



2021 Waste Prevention & Recycling Report

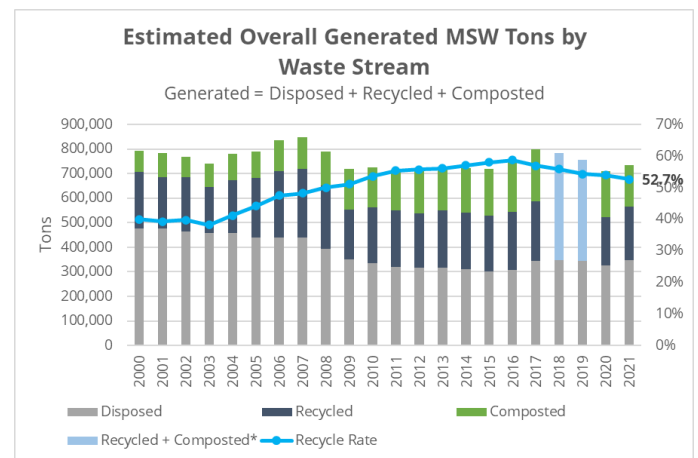
Introduction

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) reports annually to Seattle City Council on the previous year's progress toward the City's solid waste goals, per Resolution 30990 (2007). The annual *Waste Prevention & Recycling Report* highlights key waste generation, disposal, recycling trends, and accomplishments in waste prevention, extended producer responsibility (EPR), product stewardship, and recycling. SPU's Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) comments on the annual report, which is due to City Council September 9, 2022. SWAC's comments appear in a letter to City Council at the end of this report. Highlights of the previous year's progress appear below, with additional details starting on page 3.

Key results

In the second year of the global pandemic, Seattle saw the economy start to recover as COVID-19 vaccines became widely distributed, capacity restrictions on all businesses were lifted, and workers began to return to their worksites. Seattle's *2021 Waste Prevention & Recycling Report* indicates that increased economic activity after a year of quarantine impacted municipal solid waste (MSW) and construction and demolition (C&D) debris levels across the City. 2021 highlights:

- **Overall MSW generation ticked upwards (+3.3%), spurred by a rebounding commercial sector.** As restrictions on businesses relaxed, the commercial sector regained its status as the largest MSW-generating customer sector. Waste generation grew the most in the commercial sector—27,000 tons (+9.5%) from 2020 to 2021—primarily due to increased commercial recycling.
- **MSW diversion increased but not to the extent of MSW disposal.** Spurred by commercial sector activity, recycling grew by 22,000 tons (+11.4%), while composting declined 19,000 tons (-10.2%) overall. Reductions in single-family composting accounted for most of the decline, suggesting that residents spent less time on yardwork in 2021. However, the increase in diversion (3,000 tons or +0.8%) fell far short of the growth in landfilled tons.

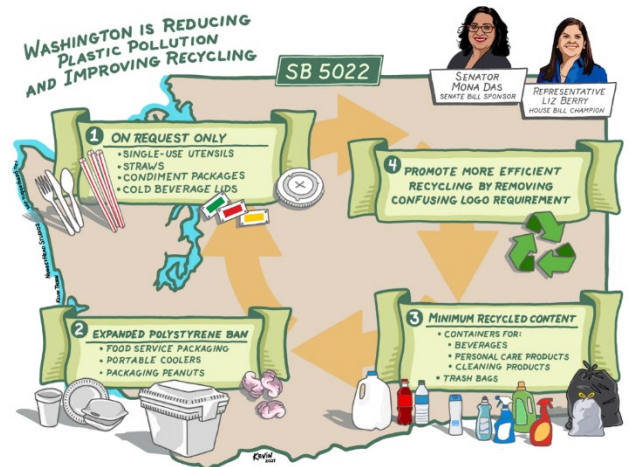
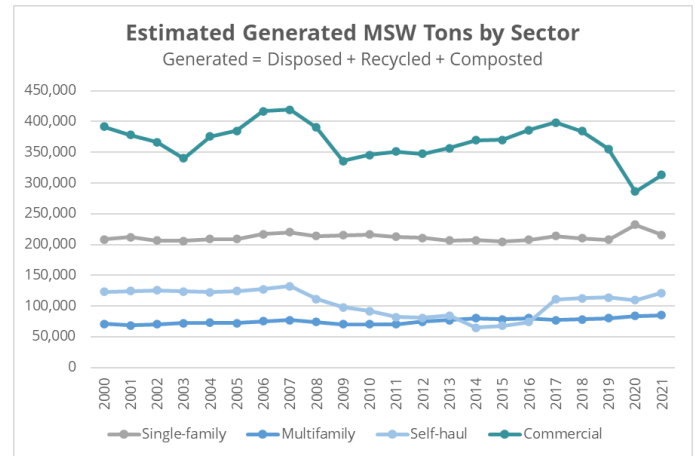


Municipal solid waste (MSW) includes all the garbage, composting, and recyclables that Seattle customers set out for collection or haul to a City transfer station. It includes some materials and items that need special handling, such as old refrigerators and tires.

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- **Landfilled MSW reached a 12-year high mark of 348,000 tons.** Customers landfilled 20,000 more tons (+6.2%) in 2021 than in 2020. Those who “self-hauled” material to the transfer stations contributed more than half of the increase (57.4%) in disposed waste. With gains in landfilled tons far outweighing the increase in MSW diversion, the overall recycling rate dropped slightly to 52.7%.
- **After reaching a high point in 2020, construction and demolition (C&D) debris generation declined substantially.** C&D debris generation decreased 109,000 tons (-19.5%), possibly due to an 8.9% decline in demolition permits. Decreases in C&D debris recycling (-64,000 tons) accounted for 58.7% of the decline.
- **Despite the pandemic, SPU helped pass statewide legislation that will help recycling and reduce plastic waste and pollution.** The new laws created under Senate Bill 5022 aim to reduce use of single-use food service items, ban certain expanded polystyrene products, set minimum recycled content requirements for some plastic items, and remove certain recycling labeling requirements that are confusing to consumers.



Graphic courtesy of Washington State Senator Mona Das

Moving upstream to waste prevention

In SPU's vision of a zero-waste future, all resources have value, and we strive to waste nothing. Striving for zero waste means we look at the whole life cycle of materials so we can eliminate waste and toxic materials, prevent pollution and reduce carbon emissions, encourage product durability and reusability, conserve natural resources, and ultimately build a circular and inclusive economy.

