# City of Novi:
# Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating Compost Drop-Off Programs



Atika Gupta
University of Michigan
MPH/MBA ‘28

CITY OF NOVI
America 250

CATALYST COMMUNITIES

GRAHAM SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

EGLE
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY

# Acknowledgements


- **Mentors**: Rebecca Runkel (Project Engineer, City of Novi) and Matt Heintz (Council Member, City of Novi)
- **Technical Advisor**: Logan Applebee (Solid Waste Planner, HDR)
- **Graham Sustainability Institute/CLC Staff**: Sarah Lee, Alex Haddad, Fatimah Bolhassan
- **Community Members**: Abby Morris (Washtenaw County), Alexis Weinberg (Sterling Heights), Angela Fox (ICLEI), Aria McElroy (Detroit), Aubree Carlisle (EGLE), Chris Broadbent (Kalamazoo), Devan Dodge-Frye (Royal Oak), Emma Dillman (Kent County), Harley Mordarski (Madison Heights), Jennifer VanHorssen (Grand Rapids), John Selmi (Canton Township), Linda Applebee (Greater Laingsburg Recyclers), Lori Thomas (Lansing), Mallory Lawson (Ann Arbor), Mike Csapo (RRRASOC), Nicole Berg (University of Michigan), Sean Ballantine (Madison Heights), Souzan Yousif (Southfield), Stephanie Osborn (Make Food Not Waste), Tepfirah Rushdan (Detroit)
- **My Fellow Fellows**







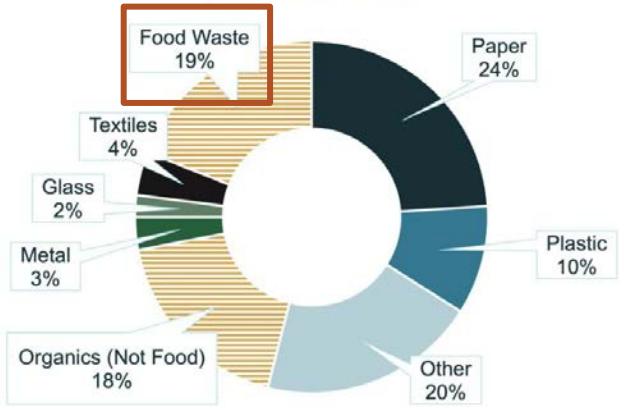
## Where our waste comes from:

**43%**
homes

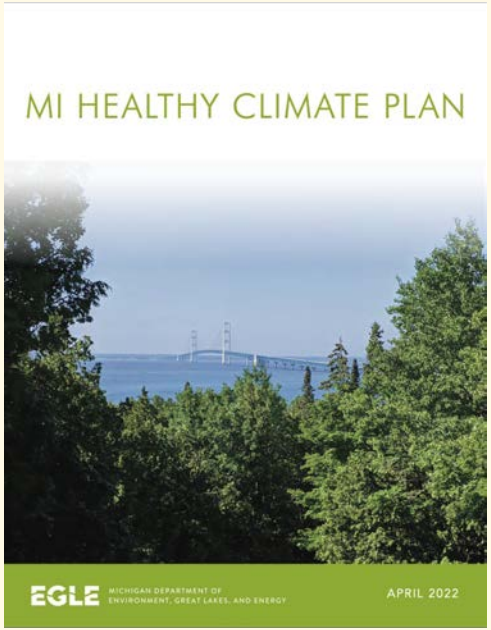
**40%**
restaurants, grocery stores, food service companies

