYCLE, AND
COMPOST)**

Vision

The trash bin is the smallest container – if it is needed at all. The amount of waste generated is minimal with most materials being reused, recycled or composted.

Background

Waste, and our choice to reduce waste, has a significant impact on the environment. Waste in incinerators and landfills create greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane. When you take into account the full lifecycle of the products we use every day and the increased energy needed to make replacement products from virgin, raw materials, the actual impact of all this waste grows significantly. Accounting for the connections between waste in many sectors, including mining, deforestation, industrial agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and electricity, our wasting represents 36.7% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions (Trashing the Climate, Platt et al., 2008. pg 24).

Over 50% of what we still throw in the garbage can be recycled through curbside and other types of collection. An additional 25% of our trash is comprised of food wastes and other materials that could be composted. A typical household in Minnesota throws away over 10 pounds of household compostable material every week. The little bit of garbage that remains after we recycle and compost can be thoughtfully addressed through a zero-waste approach (which includes extended producer responsibility) to prevent waste altogether. In other words, there really is no waste. Recycling, composting, and producer responsibility are powerful tools to reduce waste and therefore, our greenhouse gas emissions. Specifically in Minnesota, reducing our waste has a greenhouse gas reduction impact equivalent to shutting down 20% of our state’s coal power plants, or reducing every car usage in the state by two-thirds, or using 75% less electricity in our own homes.

Goals

- A. Reduce the amount of waste generated especially packaging, wastes and compostable wastes (food, nonrecyclable papers¹, leaves, grass clippings etc.) by increasing education

¹ Non-recyclable papers typically include materials such as wrapping paper, waxed boxboard, paper towels, construction paper, brown craft envelopes, blueprints, pendaflex folders, carbon paper, hardcover books.





around the benefits of reducing wastes, supporting programs that result in less waste and formally supporting producer responsibility policy.

- B. Increase the amount of materials being reused by removing barriers to reuse, promoting existing reuse options and increasing the opportunity for additional reuse initiatives and increase the durability of goods by supporting state and local initiatives that require product stewardship.
- C. Increase the number of people participating in recycling programs and amount of material being recycled through education efforts around the benefits of recycling, by creating incentives for recycling and providing additional opportunities for recycling by all members of the community including commercial facilities, multi-family housing, single family housing, government, and educational institutions.
- D. Increase number of people composting and amount being composted by education for target groups (residents, businesses, schools and institutions) providing technical assistance to start up, provide incentives and increase the opportunity for participation.
- E. Increase local economy/green jobs by developing markets for recycled and reused materials by promoting current opportunities for the salvage and purchase of these items, creating incentives for building deconstruction versus demolition and through economic development incentives for recycled, reuse or composting businesses.
- F. Increase the use of environmentally preferable products including recycled/reused materials by promoting current opportunities to purchase verifiable/certified “green” products, improving procurement practices based on successful programs in other communities and through the creation and enhancement of cooperative purchasing options.
- G. Decrease the financial burden of waste that is currently carried entirely by the local governments and citizens by gaining an understanding of the policies and structures that create the problem and then developing systems that provide for equitable cost and benefit sharing.

Initiatives and Action Steps

The following three initiatives for initial action were identified through public input and reflect local stakeholders views of which goals would have the most profound effect on moving the Joint Planning District toward sustainability. The three prioritized initiatives focus on key areas with tremendous opportunities to reduce waste while creating local economic development and green job opportunities.





The first initiative is an effort to realize the environmental and economic value of the resources that are currently being disposed and how those values can directly impact local economies. This will be done through increasing reuse, encouraging manufacturers to increase the durability of their goods, and creating local market opportunities for recycling, composting and reuse businesses. The second initiative focuses on increasing participation in waste reduction programs currently available. An upfront investment in education, incentives and startup assistance will pay off with long lasting and ongoing benefits. The third initiative is about connecting the products and services we purchase with sustainability initiatives. Verifying or certifying the environmental impact of products and providing cost-effective purchasing opportunities will address the frustration and difficulties of locating and paying a fair price (not eco-gouged) for products that are trusted to be truly “green”.