In practice, this means building on a legacy of solid waste leadership, such as world-class recycling programs, and going further to support and promote policies and practices that *prevent* waste and *increase* waste diversion to reduce waste-based carbon pollution as fast as possible. To advance on the zero-waste vision, SPU is updating its comprehensive solid waste management plan, [Seattle's 2022 Solid Waste Plan Update: Moving Upstream to Zero Waste](#), which will help prioritize waste prevention activities and measure their success, reducing the emphasis on the recycling rate as the key measure of solid waste outcomes in the City. **We get closer to zero waste by producing and using less, not by recycling more.**

An important part of SPU's climate change work, waste prevention includes actions such as designing products and systems for reuse and repair, sharing, donating, or re-selling items so others can use them, buying and using less, making and buying products that last longer, or advocating for legislation that prohibits use of certain materials.

Result details

Estimated overall MSW

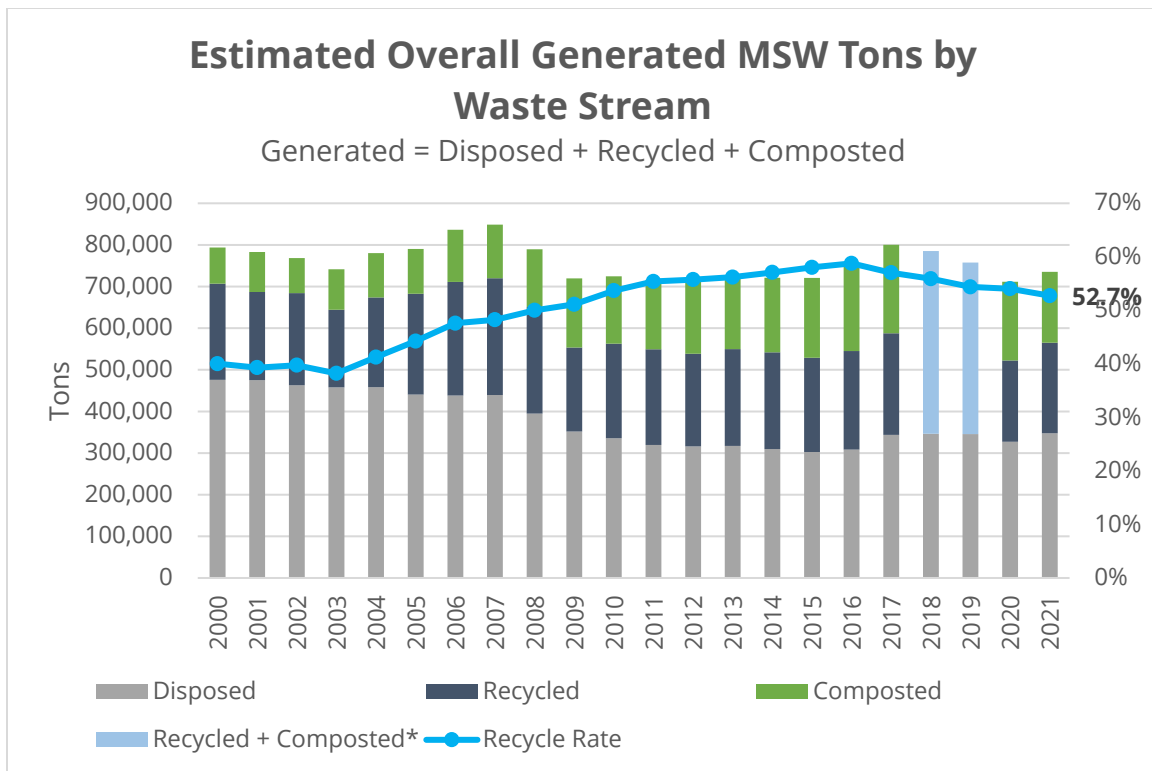
- As Seattle emerged from quarantine, disposal reached a 12-year high of about 348,000 tons, with customers self-hauling material to the transfer stations contributing more than half of the increase (57.4%).
- Recycling also increased by more than 22,000 tons or 11.4% overall, driven by commercial sector activity.
- At the same time, composting declined by more than 19,000 tons, or 10.2% overall, with single-family households responsible for two-thirds (66.6%) of the decline.
- With losses in composted tons mostly offsetting gains in recycled tons and landfilled waste up, the overall recycling rate fell to 52.7%.

About the results

- Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding
- The **recycle rate** is the estimated percentage of municipal solid waste (MSW) diverted from landfill by recycling, composting, and reuse
- To estimate some of the commercial and construction and demolition (C&D) debris tonnages, SPU relies on the self-reporting of commercial and C&D debris entities

Estimated Overall MSW Tons, 2000-2021

Year	Generated	Disposed	Recycled	Composted	Recycled + Composted	Recycle Rate
2000	793,842	476,132	230,939	86,771	317,710	40.0%
2001	782,974	475,270	211,591	96,113	307,704	39.3%
2002	768,462	462,996	221,381	84,085	305,466	39.8%
2003	741,337	458,011	186,439	96,888	283,326	38.2%
2004	780,346	458,405	215,369	106,572	321,941	41.3%
2005	790,456	440,694	241,896	107,867	349,763	44.2%
2006	836,499	438,381	272,578	125,540	398,118	47.6%
2007	848,759	439,407	280,515	128,838	409,353	48.2%
2008	789,688	394,828	255,842	139,017	394,860	50.0%
2009	719,424	351,689	201,814	165,921	367,735	51.1%
2010	724,469	335,570	227,204	161,694	388,898	53.7%
2011	715,996	319,341	229,828	166,826	396,655	55.4%
2012	713,821	315,983	222,713	175,125	397,838	55.7%
2013	724,385	317,259	232,281	174,845	407,126	56.2%
2014	721,269	309,515	232,587	179,168	411,754	57.1%
2015	720,705	302,467	226,337	191,901	418,238	58.0%
2016	748,051	308,379	236,555	203,118	439,672	58.8%
2017	800,380	343,922	243,936	212,522	456,458	57.0%
2018	785,223	346,322	N/A	N/A	438,902*	55.9%
2019	757,466	345,559	N/A	N/A	411,907*	54.4%
2020	711,619	327,114	195,220	189,285	384,505	54.0%
2021	735,182	347,549	217,563	170,070	387,634	52.7%



*SPU used an econometric regression analysis to estimate the open market portion of commercial diversion (recycled + composted) overall in 2018 and 2019 due to poor response rates of mandatory recycler reporting (Seattle Municipal Code 6.250). As such, a breakdown of recycled versus composted tonnage is not available for those years.

