



# Executive Summary

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An international leader in solid waste management for decades, Seattle has advanced a zero-waste vision thanks to public support for environmentally focused programs and thoughtful planning. Today, Seattle’s vision of a zero waste future builds toward an inclusive and circular economy, where all materials with value are reused or recycled, and nothing is wasted. To advance toward zero waste, Seattle looks at the whole life cycle of materials to eliminate waste and toxins, prevent pollution, reduce carbon emissions, and conserve natural resources.

Seattle’s life cycle view of materials reflects industrywide shifts toward solid waste management approaches focused on preventing waste in the first place. We get closer to zero waste by producing and using less. That is why Seattle’s *2022 Solid Waste Plan Update: Moving Upstream to Zero Waste (2022 Plan Update)* prioritizes waste prevention in solid waste system planning. As part of our emphasis on waste prevention, Seattle will work to address the root causes of waste to reduce impacts on health and the environment.

Though Seattle plans for a zero-waste future in which resources with value stay out of the landfill, we will have to continue to manage some garbage, recycling, and organic materials. The *2022 Plan Update* describes how Seattle will manage and finance waste management services and facilities over the next six years, and projects system management needs over 20 years.

The *2022 Plan Update*:

- Highlights historic solid waste trends, including progress toward goals, and details solid waste system projections
- Describes how Seattle advances waste prevention and diversion from landfill through policy, customer outreach and education, investments in the circular economy, and enforcement of solid waste rules, regulations, and contracts
- Describes the solid waste system and how Seattle provides essential solid waste management services to 1.4 million people in the City
- Recommends 39 actions for Seattle to continue innovating in solid waste management



*The zero waste component of Seattle Public Utilities’ vision (Source: 2021–2026 SPU Strategic Business Plan)*

- Suggests creating new goals consistent with Seattle's growing emphasis on reducing waste at the source

The *2022 Plan Update* reflects goal areas and guiding principles that are at the center of Seattle's work:

- Understanding and responding to customers and community
- Ensuring affordability and accountability
- Addressing risk and resilience
- Enhancing equity and empowerment
- Delivering service and safety

With the *2022 Plan Update*, Seattle aligns its waste-related goals not only with the City Council-adopted [SPU Strategic Business Plan \(2021-2026\)](#), but also with the City's sustainability and climate goals in the [Climate Action Plan \(2013\)](#), as well as the overarching vision of a [Washington State's Solid and Hazardous Waste Plan - "Moving Washington Beyond Waste and Toxics" \(2021\)](#).<sup>1</sup>

Working alongside partners in the community and in the solid waste industry, Seattle is leading the way to zero waste and toward a healthier, more sustainable, and inclusive way of managing resources.

## Recommendations

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The table on the following page lists the 39 recommendations described in the *2022 Plan Update*. Recommendations cover either a short-term planning period within the next five years, or a long-term planning period of five or more years.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SPU/AboutUs/SBP\\_2021-2026.pdf](https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SPU/AboutUs/SBP_2021-2026.pdf)  
[http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Environment/ClimateChange/2013\\_CAP\\_20130612.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Environment/ClimateChange/2013_CAP_20130612.pdf)  
<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/1504019.pdf>