1. **Create jobs and green cash, not a pile of trash:** Increase the amount of materials being reused and promote local economic development and the creation of green jobs by focusing on both upstream (manufacturing) and downstream (post consumption) issues. Downstream, encourage reuse over disposal by promoting existing reuse opportunities, creating new ones, and addressing the barriers to reuse. For manufacturers and processors (upstream), support state and local initiatives that require product stewardship to increase the durability of goods and promote market development for recycled and reused materials.
 - a. Create new reuse opportunities based on community need. Measure the amount of reusable durable goods going into the trash (at neighborhood clean up days, piloted blocks, institutions, etc.) to create a baseline and prioritize biggest potential for reuse (furniture, electronics, clothes, etc). Find partners that can use targeted materials, such as Salvation Army, Goodwill, Epilepsy foundation and others, to talk about creating a free center for reuse. Create a website like Eureka Recycling’s Free Market that can quantify the amount of material reused. Work with the City’s economic development goals to attract businesses that can use the available reuse items as feedstock or inventory.
 - b. Increase material reuse by promoting existing opportunities for donation, sale, repair or purchase of salvage items. Make accessing these resources easy for residents by documenting and keeping up to date: the available community resources, what items they accept and any conditions around quality, quantity or seasonality. Use a variety of approaches to promote this list, including online (city website, Facebook, etc.), articles in community papers and displays at events. Coordinate with existing reuse events such as “Donate, Don’t Ditch” at St. Cloud State and the Community Curbside Set-Out Day before the special pick up day. Publish a reference list of where reuse can take place year round for distribution at one-time events.





- c. Create a targeted incentive program to promote reuse over disposal. Explore additional local policy to reflect the values of the community. Quantify the financial (disposal cost savings and added value opportunity) and environmental impact (decrease in carbon emissions) of reuse policy to create a cost benefit analysis for incentive programs. For instance, the use of a building permit requirement to encourage building deconstruction instead of demolition (such as requiring a holding area for waste deconstruction materials). Or the possibility of a container deposit legislation or policy that can result in 90% or greater recovery of containers.
 - d. Support and attract new reuse businesses. Promote and advertise community businesses that use recycled or reused materials as feedstock including repair, thrift stores and other reuse businesses in the community. Provide economic incentives for these types of businesses to locate in the city. Quantify the number of jobs and economic impact of this specific business sector.
 - e. Prioritize local industry groups that are receptive to increasing reuse through product stewardship. Create product stewardship education programs to promote existing regional, state and national initiatives to these groups. This will include workshops, evaluation, best practices, peer mentoring and consulting.
 - f. Document whom the specific local producers of waste and end-users of recovered materials are in the community and quantify what volumes they produce or use. Partner with these waste generating business or value added manufacturers to support the collection and reuse infrastructure required to increase reuse or minimize waste. This could include the funding of a hard to recycle drop off center for items such as plastic containers without necks.
2. **When Zero makes your community Number One!:** Recycle and compost more materials by increasing the number of people participating in recycling and composting programs. Increase participation through targeted education, making programs accessible to a wider audience, providing technical assistance and creating incentives.
- a. Conduct participation and demographics studies to determine underserved populations in existing service areas. Prioritize opportunities to increase participation and create targeted education and incentive campaigns to reach these groups. Education can be on the environmental benefits of recycling. Incentives can include pay as you throw trash rates, or rebates or financial incentives to recycle more. Measure impact before and after efforts to determine success.
 - b. Improve resident's ability to recycle away from home (including commercial facilities, government, and educational institutions). State and national surveys show that this is where much of the remaining residential waste is borne and residents are frustrated that there are not opportunities to recycle. Document waste reduction