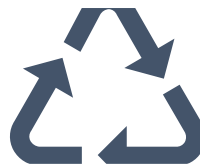
Estimated commercial MSW



43% of generated waste*



33% of disposed waste



62% of recycled waste



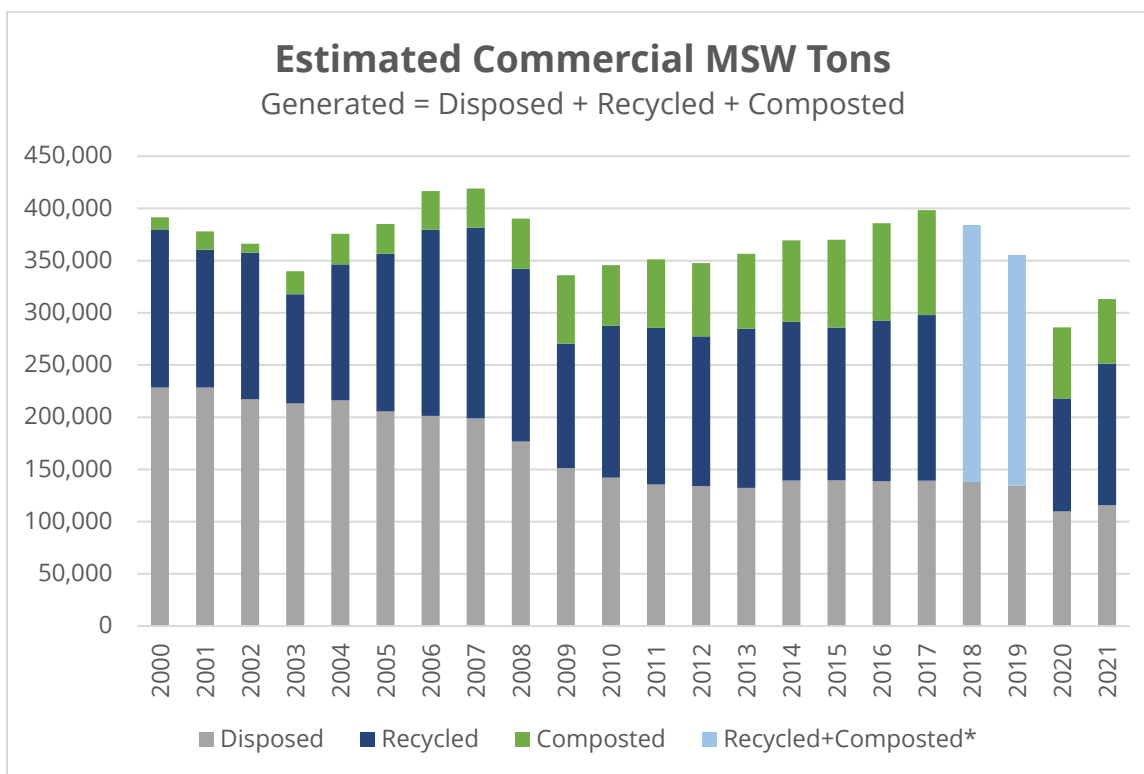
36% of composted waste

*This graphic has been designed using resources from Flaticon.com

- After declining 20% (69,000 tons) from 2019 to 2020, commercial sector waste generation grew nearly 9.5% (27,000 tons) last year. Recycling bolstered the increase for this sector.
- Still, the commercial sector has not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Commercial generation comprised 42.6% of MSW generation overall in 2021, down from 46.9% in 2019.
- Commercial disposal increased about 6% (6,000 tons) after reaching an all-time low in 2020 but remained lower than residential disposal for the second straight year.

Estimated Commercial MSW Tons, 2000-2021

Year	Generated	Disposed	Recycled	Composted	Recycled + Composted	Recycle Rate
2000	391,406	228,417	150,949	12,040	162,989	41.6%
2001	377,927	228,405	132,095	17,427	149,522	39.6%
2002	366,224	217,195	140,475	8,554	149,029	40.7%
2003	339,844	213,247	104,450	22,147	126,597	37.3%
2004	375,739	216,112	130,345	29,282	159,627	42.5%
2005	385,093	205,637	150,817	28,639	179,456	46.6%
2006	416,564	201,231	178,309	37,023	215,333	51.7%
2007	418,979	198,968	182,694	37,317	220,011	52.5%
2008	390,267	176,774	165,432	48,060	213,493	54.7%
2009	335,992	151,398	119,051	65,542	184,593	54.9%
2010	345,692	142,180	145,450	58,061	203,511	58.9%
2011	351,214	135,536	150,102	65,576	215,678	61.4%
2012	347,673	134,089	143,296	70,288	213,584	61.4%
2013	356,480	132,401	152,340	71,739	224,079	62.9%
2014	369,407	139,457	151,982	77,967	229,950	62.2%
2015	370,037	139,557	146,256	84,224	230,480	62.3%
2016	385,846	138,804	153,871	93,171	247,042	64.0%
2017	398,422	139,317	158,480	100,626	259,105	65.0%
2018	384,139	138,009	N/A	N/A	246,130*	64.1%
2019	355,453	134,686	N/A	N/A	220,767*	62.1%
2020	286,036	109,891	108,190	67,955	176,145	61.6%
2021	313,181	115,869	135,451	61,862	197,313	63.0%



*SPU used an econometric regression analysis to estimate the open market portion of commercial diversion (recycled + composted) overall in 2018 and 2019 due to poor response rates of mandatory recycler reporting (Seattle Municipal Code 6.250). As such, a breakdown of recycled versus composted tonnage is not available for those years.

