

Advancing Zero Waste

HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA

A zero-waste future is possible with state leadership

Hennepin County is seeking a transformative change to our waste management system where all materials are designed to become resources for others to use.

Hennepin County's Zero Waste Plan



Create a materials management system that reduces racial disparities and advances equity



Expand the reach of county waste education, grants, and programs



Adopt policies that accelerate the transition to a zero-waste future



Implement programs to advance circularity, reduce waste, and support reuse

To achieve this goal of 90% or greater recycling rate, the county needs to prevent or capture the remaining organics and recyclables being trashed and develop stronger recovery options for household goods and building materials.

How fast we can get to zero waste depends on state leadership to:

- Address how products and packaging are designed before they get to consumers and eventually become waste
- Strengthen recycling markets, especially for organics and local processing solutions like anaerobic digestion (AD)
- Provide additional SCORE funds to expand recycling
- Provide authority and tools for local government to implement new recycling programs

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zero-waste-future](http://BeHeardHennepin.org/zero-waste-future)

Zero waste advances climate action goals

Hennepin County was the first county in the state to adopt a Climate Action Plan and updated the county's climate goals to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 – with an interim goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030.

Zero-waste actions included in the Climate Action Plan

- Prevent food waste and divert organic materials from the trash.
- Reuse and recycle construction and demolition waste.
- Understand the climate impacts of our consumer choices and mitigate the largest impacts.
- Advocate for state leadership on zero-waste policies and producer responsibility.
- Expand our green building effort and sustainable purchasing initiatives.
- Reduce the health impacts associated with pollution for the production, packaging, use, and disposal of materials by supporting waste prevention, reuse, recycling, toxicity reduction, and proper management of hazardous waste.

Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) and its role in the county's solid waste system

The county wants a future where we don't need HERC. But not if that means more trash to landfills. Until we get to zero waste, efforts to undermine waste-to-energy without providing new resources and policy tools to reduce waste involves real trade-offs.

Climate impacts

Landfilled waste produces a significant amount of methane, which is 80 times more potent of a greenhouse gas than carbon over a 20-year period.

- If we landfilled the trash that is currently processed at HERC, it would result in approximately 300,000 additional tons of CO₂ equivalent, primarily from the release of methane from landfills.
- HERC has climate benefits until we have successfully diverted most biogenic materials from the trash – the 50% of trash that includes food waste, paper and wood. We need the state's help to get to the point where HERC is no longer the best option for the trash that remains.

Limits government's ability to fulfill waste management policy

State law requires public entities follow the waste hierarchy to first reduce, reuse, recycle and compost to divert materials from the waste stream, then process the trash that remains to recover energy and metals. All efforts should be made to avoid landfilling, the least preferable waste management option.

- There are 7 public and 2 private waste-to-energy plants in Minnesota
- We can't afford to keep putting waste in the ground. Burying our trash in a landfill presents long-term risks to our groundwater supplies. The state is spending hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to clean up old, leaking landfills.