**16%**
farms

**2%**
manufacturers



# Food waste diversion is embedded in Michigan's long-term strategy




**New Materials Management Plans have officially been called for**

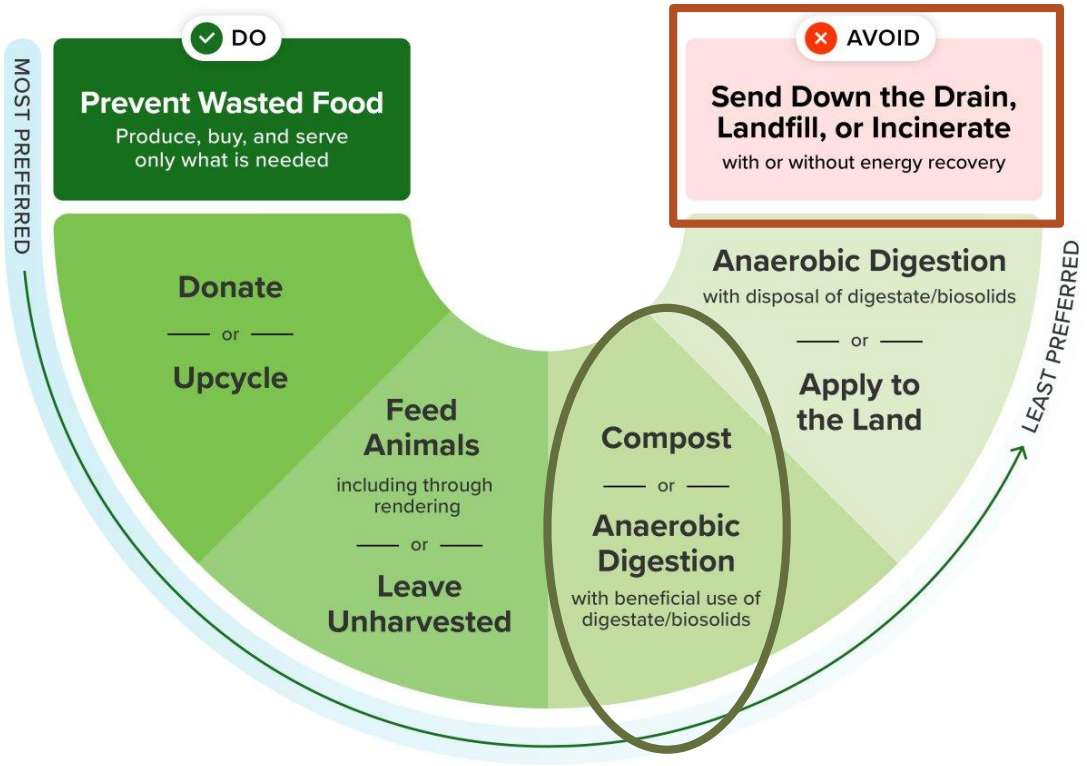
New Materials Management Plans are in the approval and development process. The new law establishes statewide recycling goals and standards, and the Materials Management Plans will identify an implementation strategy to meet those goals.

Current Solid Waste Management Plans will remain in effect until a new Materials Management Plan is approved.



# Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food




December 2025

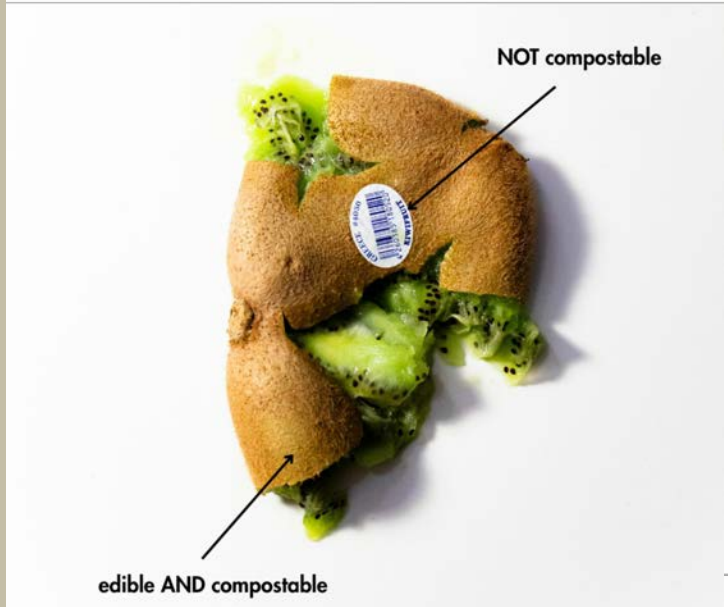
# City of Novi's Drop-Off Program

- Newly formed Environmental Sustainability Committee launched pilot in June 2026
- No dedicated sustainability team; required outside staff support
- Low-barrier-to-entry program
- Motivations:
  - Four pillars
  - First initiative
  - Resident experience