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| Recommendation   | Short-Term (S) / Long-Term (L) | Chapter and Page |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Overarching</b>   |                                |                  |
| Lead with race and incorporate racial justice in solid waste programs, education, and outreach in support of SPU’s commitment to providing racially equitable, inclusive, and culturally competent services. | S                              | 1.24             |
| <b>Maximizing and Measuring Impact</b>   |                                |                  |
| Keep developing overarching goals consistent with waste prevention and reduction activities instead of continuing to emphasize recycling rate goals focused on diversion.                                    | S                              | 2.13             |
| Expand solid waste data analytics, metrics, and evaluation to improve assessment of services and operations.   | S                              | 2.23             |
| <b>Waste Prevention and Reuse</b>  |                                |                  |
| Prioritize and support waste prevention with research, data analysis, and metrics.   | S                              | 4.6              |
| Increase community awareness of waste prevention through coordinated outreach.   | S                              | 4.7              |
| Expand food waste prevention to reduce the amount of wasted food.  | S                              | 4.17             |
| Expand efforts to rescue safe, edible food from the waste stream by getting it to those that need it most.   | S                              | 4.18             |
| Reduce single-use items and promote durable or reusable alternatives.  | S                              | 4.30             |
| Expand support for community organizations working to prevent waste.   | S                              | 4.34             |
| Expand support of the City’s sustainable and green purchasing policies.  | S                              | 4.42             |
| Explore and expand market opportunities for reused material and repair services.   | S                              | 4.46             |
| Promote and support waste prevention for textiles and monitor emerging textiles recycling technologies.  | L                              | 4.47             |
| <b>Recycling and Composting Policy and Markets</b>   |                                |                  |
| Advocate for responsible recycling policies recommended by the Responsible Recycling Task Force.   | S                              | 5.14             |
| Continue and expand efforts to reduce the amount of contamination, or non-recyclable material, in the recycling and food and yard waste.   | S                              | 5.14             |
| Support market and infrastructure development for recycling.   | S                              | 5.18             |
| Continue to explore and implement product stewardship policies and programs that require producers, manufacturers, and/or retailers to take back and recycle the products they sell.                         | S                              | 5.35             |
| Continue to support and expand industry-led take-back of plastic wrap and bags.  | S                              | 5.36             |
| Require all single-use food service packaging to be compostable and harmonize acceptance standards for compostable products.   | S                              | 5.40             |
| Continue to refine and develop strategies to keep more food waste and compostable paper out of the garbage.  | S                              | 5.41             |
| Continue to support market development for compost products.   | S                              | 5.41             |
| Assess options for diaper and pet waste recovery.  | L                              | 5.42             |

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| Recommendation   | Short-Term (S) / Long-Term (L) | Chapter and Page |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Solid Waste Handling, Collection, and Removal</b>   |                                |                  |
| Conduct research to inform future collection, processing, and disposal contracts.  | L                              | 6.22             |
| Adopt collection infrastructure requirements in new multifamily construction to ensure tenants have sufficient solid waste services and convenient access to solid waste containers. | S                              | 6.23             |
| Explore collection infrastructure requirements for new construction of townhomes and live-work units.  | S                              | 6.24             |
| Improve alley and public right-of-way access for collection vehicles.  | S                              | 6.24             |
| Expand the Clean City education campaign to increase awareness of the City’s litter and cleanup programs.  | L                              | 6.30             |
| <b>Solid Waste Transfer, Processing, Disposal, and Emergency Management</b>  |                                |                  |
| Continue to explore opportunities for adaptive reuse of historic landfills, including opportunities to control costs at closed landfills and to bring the land into productive use.  | S                              | 7.25             |
| <b>Construction and Demolition Debris</b>  |                                |                  |
| Expand construction and demolition debris industry outreach and education.   | S                              | 8.7              |
| Improve enforcement of and incentives for compliance with C&D system rules.  | S                              | 8.7              |
| Promote salvage and deconstruction for reusable building materials.  | S                              | 8.9              |
| Require deconstruction (instead of demolition) for select project sizes and/or project types to increase C&D debris recovery.  | S                              | 8.9              |
| Expand recycling market development for C&D debris to support diversion of these materials from landfill.  | S                              | 8.21             |
| Enhance diversion of construction and demolition debris at transfer stations.  | S                              | 8.21             |
| <b>Outreach, Education, Code Enforcement, and Compliance Support</b>   |                                |                  |
| Continue and expand use of large, color-coordinated, multilingual, and icon-based container decals to encourage proper sorting of waste.   | S                              | 9.11             |
| Continue and expand use of available metrics to inform outreach strategy and measure outcomes.   | S                              | 9.19             |
| Continue participating in the regional Communication Consortium to unify solid waste messaging between Seattle and King County municipalities.                                       | S                              | 9.20             |
| Expand waste prevention and diversion outreach and education in schools.   | S                              | 9.21             |
| Expand efforts to increase compliance with solid waste code and requirements across customer sectors.  | S                              | 9.30             |
| <b>Administration and Financing of the Solid Waste System</b>  |                                |                  |
| Continue to regularly review rates to ensure they provide incentives for program success, are set equitably, and balance affordability and program costs.                            | L                              | 10.16            |