Self-haul MSW



17% of generated waste*



31% of disposed waste



3% of recycled waste



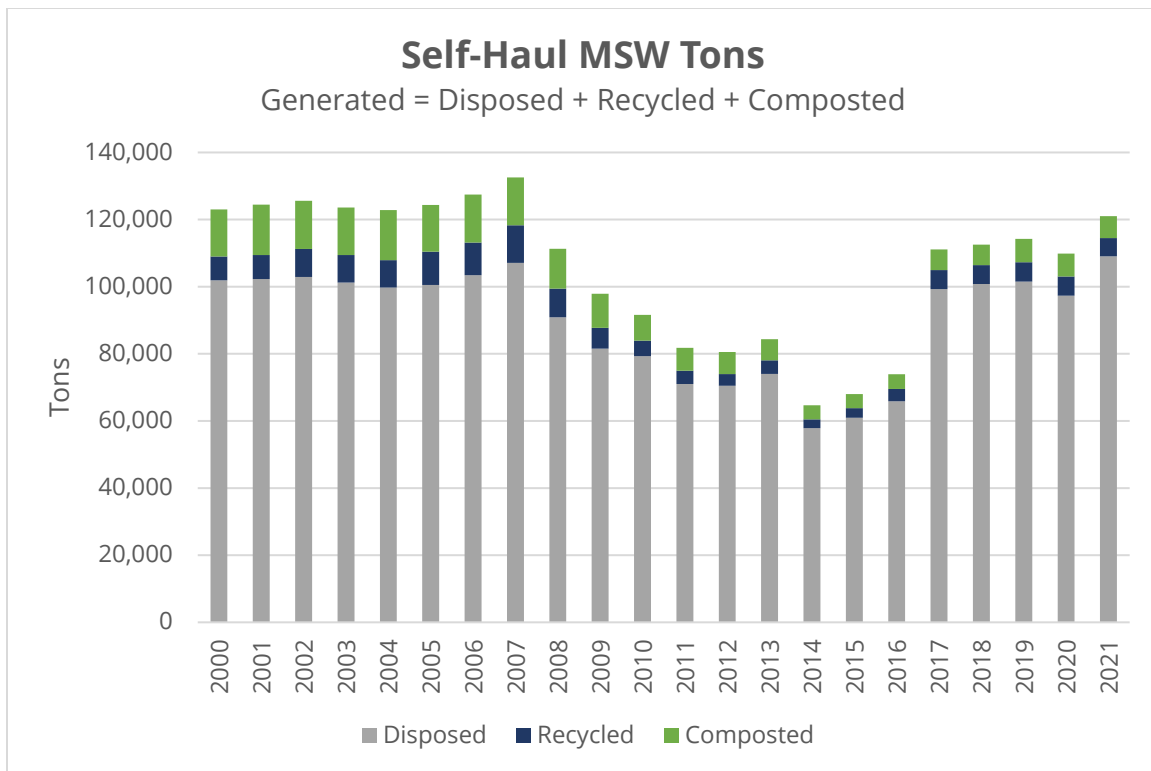
4% of composted waste

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- In the second year of the pandemic, the amount of material self-hauled to the transfer stations by a mix of residential and nonresidential (e.g., businesses, non-profits, and institutions) customers increased 11,000 tons (+10.2%) to 121,000 tons. About 90% of that waste went to landfill.
- In fact, disposed tons of waste “self-hauled” directly to the City’s two transfer stations reached a 22-year all-time high. Disposal at the transfer stations has been on an upward trajectory since 2015, except for 2020 when the transfer stations temporarily reduced hours due to COVID-19.

Self-haul MSW Tons, 2000-2021

Year	Generated	Disposed	Recycled	Composted	Recycled + Composted	Recycle Rate
2000	123,024	101,883	7,109	14,032	21,141	17.2%
2001	124,453	102,305	7,114	15,034	22,148	17.8%
2002	125,620	102,891	8,363	14,366	22,729	18.1%
2003	123,597	101,232	8,209	14,156	22,365	18.1%
2004	122,835	99,766	8,164	14,905	23,069	18.8%
2005	124,364	100,499	9,940	13,925	23,865	19.2%
2006	127,444	103,429	9,738	14,277	24,015	18.8%
2007	132,545	107,098	11,200	14,247	25,447	19.2%
2008	111,309	90,894	8,522	11,893	20,415	18.3%
2009	97,893	81,565	6,179	10,149	16,328	16.7%
2010	91,618	79,293	4,643	7,682	12,325	13.5%
2011	81,776	71,033	3,949	6,794	10,743	13.1%
2012	80,568	70,474	3,501	6,593	10,094	12.5%
2013	84,341	74,019	4,032	6,290	10,322	12.2%
2014	64,681	57,847	2,635	4,199	6,834	10.6%
2015	67,993	60,938	2,888	4,167	7,055	10.4%
2016	73,923	65,840	3,693	4,390	8,083	10.9%
2017	111,099	99,290	5,681	6,127	11,808	10.6%
2018	112,550	100,827	5,595	6,127	11,723	10.4%
2019	114,234	101,506	5,771	6,957	12,728	11.1%
2020	109,844	97,320	5,744	6,780	12,524	11.4%
2021	121,007	109,046	5,448	6,513	11,961	9.9%



