

# Advancing Sustainability through the City of Gary Recycling Department

## Impact on Sustainability

- Municipal waste diversion programs help residents, businesses, and the local government conserve resources, reduce their environmental impact from waste, and stimulate economic activity.
- Especially when curbside recycling programs exist, recycling can be an engaging introduction to living more sustainably because it becomes an activity in which everyone can participate.
- Diverting municipal solid waste (MSW) from landfills helps reduce costs for garbage collection. Diverted waste can also be upcycled from an emissions source to a value-added product, such as compost for urban farms.
- Though dependent on many market variables, strong municipal recycling programs generate materials that have economic value as feedstocks for new products.

## Current Supportive Practices

- Weekly curbside recycling collection for single family homes and multi-unit buildings ( ≤ 4 units)
- Drop-off services for e-waste and tires M-F
- Paper shredding offered 3 times per week
- Yard waste collection twice per month
- Periodic advertising campaigns and inter-departmental competitions throughout the year to raise awareness around recycling and increase public and employee engagement

**Examples:** National Recycling Day at City Hall; Annual Shoe Donation Competition; Presence at public events such as Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day and Clean Water Celebration, among others.

## Mayor's Sustainability Metrics

- Tons of MSW collected annually
- Tons of recycling collected annually
- Cubic yards of yard waste collected and composted annually
- Cubic yards of city produced compost distributed annually (coordinate with GSD)
- Recycling rate of each municipal office
- Annual materials characterization of MSW and recycling col-

## Departmental Overview

- The Gary Recycling Department provides curbside and drop-off residential recycling services for municipal solid waste.
- Started in 1998, the department is funded by the Lake County Solid Waste Management District (LCSWMD).

## Priority Recommendations

### Short-term • Achievable in 1-2 years

**Lead by Example.** Increase recycling among COG departments.

- Periodically conduct department specific outreach and re-distribute bins to each department.
- Develop procedures to monitor & reward participation and ensure departments have the recycling bins needed to make the practice convenient.
- Work with EA/GU and LCSWMD to develop an efficient waste tire collection and recycling plan and re-evaluate current yard waste collection procedures.

**Expand and Incentivize Residential Recycling.**

- Rebuild the inventory of households participating in curbside recycling in order to be able to monitor participation.
- Conduct outreach in partnership with active community groups to expand outreach capacity. Leverage COG volunteers and block clubs to help with outreach to residents, businesses, and community organizations. Start small by focusing on one district or neighborhood at a time.
- Take advantage of the upcoming expiration of the waste hauler contract to consider alternative waste collection structures, such as PAYT, that will incentivize recycling/waste reduction.

**Longer-term • Undertake after increasing effectiveness of current programs**

**Engage the private sector. Seek opportunities to build circular economies.**

- Work with stores that provide single use bags to offer reusable bags and recycling stations at the store.
- Investigate partnerships with incoming industries, like Fulcrum BioEnergy, for whom MSW could be a resource.
- Consider creating an education & investment fund (e.g. \$1 per month per household)

**Recommendations continued on back**

## Resources

- **Other Departments/Divisions:** Gary Department of Environmental Affairs & Green Urbanism, Gary Sanitary District, Redevelopment, Mayor's Office of Constituent Services
- Lake County Solid Waste Management District
- *Electronic Resources*
- [Municipal Measurement Program \(MMP\)](#)
- [EPA Managing and Transforming Waste Directory](#)
- [Indiana Recycling Coalition](#)
- [PAYT for Gary](#)

# Advancing Sustainability through the City of Gary Recycling Department

## Recommendations

### Short-term • Achievable in 1-2 years

**Lead by Example.** Strengthen internal support for recycling programs and increase recycling among COG departments.

- Periodically host a recycling workshop for each department and re-distribute bins to each department.
- Develop inventory procedures for municipal recycling participation to ensure departments have the recycling bins needed to make the practice convenient.
- Participate in the new Municipal Measurement Program (MMP), developed by the Recycling Partnership and Re-TRAC. MMP provides municipalities with a free materials management program analysis and planning tool.
- Work towards having all city events to meet zero waste standards.

### Coordinate Waste Minimization Efforts

Establish an interdepartmental team that maintains knowledge of all municipal endeavors to reduce operational waste, MSW, C&D waste, etc. and collectively works to plan and implement supporting policies and programs.

Work with EA/GU to develop an efficient waste tire collection and recycling plan.

### Expand and Incentivize Residential Recycling

• Rebuild the inventory of households participating in curbside recycling in order to be able to monitor and manage participation. With a concerted effort this could be done over a few months. A group of dedicated volunteers or temporary paid team could help rebuild the residential recycling inventory.

- Partner with MOCS to conduct education and outreach to block clubs.
- Conduct outreach in partnership with community groups to expand outreach capacity. Leverage COG volunteers and partners to help with public outreach to residents, businesses, and community organizations. Start small by focusing on one district or neighborhood at a time.

### • Take advantage of contractor educational program opportunities offered by the waste hauler contract.

• Take advantage of the upcoming expiration of the waste hauler contract (May 1, 2020) to consider alternative waste collection structures that will incentivize recycling/waste reduction. Options could include implementing a variable rate garbage program and requiring the hauler to distribute educational materials developed by the city.

### Adopt Supportive Policies

- Adopt an operational policy that requires all city events to meet zero waste standards.
- Adopt a recycling ordinance that requires apartment buildings to offer recycling services and educational materials to their tenants.

- Adopt a construction and demolition waste recycling ordinance.

Existing Recycling Department programs are already in place to support the adoption and implementation of the following types of ordinances:

Cardboard recycling ordinance (disposal ban)

Electronic recycling ordinance (disposal ban)

*State preemption law prevents local IN governments from taxing or otherwise prohibiting single use packaging/plastic bags.*

### Medium-term • Achievable in 2-5 years

- Work with EA/GU, GSD, and LCSWMD re-evaluate current yard waste collection procedures.
- Promote public space recycling. Replace or add public waste receptacles around municipal buildings and the city that include a partition for recyclable materials. Start with the high traffic areas such as transit center, parks, and main thoroughfares.
- Consider creating an education & investment fund (The City of Fort Collins suggested \$1 per month per household)

### Longer-term • Ambitious and more difficult to achieve in the near term due to cost, political will, or lack of existing support systems

#### Engage the Commercial Sector

Focus efforts on increasing the effectiveness of current programs first. Eventually, work toward engaging the commercial and industrial sectors in the city's waste reduction efforts.

- Publicly recognize businesses that demonstrate sustainable materials management practices. Work with EA/GU to incorporate commercial recycling into a green business challenge or certification program. Engage businesses in voluntary recycling programs that offer public recognition as a precursor to recycling ordinances. Consider separate stream recycling, which can reduce contamination, but requires significant public education efforts and logistic changes.
- Seek new ways to decrease waste generated by the population and find productive uses for discarded materials
- Develop a residential food waste diversion program. Work with the city's hauler to do a waste characterization study to evaluate diversion potential of compostable materials currently being landfilled.
- Investigate partnerships with incoming industries, like Fulcrum BioEnergy, for whom MSW could be a resource.
- Work with grocery stores and other stores that provide single use bags to offer reusable bags and recycling stations at the store.
- Flag existing businesses in the city's business inventory that process industrial materials to maintain a list of potential partners for sustainable materials management programs.
- Develop an urban wood program to create a value added product from removed trees. Look to The Urban Wood Network and existing