- potential in public space through waste audits. Conduct additional waste audits after recycling is set up to measure impact.
- c. Identify areas to increase commercial and residential recycling efforts (ex. multifamily buildings, apartments, condos, etc.). Residents live increasingly in homes that are not single-family, and multi-family recycling needs to be addressed differently than single family homes. Use Eureka Recycling's Multi-family recycling toolkit and other national resources to structure a successful program. Conduct pre- and post-waste sorts to document improvement.
 - d. Promote composting by addressing the barriers that currently exist by providing technical assistance to start up the program, incentives to participate and increasing access. Work to increase opportunities for participation by working with haulers, city programs and processors so more people have access to both commercial composting. Provide workshops and materials needed to start back yard composting. Target education campaigns on composting for residents, businesses, schools and institutions. Measure the volumes collected to quantify the impact.
3. **Vote for the environment with your dollars:** Increase the use of environmentally preferable products, including recycled/reused materials, by promoting current opportunities to purchase verifiable/certified "green" products, improving procurement practices based on successful programs in other communities and through the creation and enhancement of cooperative purchasing options.
- a. Increase the impact of environmentally preferable purchasing policies by reviewing and identifying the opportunities within current government. Quantify what impact the policies have already had and measure what additional potential exists within government purchases. Survey purchasers within the government to identify the barriers and address solutions to making the policies more effective. Use ongoing purchasing data to determine effectiveness and measure success.
 - b. Create additional policies to promote sustainable purchasing habits in the community. These could include a municipal policy of no plastic water bottles at meetings, a retail plastic bag policy requiring reusable or bio-based compostable or recyclable bags, or a take out container policy requiring re-usable or bio-based, compostable. Measure what the potential environmental impact and cost of these efforts would be to conduct a cost-benefit analysis prior to work. Measure after implementation to quantify benefits.
 - c. Expand access to purchasing outside of government. Maintain criteria for best available product certification. Create and distribute updated lists of verified preferable products and where they are locally available. Create methods for businesses and residents to access the same reliable products and reduced bulk





pricing by allowing co-op purchasing and bulk orders. Promote opportunity through business networks and schools.

- d. Increase local availability by working with manufacturers and distributors to supply products locally. Support locally manufactured green products in conjunction with economic development funding.
- e. Provide resident forums where they can be engaged in environmental product purchasing through education (ex. understanding why all plastics cannot be recycled), social action (why their feedback to brands, packagers can influence design) and the impact of their purchasing power.

General Actions

The following general actions have been identified as key steps to allow the Joint Planning District to move toward the goals for this Best Practice Area that were not selected as “initiatives”.

- I. Consider relative education actions in this BPA in conjunction with community education BPA and compost actions in these BPA’s with Food related actions in other BPA’s.
- II. Work to remove disincentives and create incentives to improve waste reduction (reduce, reuse, recycle, compost). Review waste reduction governmental/institutional policies and ordinances to identify the barriers and opportunities.
- III. Establish governmental and institutional waste reduction (reduce, reuse, recycle, compost) goals and measures! Review internal initiatives in all governmental buildings – track and measure before and after results for social, environmental and economic benefits to use a model for broader audiences and promote green initiatives.
- IV. Kick off a city or regional energy and waste reduction campaign for residents and businesses. Co-messaging and providing single sources on multiple resource topics is a proven technique to increase involvement. Provide a "stamp of approval" on specifically targeted efforts and methods (i.e. backyard composting).
- V. Promote local waste reduction success stories (environmental awards program) to educate and provide peer modeling for residential as well as government and private sector workplaces. Recognize individuals or teams, not entities.
- VI. Look for economies of scale in garbage that often create opportunities to implement green programs at much lower costs. (Ex. organized collection of waste at city, county or regional level.)
- VII. Promote the regions good, green businesses, nonprofits and initiatives (ex. develop or work with partners to create an expo like the Living Green Expo in the Twin Cities).