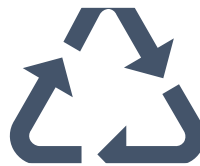
Single-family MSW



29% of generated waste*



19% of disposed waste



23% of recycled waste



58% of composted waste

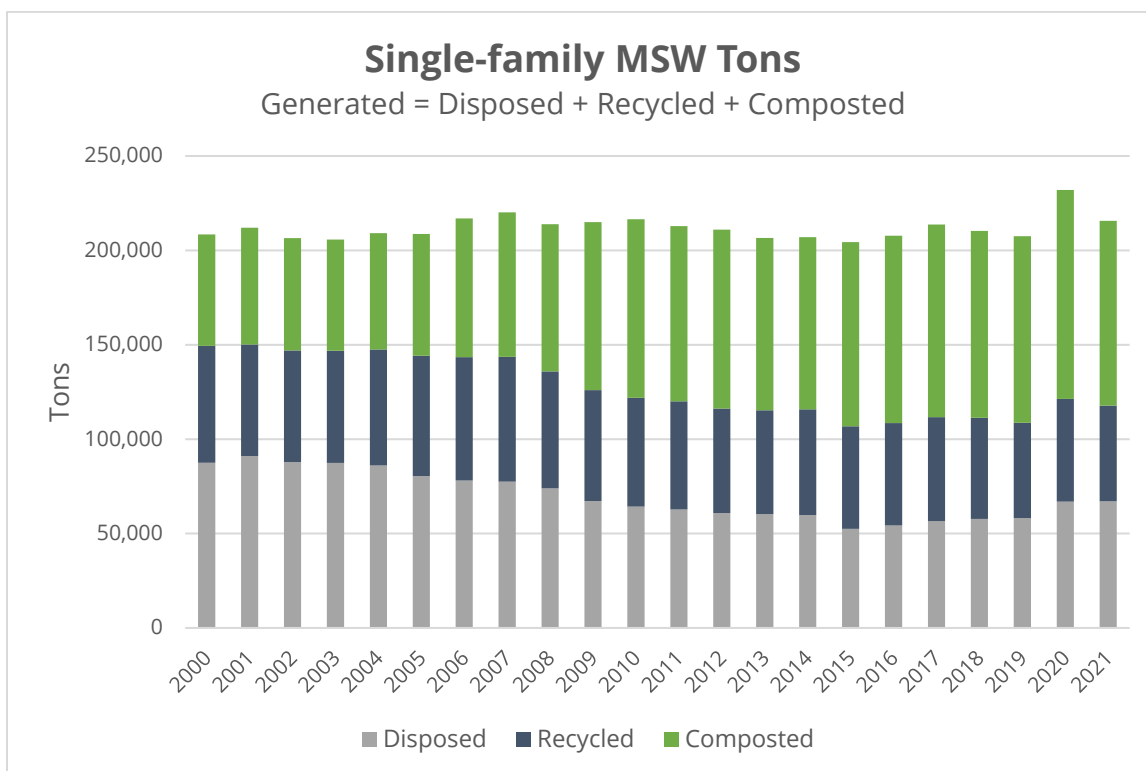
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- Waste generation levels for single-family households fell 7.1% (~16,400 tons) after reaching their highest point in 2020, with all the decline coming from reductions in diversion, especially composted tons.
- Even with reductions in composted tons, the single-family sector continued to compost substantially more material than any other sector—57.6% of composted MSW overall. Yard waste accounts for most of the material in single-family compost.¹
- Single-family disposal increased slightly again, continuing a 6-year trend upward. Overall, the single-family sector created 19.3% of landfilled MSW, the second least amount of waste disposed behind multifamily households.

¹ According to Seattle's most recent [2016 Organics Stream Composition Study](#), yard waste makes up nearly three-quarters (~74%) of single-family composting.

Single-family MSW Tons, 2000-2021

Year	Generated	Disposed	Recycled	Composted	Recycled + Composted	Recycle Rate
2000	208,468	87,499	61,972	58,997	120,969	58.0%
2001	211,982	91,072	59,107	61,803	120,910	57.0%
2002	206,474	87,834	59,200	59,440	118,640	57.5%
2003	205,748	87,426	59,433	58,889	118,322	57.5%
2004	209,132	86,029	61,474	61,629	123,103	58.9%
2005	208,675	80,478	63,715	64,482	128,197	61.4%
2006	216,946	78,078	65,371	73,496	138,868	64.0%
2007	220,128	77,494	66,121	76,513	142,634	64.8%
2008	213,889	73,961	61,956	77,972	139,928	65.4%
2009	215,015	67,229	58,786	89,000	147,786	68.7%
2010	216,484	64,309	57,578	94,597	152,175	70.3%
2011	212,861	62,779	57,234	92,848	150,082	70.5%
2012	211,030	60,906	55,317	94,807	150,124	71.1%
2013	206,603	60,302	55,023	91,278	146,301	70.8%
2014	206,992	59,772	56,065	91,155	147,220	71.1%
2015	204,397	52,529	54,314	97,554	151,868	74.3%
2016	207,804	54,298	54,213	99,293	153,506	73.9%
2017	213,709	56,541	55,123	102,045	157,168	73.5%
2018	210,289	57,725	53,582	98,982	152,564	72.5%
2019	207,538	58,191	50,505	98,842	149,347	72.0%
2020	232,038	66,877	54,433	110,728	165,161	71.2%
2021	215,678	67,073	50,677	97,928	148,605	68.9%



Multifamily MSW



12% of generated waste*



16% of disposed waste



12% of recycled waste



2% of composted waste

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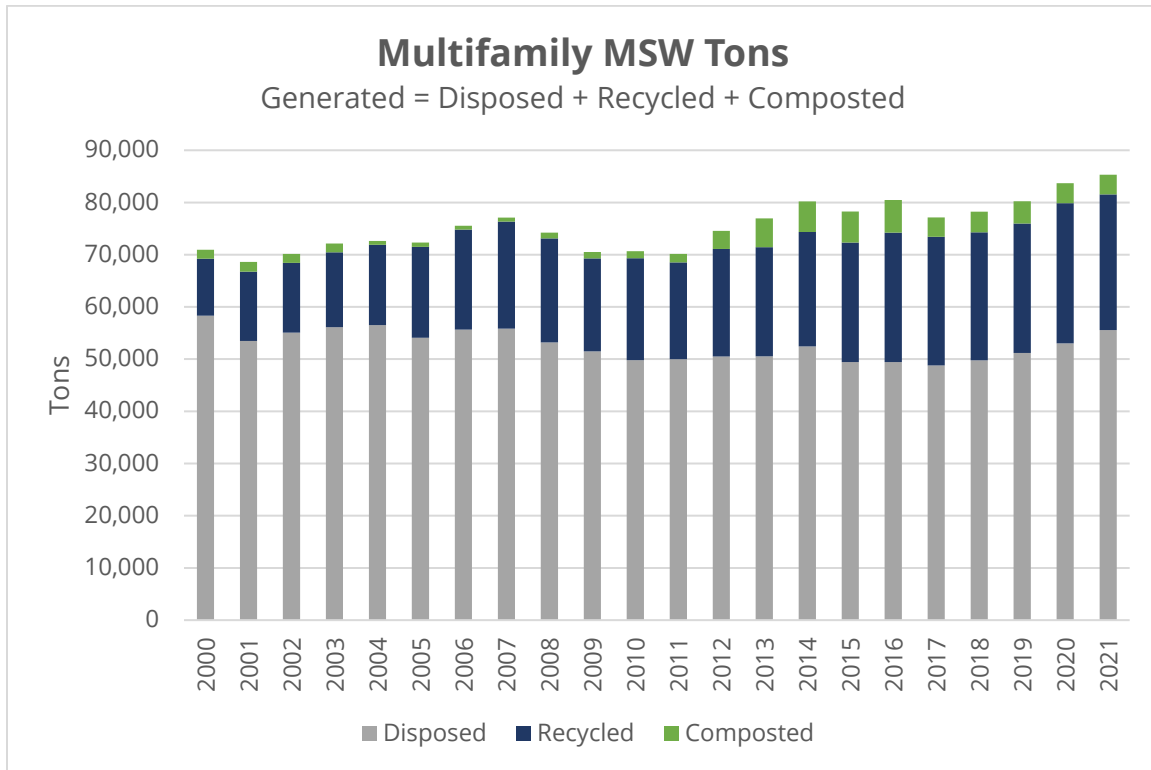
- Multifamily households broke a new record for waste generation in 2021, creating more waste than in the past 21 years (85,000 tons).
- However, relative to other customer sectors, multifamily residents still generated (11.6%) and disposed of (16.0%) the least waste of any MSW sector.
- Predictions that multifamily waste would increase substantially with the enormous growth of multifamily housing, the number of units of which has increased 26%² since 2010, have largely not borne out.