ATIKA GUPTA
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, MPH/MBA '28

# Michigan: Compost Drop-Off Program Guide




## How to Use This Guide

This guide is intended for municipal staff, public works employees, solid waste coordinators, local government leaders, and community partners supporting the implementation of compost* drop-off programs.

- ***Exploring a compost drop-off program?*** Begin with Introduction and Planning Considerations sections to understand the benefits, assess municipal infrastructure, and build organizational support.
- ***Designing a program?*** Refer to Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 to guide program design, implementation, and evaluation.
- ***Looking for adaptable tools?*** Refer to the Appendices for registration form questions, pre- and post- surveys, social media and communications tools, funding opportunities, and additional resources.
- ***Need to get to the Table of Contents?*** Click on any page number (excluding references) to return.







*Referred to as a compost drop-off program throughout this guide. Alternative names include food scrap or food waste drop-off program. *See Choose a Program Name.*

**40% of the U.S. food supply goes to waste each year.**[5,13,14]




The average Michigander spends $759/yr on food they don't eat.[15]

43% of all food waste generated comes from households.[5]



Michigan landfills more than 2 billion pounds of food a year.[16]

1.4 billion is edible.[16]

**When food scraps are viewed as resources, the value of investing in food waste reduction programs is clear.**

## Compost Drop-Off Programs

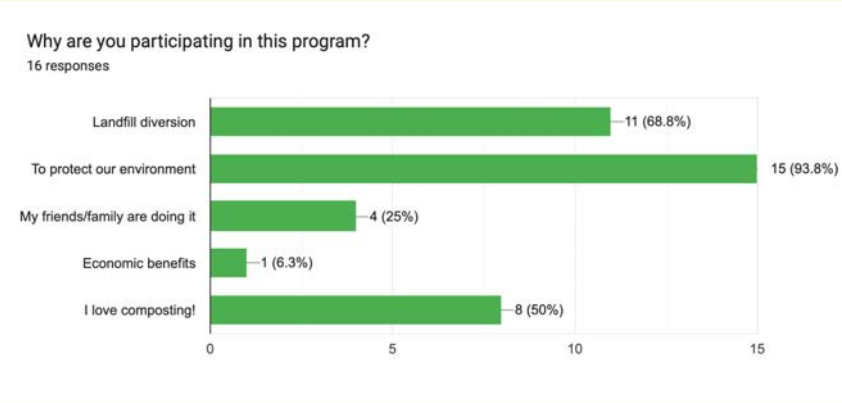
aka food scraps/food waste drop-off programs

# Considerations

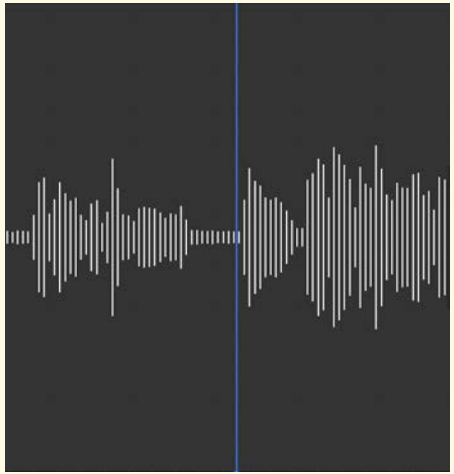
**Phase 1: Preparing to Launch Your Program**

**Phase 2: Launching Your Program**

**Phase 3: Evaluating and Expanding Your Program**




## Surveys



## Semi-structured interviews



## Site visits

**Seek mutually beneficial partnerships.** Successful partnerships are built on shared value. As you identify potential partners, consider how the collaboration can benefit both the municipality and the organization, whether through increased community visibility, filling operational gaps, or improving data collection.

