

Towards Zero Waste [SHARE](#)

Waste is an expanding global problem caused by a growing population and increasing consumption. Our national economy is based on extracting resources, manufacturing and distributing products; a system that encourages excessive waste and does not take into account the full environmental and social costs of this activity. The result is increasing depletion of natural resources, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, and deteriorating air and water pollution - all of which are environmentally unsustainable and costly to society.



The amount of waste collected per person each day in Olympia is increasing. This coupled with an increasing population, puts pressure on our already strained regional waste management system. Olympians can help solve these problems through a variety of regional and local actions.



Compost at home to reduce waste.

Olympia's Waste ReSources Utility is responsible for ensuring that all of the City's waste is properly managed, and is directly responsible for providing collection services for residential and commercial garbage, residential recyclables and residential organics.

[With the Plan update, this section may need revised.](#)

In June 2006, the Olympia City Council adopted a Zero Waste Resolution, which established a vision for the City and a new direction for the Waste ReSources Utility. This resolution gave rise to a new strategic and operational six-year plan - [Olympia's Waste ReSources Plan](#)  , which focuses on a Zero Waste approach. In fact, Olympia's [Olympia's Waste ReSources Plan](#)  anticipates a future in which "waste" is viewed as an inefficient use of resources.

In the next 20 years, the utility will face the following challenges and opportunities:

- **Reduce sources of waste.** The whole life cycle of a product must be considered as we find ways to reduce waste in both "upstream" production and distribution processes and "downstream" consumer choices and waste management practices.
- **Optimize the current collection system.** Continue to increase the portion of waste that is recycled or composted.
- **Evaluate the commercial recycling market.** Assess the pros and cons of entering into the commercial recycling services market.

Waste Resources

Inventory

The Waste ReSources Utility has two core programs: Waste Prevention and Reduction, and Collections. The Waste Prevention and Reduction Program is responsible for preparing and periodically updating the Utility's waste management plans, and for developing and implementing policies and programs. This program focuses on reducing overall waste and increasing reuse, recycling and composting.

The Collections Program operates the drop-box and curbside collection services, so waste can be disposed of reliably, with minimal impact on environmental and public health and worker safety. In addition to daily residential and commercial collection, the collections staff empties downtown trash containers, removes waste from community events, and cleans up illegal dump sites. They design collection routes, provide onsite technical assistance and customer service, deliver and remove City-owned waste receptacles, and handle billing for drop boxes and commercial dumpsters.

Existing Capacity

The Collections Program serves more than 12,000 single-family residential customers, about 130 multi-family buildings, and roughly 1,510 (need revised numbers) commercial customers. Single-family residential waste is collected in carts. Olympia's Waste Resources Residential Collection Area map shows the utility's four residential collection service areas. Most waste from multifamily customers is collected in carts or dumpsters, and waste from commercial customers in carts, cans, dumpsters and drop boxes.

The map below shows the regional processing facilities the City uses for our materials. (update the map) ~~Yard debris~~ Mixed organic waste (yard debris, food scraps and food-soiled paper) and garbage are delivered by City vehicles to the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC) at Hawks Prairie. Thurston County owns the WARC and contracts with Allied Waste Services for transfer, transport and landfilling of garbage - and for the transfer, hauling and composting of yard debris. Currently, commingled recyclables are taken to a private transfer station near the County's WARC, and then to a regional Materials Recovery Facility in Tacoma, Washington.

Garbage and non-recyclable construction and demolition debris is compacted into large containers and hauled to a railhead in Centralia. This debris is transported by rail to the Roosevelt Regional Landfill in Klickitat County, which is operated by Rabanco, an Allied Waste subsidiary. Mixed organic waste (~~yard debris, food scraps and food-soiled paper~~) is hauled from the WARC to a composting facility ~~near Tenino~~. Some woody debris and organic waste is taken to industrial sites for burning as hog fuel for energy.

Future Facilities

Future needs for the City's Waste ReSources (solid waste) Utility will be met by adapting programs to an ever-evolving waste stream while considering disposal, transfer, recycling and composting capacities and technologies. The City depends on both public and private facilities to responsibly manage its waste: Olympia's garbage is delivered to the county-owned Hawks Prairie transfer station, then hauled to the privately-owned Roosevelt Regional Landfill in Klickitat County. By 2021, Thurston County's transfer station, paid for by customer fees, ~~will~~ *may* need to expand its capacity. However, landfill capacity at Roosevelt Regional is expected to last another 70 to 80 years.

The City also relies on a private transfer operation to deliver its commingled recycling to a regional sorting facility in Tacoma, Washington. A City-owned and operated transfer site could greatly improve the City's position in working with recycle sorting facilities and composting operations. ~~The following section needs major revisions. I'm not certain of the exact language at this time. Much of what was described is pretty old now and either no longer the issue, or the issue should be more about bigger picture. Capacity for composting and waste to energy continues to be an issue. Facilities struggle with odor and contamination. Many of the closer options have gone out of business resulting in waste needing to travel further. The capacity for composting and burning organic waste for energy was recently reduced after the closure of two nearby composting operations and a waste-to-energy plant in Grays Harbor. Meanwhile, the Silver Springs composting facility near Tenino is undergoing a major renovation to control odors. The City may need to consider alternatives if Silver Springs experiences continued problems managing odors and quality.~~ The City will need to plan for customer growth spurts as areas of its Urban Growth Areas are annexed.