Multifamily MSW Tons, 2000-2021

Year	Generated	Disposed	Recycled	Composted	Recycled + Composted	Recycle Rate
2000	70,944	58,333	10,909	1,702	12,611	17.8%
2001	68,611	53,487	13,275	1,849	15,124	22.0%
2002	70,144	55,076	13,343	1,725	15,068	21.5%
2003	72,149	56,106	14,347	1,696	16,043	22.2%
2004	72,640	56,498	15,386	756	16,142	22.2%
2005	72,325	54,080	17,424	821	18,245	25.2%
2006	75,545	55,643	19,159	743	19,903	26.3%
2007	77,108	55,847	20,501	760	21,261	27.6%
2008	74,223	53,199	19,932	1,092	21,024	28.3%
2009	70,524	51,497	17,798	1,230	19,028	27.0%
2010	70,675	49,788	19,532	1,355	20,887	29.6%
2011	70,145	49,993	18,544	1,608	20,152	28.7%
2012	74,549	50,514	20,599	3,437	24,035	32.2%
2013	76,960	50,537	20,886	5,538	26,423	34.3%
2014	80,189	52,439	21,905	5,845	27,750	34.6%
2015	78,278	49,443	22,880	5,956	28,835	36.8%
2016	80,478	49,437	24,778	6,263	31,041	38.6%
2017	77,150	48,773	24,652	3,725	28,376	36.8%*
2018	78,245	49,760	24,520	3,965	28,485	36.4%
2019	80,241	51,176	24,802	4,250	29,065	36.2%
2020	83,701	53,026	26,853	3,822	30,675	36.6%
2021	85,316	55,561	25,988	3,767	29,755	34.9%

² The April 1 housing estimates are produced by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). OFM housing estimates are derived from input from jurisdictions based on local census or annually reported permit data. The City of Seattle reports construction and demolitions of housing units every April 1. See [Citywide Growth Graphs Population, Households, Housing Units](https://seattlecitygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/c8cfcb827e564623a6fa3af6360141fe) (<https://seattlecitygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/c8cfcb827e564623a6fa3af6360141fe>) for Seattle housing unit data.

*Before 2017, the combined residential (single-family and multifamily) composted tonnage was measured and then attributed to either the single-family or multifamily sector based on estimates. Starting in 2017, composted tonnage data by individual residential sector became available. The adjustment in calculation methodology likely explains the shift in the recycling rate in 2017.



Residential MSW (single-family + multifamily)

- Residential waste generation fell 14,000 tons (-4.7%), with reductions in single-family composting accounting for most of this decline. Daily residential per person waste generation fell to 2.22 pounds per day, within the target in SPU's Strategic Business Plan (residential generation <2.5 pounds per person per day)³.
- But with residential disposal up slightly (2,700 tons or +2.3%), and residential recycling and composting both down, daily per person residential disposal to landfill increased to 0.91 pounds per person per day. Even so, Seattle continued to hit targets for waste disposal (<1 pound per person per day) in SPU's Strategic Business Plan.⁴
- Long-term trends show residential disposal declining over time despite staggering population growth. As detailed in recent articles, "[A Triple Win](https://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2020/05/14/a-triple-win/)" in *Resource Recycling*⁵ and "[Seattle's Winning Strategy for Managing Organics](https://www.biocycle.net/seattles-winning-strategy-managing-organics/)" in *BioCycle*⁶, Seattle has achieved long-term declines in residential disposal due to strategic implementation of zero waste incentives, programs, and regulations.

³ SPU's Strategic Business Plan is available at <https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/about/plans/strategic-business-plan>.

⁴ Ibid.

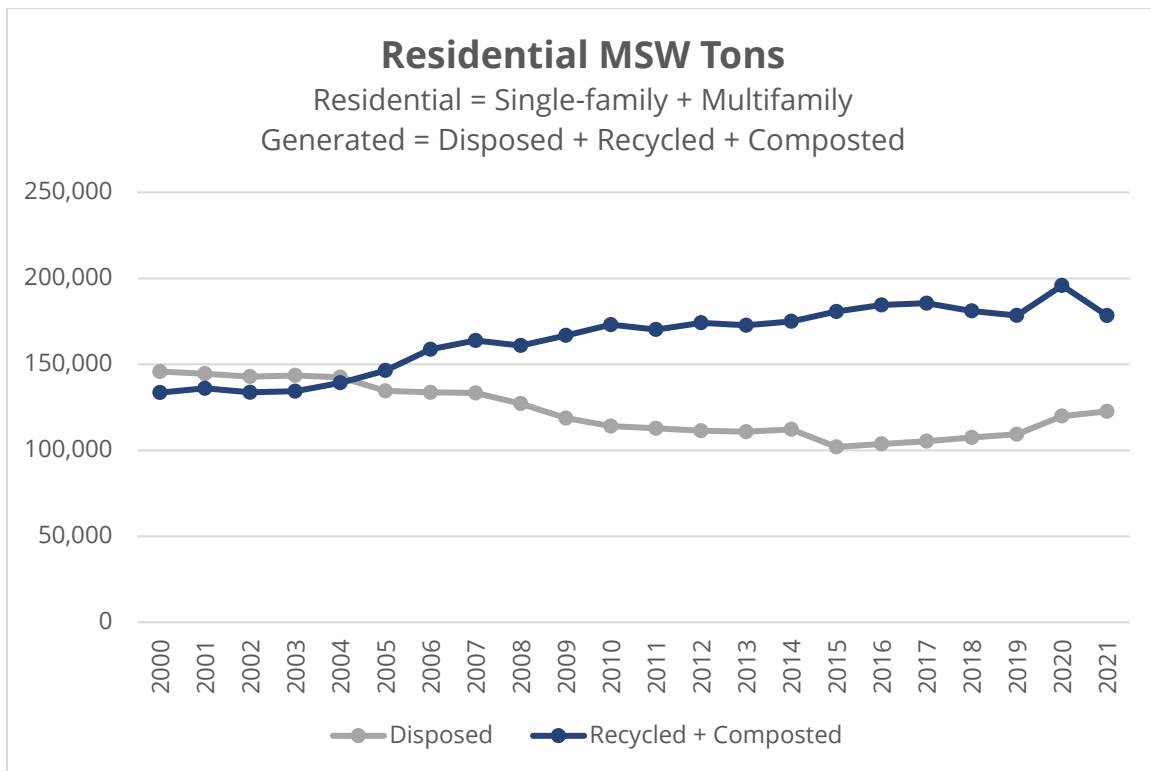
⁵ Morris, Jeffrey. "A Triple Win." *Resource Recycling*, 2020 April, <https://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2020/05/14/a-triple-win/>.

