

Recycling Goals

Goal 1: Divert Various Materials from the Landfill and Track Diversion Rates

Objective 1.1 Improve Diversion of Hard-to-Recycle and Hazardous Materials

- Implement at least one year-round collection site within each County that accepts tires, HHW, batteries, and electronics.
- Partner with Gazelle, TerraCycle, Goodwill, Habitat ReStore, and others to expand diversion pathways.
- Add four comprehensive drop-off sites per county (HHW, mattresses, foam, tires, recyclables, food waste).
- Include E-waste, HHW, plastic films, and reuse programs consistently in diversion metrics.

Objective 1.2 Expand Glass Recycling Opportunities

- Research feasibility of diverting glass for alternative uses (e.g., sand for lakefront projects).
- If feasible, establish or incentivize a glass recycling facility in the tri-county area.
- Track glass as a separate recycling metric, since it is currently being removed from the recycling stream and treated as waste.

Objective 1.3 Foster Local Markets and Economic Development

- Partner with local economic development agencies to attract companies to the region that utilize recycled materials.
- Promote Michigan's Materials Marketplace and NextCycle program for innovation.
- Support local industries to create end markets for recycled materials.
- Encourage community-level baling (e.g., cardboard) for resale rather than relying only on MRFs.

Objective 1.4 Establish Diversion Tracking Methods and Set Clear Performance Targets

- Implement an online form for MRF's, Composters, Diversion Program Managers, and others to submit quantities of recyclables, organics, and other materials that are diverted from the landfill.

- Reduce contamination rates by 1% annually, with a goal of reaching less than 5% contamination
- Increase diversion rates by 2% annually for the first five years.

Goal 2: Build a Culture of Recycling and Waste Reduction Through Education, Engagement, and Outreach

Objective 2.1 Increase Public Awareness of Recycling Opportunities

- Develop a regional education campaign on what, where, and how to recycle and reduce waste.
- Launch outreach through billboards, media, and digital channels to advertise recycling events and promote correct recycling practices.
- Build and maintain a digital presence (e.g., “Southwest Michigan Recycles” social media, blog, education programming).
- Hold public events to share programs, goals, and successes.
- Encourage community-wide visibility by sharing progress updates and goals in multiple formats

Objective 2.2 Strengthen Recycling Education in Schools and Businesses

- Establish a school recycling coordinator position for each district to lead education and outreach in schools.
- Develop official partnerships with schools to integrate recycling education into student learning and community projects.
- Engage grocery stores and businesses as partners to share recycling information and host events.
- Provide toolkits for schools and businesses to implement recycling education programs.

Objective 2.3 Promote Retailer Responsibility and Consumer Choices

- Encourage retailers to recycle the products they sell and provide clear recycling instructions to customers.
- Educate consumers on single-use packaging impacts; promote reusable/recyclable alternatives.

- Highlight examples of retailers and businesses who successfully promote recycling and waste reduction through certifications.
- Educate the public on hazardous materials and the need to keep them out of landfills.

Objective 2.4 Improve Effectiveness of Outreach and Messaging

- Utilize AI contamination technology to deliver targeted, audience-specific recycling messages.
- Develop campaigns that explain why recycling works and address myths to improve participation and reduce contamination.
- Create outreach strategies for rural, urban, and hard-to-reach populations.
- Integrate waste reduction initiatives into education efforts, linking recycling with broader sustainability goals.

Goal 3: Expand and Improve Recycling Infrastructure and Access

Objective 3.1 Expand Curbside Recycling Services, Ensuring Minimum Requirements are Met.

- By 2026: Ensure 90% of single-family dwellings in urban areas have curbside service (min. twice/month).
- By 2028: Ensure 90% of single-family dwellings in municipalities >5,000 residents have curbside service.
- Minimum Requirements: consistent materials accepted (plastics, cans, cardboard, paper, cartons, glass), recycling is picked up at least twice per month, and education regarding acceptable materials is provided often.
- Develop strategies to reduce contamination alongside volume increases, ensuring recyclables are market-ready.

Objective 3.2 Ensure Equitable Drop-Off Access, Ensuring Minimum Requirements are Met.

- By 2032:
 - Counties <100,000 residents → 1 site per 10,000 residents without curbside.
 - Counties ≥100,000 residents → 1 site per 50,000 residents without curbside.

- Minimum Requirements: Sites must offer collection of plastics, cans, cardboard, paper, cartons, glass; the site must be open to the public for at least 24 hrs/month; the site must offer at least some evening/weekend hours.
- Ensure drop-offs are manned and located within ~10 miles for every household.
- Use GIS mapping to optimize facility placement; explore schools and grocery stores as additional collection points.
- Encourage business-government partnerships to share infrastructure costs.
- Promote universal access for all sites so anyone from the County or region may drop-off recyclables.

Objective 3.4 Modernize Recycling Transportation and Logistics

- Transition municipal waste fleets to electric/clean-fuel trucks, and promote the transition for private companies.
- Develop coordinated logistics with haulers to ensure adequate equipment, hours, and materials handling capacity.
- Standardize procedures to make sure expansion of services does not result in higher contamination rates.

Goal 4: Strengthen Policy and Funding to Support Recycling

Objective 4.1 Establish Sustainable Funding

- Create a dedicated, ongoing funding source for recycling, food scrap diversion, and education programs.
- Explore tax increases, dedicated millages, or alternative funding models tailored to each county's needs.
- Provide grants to schools and community organizations to support recycling education and program implementation.
- Develop county-level requirements for minimum program staffing, including a full-time recycling coordinator.
- Create a toolkit for municipalities with sample policies (e.g., hauler registration, single-hauler contracts, ordinances).

Objective 4.2 Make Recycling Cost-Effective and Transparent

- Encourage single-hauler contracts in cities/villages to ensure universal recycling access at consistent costs..

- Mandate hauler data reporting on weight, volume and destinations to build transparency and public trust.
- Investigate models to make recycling cheaper than disposal, including subsidies, fee restructuring, or incentives.

Objective 4.3 Advance Waste Reduction Through Policy and Incentives

- Enact a county ordinance that requires haulers to obtain a license to operate within the county, and require haulers offer curbside recycling access to any household with curbside trash pickup.
- Explore ordinances or voluntary agreements that require retailers and businesses to support waste reduction and recycling promotion.
- Support Extended Producer Responsibility legislation to incentivize producers to use easier-to-recycle packaging and help fund recycling programs throughout the state.
- Enact a county resolution requiring all county-sponsored functions to use recyclable and compostable materials when possible, and require the function to provide recycling and food scrap recycling.
- Enact a county resolution requiring all county buildings purchase recyclable or compostable materials when possible, and ensure all county buildings have access to recycling and food scrap recycling.