



Solid Waste

Current waste generation and practices for solid waste disposal are harmful to the environment as well as public health.

Partnerships with businesses and institutions to enable local markets for recycling and reusing, expansion of community-wide composting programs, and consideration of more stringent policies and requirements around waste diversion are some of the increasingly popular (and effective) sustainable waste management approaches. At the same time, the City will also focus on increasing public outreach and awareness around waste reduction while building a culture that promotes shared resources and innovative solutions.

Goals

1. Gloucester becomes a model community for innovative waste management and reduction.
2. Gloucester increases its diversion rate through programs and policies to prevent, reduce, reuse, compost, and recycle waste.

What's been done so far?

The City of Gloucester offers weekly curbside trash and recycling collection service for single family – multifamily (4 apartment max) residences. Gloucester's current solid waste goes to nearby incineration. While incineration reduces the amount of waste that goes to landfills, the residual ash and remaining still end up in landfills. Newer incinerators may have technology to better filter and capture pollutants; however they don't eliminate them and therefore incineration of waste remains one of the major sources of toxic pollution to the surrounding communities.¹⁰

While it should be noted that Gloucester's solid waste makes up a very small portion (0.1%) of the community's overall GHG emissions portfolio, it still contributes to the regional air pollution and greenhouse emissions. As such, implementing strategies to reduce and divert waste, and ultimately getting to zero waste goal, will be a significant contribution to improving the region's environmental quality, public health, and GHG reduction efforts.

¹⁰ <https://www.clf.org/blog/whats-wrong-with-burning-our-trash-anyway/>

SW1 Explore initiatives to increase waste diversion and continue supporting MassDEP efforts with implementing its Solid Waste Master Plan. Identify strategies to increase opportunities for waste reduction, diversion, recycling, composting, re-use, and recovery in the City's solid waste management.



Sphere of Influence:
City



Implementation Partners:

- MassDEP Solid Waste Division
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- Local waste haulers, composters, and waste management companies
- Backyard Growers
- **Government and Municipal Bodies:** Board of Health, Mayor's Office
- **City Departments:** DPW, Open Space and Recreation Committee



Funding Sources:

- MassDEP
- MVP
- Green Communities

Next Steps:

- Continue participating in regional conversations with MassDEP Solid Waste Division.
- Conduct a waste characterization study and establish a waste diversion goal.
- Consider adopting guidelines for solid waste management or waste diversion, such as Zero Waste Community Principles (from the Zero Waste Internal Alliance).

Improving Equity:

- Ensure robust engagement efforts with residents about resource needs and barriers for participation, particularly those in EJ communities and climate vulnerable populations.

Co-benefits:

Improved environmental quality.

Creating a circular economy, new businesses supporting waste reduction and diversion.

Measure of Success:

Increased City-wide waste diversion rate.

SW2 Promote recycling education in public spaces and buildings to inform the community on what is recyclable. Create comprehensive signage for public areas as well as for residential use.



Sphere of Influence:
City



Implementation Partners:

- MassDEP Solid Waste Division
- Local waste haulers, waste management companies
- Businesses and real-estate management companies
- Backyard Growers
- Yonity
- Pathways for Children
- **Climate Activist Organizations:** Cape Ann Climate Coalition, TownGreen2025, Seaside Sustainability
- **Government and Municipal Bodies:** Mayor's Office, Board of Health, Gloucester Youth Council, School Committee
- **City Departments:** DPW, Health, School Department



Funding Sources:

- MassDEP
- RecyclingWorks

Next Steps:

- Review and update existing outreach materials promoting waste reduction, recycling, composting, etc. – make them more attractive and easier to follow.
- Translate outreach materials into multiple languages.
- Distribute updated educational materials to all households, businesses, schools, and public facilities, ensuring all households receive physical copies of educational materials, with materials providing details to additional online materials if applicable.
- Consider how the City can implement public recycling facilities at parks and other public spaces.
- Partner with local businesses to promote and manage the use of public recycling facilities.

Improving Equity:

- Ensure robust engagement efforts with residents about resource needs and barriers for participation, particularly those in EJ communities and climate vulnerable populations.

Co-benefits:

Improved environmental quality.

Creating a circular economy, new businesses supporting waste reduction and diversion.

Reduced contamination in recycling materials, etc.

Measure of Success:

Increased City-wide waste diversion rate.

SW3 Evaluate food waste composting options at Gloucester Public Schools.



Sphere of Influence:
City



Implementation Partners:

- Local composting service providers or community organizations
- Backyard Growers
- Climate and sustainability activist organizations (Cape Ann Climate Coalition, TownGreen2025, Seaside Sustainability Inc. etc.)
- **Government and Municipal Bodies:** Board of Health, Gloucester Youth Council
- **City Departments:** School Department , DPW



Funding Sources:

- MVP
- DCS
- RecyclingWorks
- MassDEP

Next Steps:

- Pilot a composting program at Gloucester High School.
- Launch a composting education campaign; host workshops for students to learn about the benefits of composting, etc.
- Expand the program to remaining schools.

Improving Equity:

- Educational materials and programing that accommodate students of a wide range of ages, abilities, and prior knowledge about composting.

Co-benefits:

Replication of composting efforts at home.

Reduced waste generation.

Measure of Success:

Established a composting program in all schools.

Additional Strategies for Solid Waste Management

Strategy	Realm of Influence
SW4 Advocate for an "Extended Producer Responsibility" policy to ensure that producers/product manufacturers are also responsible for minimizing waste in their products and packaging processes.	State/Federal/ Regional
SW5 Expand access to composting services to all residents or consider a public and/or private partnership to promote composting.	City
SW6 Participate in regional procurement initiatives for waste management.	City
SW7 Explore opportunities for small-scale implementation of converting unavoidable food waste to energy.	City
SW8 Advocate for policy and adoption of technologies that require significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and toxic pollutions at waste incinerators.	State/Federal/ Regional