⁶ Morris, Jeffrey. "Seattle's Winning Strategy for Managing Organics." *BioCycle*, 2020 May, <https://www.biocycle.net/seattles-winning-strategy-managing-organics/>.

Residential MSW Tons, Population, and Per Person Rates, 2000-2021

Year	Tons			Population estimate*	Pounds per person per day	
	Generated	Disposed	Recycled + Composted		Generated	Disposed
2000	279,412	145,832	133,580	563,286	2.72	1.42
2001	280,593	144,559	136,034	567,491	2.71	1.40
2002	276,618	142,910	133,708	572,854	2.65	1.37
2003	277,897	143,532	134,365	574,530	2.65	1.37
2004	281,772	142,527	139,245	576,906	2.68	1.35
2005	281,000	134,557	146,442	579,779	2.66	1.27
2006	292,491	133,721	158,770	587,755	2.73	1.25
2007	297,235	133,341	163,895	594,339	2.74	1.23
2008	288,112	127,160	160,952	599,055	2.64	1.16
2009	285,539	118,725	166,814	603,155	2.59	1.08
2010	287,159	114,097	173,062	608,660	2.59	1.03
2011	283,006	112,772	170,234	611,249	2.54	1.01
2012	285,579	111,420	174,159	614,283	2.55	0.99
2013	283,563	110,839	172,724	624,045	2.49	0.97
2014	287,181	112,211	174,970	638,784	2.46	0.96
2015	282,675	101,972	180,703	660,908	2.34	0.85
2016	288,282	103,735	184,547	684,136	2.31	0.83
2017	290,859	105,315	185,544	694,513	2.29	0.83
2018	288,534	107,485	181,049	707,555	2.23	0.83
2019	287,779	109,367	178,412	724,144	2.18	0.83
2020	315,739	119,903	195,836	737,015	2.35	0.89
2021	300,994	122,634	178,360	742,400	2.22	0.91

*SPU uses April 1 population estimates provided by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). For this report, SPU updated the population estimates for 2010-2020 using OFM's Intercensal Estimates of April 1 Population and Housing, 2010-2020: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fofm.wa.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fpublic%2Fdataresearch%2Fpop%2Fapril1%2Fhseries%2Fofm_april1_intercensal_estimates_2010_2020.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK. Current (2021) April 1 population estimates from OFM appear on the City of Seattle's website: <https://seattlecitygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/c8cfcb827e564623a6fa3af6360141fe>.



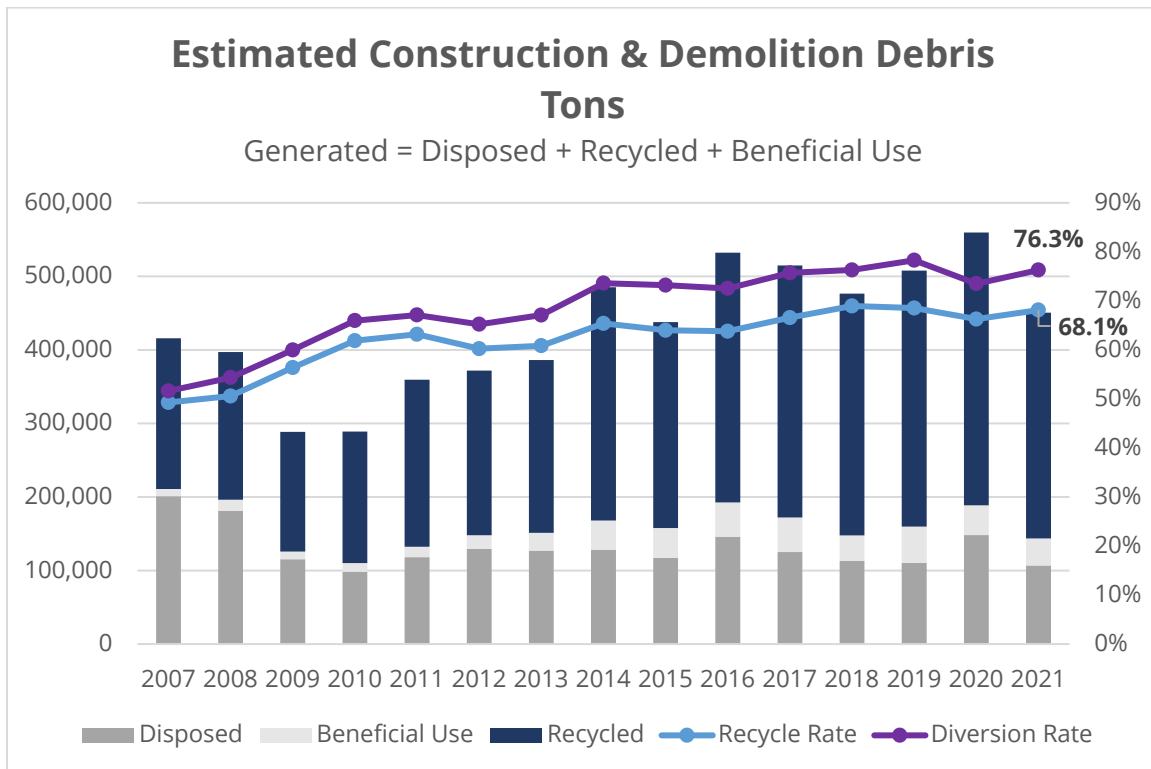
Estimated construction and demolition debris

- According to data self-reported to the City by construction and demolition debris collection, processing, and disposal vendors, C&D debris generation fell almost 20% in 2021 after reaching an all-time high in 2020.⁷ Demolition permits declined 8.9% in 2021, which could account for some of the decrease in C&D generation.
- Declines in C&D debris recycling tons (-64,000) comprised 58.7% of the decrease in C&D debris generation overall. Disposal dropped more than 41,000 tons (-27.9%).
- Despite a significant decrease in overall tonnage, the C&D sector generated more tons overall than any other individual MSW sector for the 11th straight year.