Partnerships with Make Food Not Waste have supported resident education and community outreach (Southfield), BioBag has helped to reduce contamination (Southfield), and Rego, an AI-powered software/platform, has helped to more accurately measure diverted food waste (Kalamazoo).

**City of Novi Pre-Survey Responses**

"Thank you for starting this"

"I would love this program be available city wide and collection be done biweekly if not weekly"

"I was using Farmington's bins but happy to see Novi is finally getting on board with this!"

"Thank you for doing this! We compost in tumbler and garden beds, but I hope this program gets support. If gaining traction, one bin for each neighborhood would be nice (so that people aren't driving and causing greenhouse gases as much)."

"Please make it permanent."




Washtenaw County countertop bin giveaway. (Source: Atika Gupta)


MyGREEN MICHIGAN
ACCEPTABLE COMPOSTABLE MATERIALS
NON-ACCEPTABLE MATERIALS
City of Novi Compost Drop Off Site
For Information Please Call
248-347-0478
COMPOSTABLE

# Takeaways and Call to Action



- 40% of the U.S. food supply goes to waste each year.
- Successful programs explain the *why* and solve for the *what* and *how*.
- Community knowledge and resource sharing are key.
- Through local action, we can achieve collective impact.

**Call to Action: Share this guide with your networks, especially those interested in starting drop-off programs!**

*(Will be available on the CLCF website in ~1-2 months)*

# Questions?

This material is based upon work supported by the Department of Energy and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) under Award Number EE0008653. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Government or any agency thereof. Find this document and more about the CLC Fellowship that supported this project at graham.umich.edu/clcf.

# References


Carlisle A, Todd D, Salzman S. Food Waste Reduction in Materials Management Planning and Beyond. July 30, 2026.

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. (n.d.). *Materials management planning*. State of Michigan. https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/materials-management/solid-waste/planning

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. (2022). *MI Healthy Climate Plan*. State of Michigan. https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/climate-and-energy/mi-healthy-climate-plan

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, & Make Food Not Waste. (2023). *Michigan Food Waste Roadmap*. State of Michigan. https://www.michigan.gov/egle/-/media/Project/Websites/egle/Documents/Programs/MMD/Pollution-Prevention/Food-Waste-Reduction/Michigan-Food-Waste-Roadmap.pdf

Michigan Sustainable Business Forum. (2024). *2024 Economic Impact Potential and Characterization of Municipal Solid Waste in Michigan*. Michigan Sustainable Business Forum.

NCSL. *Fighting Food Waste*. 2022. https://www.ncsl.org/agriculture-and-rural-development/fighting-food-waste

Recycle Track Systems. (2026). *Food Waste in America in 2026: Statistics and Facts*. RTS.

ReFED. (2026). *Progress on the Plate: 2026 ReFED U.S. Food Waste Report*. ReFED.

# References


Simran Parwani. *Michigan Wasted 2.8 Million Tons of Food In 2022*. Axios Detroit; 2024. https://www.axios.com/local/detroit/2024/01/02/food-waste-michigan

The Nutrition Source. *Food Waste*. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; 2017. https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/sustainability/food-waste/

Trilling D. *Methane Sensors Are Finding Dangerous Pollutants in Low-Income Neighborhoods - The Salata Institute*. 2024. https://salatainstitute.harvard.edu/methane-sensors-are-finding-dangerous-pollutants-in-poor-neighborhoods/

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2026). *Wasted Food Scale*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/wasted-food-scale

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *United States 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal*. 2025. https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/united-states-2030-food-loss-and-waste-reduction-goal