⁷ Per Seattle Municipal Code 6.250, Seattle requires recycling collectors and processors to report their recycling activities to obtain a [Recycler License](#) that allows them to operate in the City.

Estimated Construction & Demolition Debris Tons, 2007-2021

Year	Generated	Disposed*	Recycled**	Beneficial Use*	Recycle Rate	Diversion Rate
2007	415,801	201,156	204,907	9,738	49.3%	51.6%
2008	397,052	181,241	200,851	14,961	50.6%	54.4%
2009	288,551	115,446	162,742	10,362	56.4%	60.0%
2010	288,957	98,309	178,794	11,854	61.9%	66.0%
2011	359,390	118,216	227,049	14,125	63.2%	67.1%
2012	371,962	129,383	224,060	18,519	60.2%	65.2%
2013	386,200	127,040	234,982	24,178	60.8%	67.1%
2014	485,242	128,024	317,331	39,887	65.4%	73.6%
2015	437,883	117,343	280,205	40,336	64.0%	73.2%
2016	532,126	146,139	339,478	46,509	63.8%	72.5%
2017	514,858	125,074	342,755	47,029	66.6%	75.7%
2018***	476,433	112,900	328,568	34,965	69.0%	76.3%
2019***	507,793	110,275	348,032	49,486	68.5%	78.3%
2020	559,575	148,209	370,942	40,424	66.3%	73.5%
2021	450,686	106,882	307,052	36,752	68.1%	76.3%



*SPU estimates C&D debris disposal and beneficial use tons based on C&D companies' self-reporting via the [Qualified Facilities Monthly Report](#) and the [Annual Recycling and Reuse Report](#).

**SPU estimates C&D debris recycled tons based on C&D companies' self-reporting in the [Annual Recycling and Reuse Report](#).

***In 2020, SPU updated disposal estimates for 2018 and 2019 following additional data analysis.

Top accomplishments to advance waste prevention and recycling

SPU's Solid Waste Planning and Program Management Division provides strategic planning, customer programs, data and analytics, inspections and compliance, and contracts management for solid waste in Seattle. The following describes the division's top accomplishments to encourage waste prevention and diversion from landfill through recycling and reuse:

Waste prevention

- As part of SPU's focus on racial equity, expanded opportunities for small Women and Minority-owned Businesses (WMBE) to participate in the Waste Prevention Strategic Planning Initiative by splitting the scope of work into four contracts instead of a more traditional single contract. As a result, SPU hired four WMBE prime firms, who together brought with them a team of 13 WMBE subconsultants and one nonprofit subconsultant. The consultant team provides a breadth of experience and expertise that will help SPU deeply engage with diverse partners and customers and ensure that the planning effort results in equitable waste prevention outcomes and opportunities.
- Launched a new, targeted consumer food waste prevention digital media campaign to help Seattle residents better understand the savings opportunities in reducing food waste. Emphasizing the message that savings opportunities are not just about money, but about improving people's life experiences, the [Love Food Stop Waste](#)⁸ campaign focuses on inducing cheer—not shame—in the intended audience. SPU had strong engagement at the start of the campaign in 2021, designing social media posts in English *and* other languages such as Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Somali with culturally appropriate images.
- Partnered with Safeway/Albertsons and PCC Community Markets to assess how food retailers could reduce food waste while improving donations of unsold, surplus food. The assessment took place at eight (8) Seattle store locations, resulting in [recommendations](#)⁹ to standardize operations for greater efficiencies and reduced food waste, collect data showing true costs and savings of donated food, and improve communication among stores and their hunger relief partners. Grocery retailers and nonprofits can explore the findings and recommendations in the [Grocery Rescue Assessment](#).



Recycling

- Played a key role in passage of Senate Bill 5022 to reduce plastic pollution and increase plastics recycling. SPU also championed passage of the [Industrial Symbiosis Law](#)¹⁰, which will help create industrial symbiosis networks

⁸ Find the Love Food Stop Waste program website online at <https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/protecting-our-environment/sustainability-tips/waste-prevention/at-home/stop-food-waste>.

⁹ The *Grocery Rescue Assessment* is available online at <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/SPU/Documents/GroceryRescueAssessment2021.pdf>.

¹⁰ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary/BillNumber=5345&Year=2021>

where the underutilized resources of one company, such as waste, byproducts, energy, water, logistics, capacity, expertise, equipment, and materials may be used as a resource by another.

- Supported implementation of [Washington's Plastic Bag Ban](#), which SPU helped to pass in 2020. The statewide bag ban replaces the local bag ban ordinance that Seattle previously adopted.
- Worked with the Facilities and Administrative Services Department to achieve an all-time high compliance rate of 97% for annual commercial and C&D recycling and composting reporting (per Seattle Municipal Code 6.250). SPU relies on accurate and timely annual self-reporting of commercial and C&D recyclers so that the City may achieve the most cost-effective system for collection, processing, disposal, or recycling of all solid wastes generated in the City.
- Improved residential customer communications about proper sorting of materials, including developing a suite of tools, like new "Oops Tags," to alert customers to missorted materials, providing resources for adjusting solid waste services, and offering clear instructions on what goes where.

Solid Waste Advisory Committee comment letter

September 8th, 2022

Councilmember Alex Pedersen
Chair, Transportation and Utilities
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Dear Councilmember Pedersen and Committee Members,

In August 2022, the Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) had the opportunity to review SPU's Draft of the *2021 Annual Waste Prevention and Recycling Rate Report*.

With businesses and restaurants reopening and residents feeling more comfortable with leaving their homes in the second year of the global pandemic, we see overall waste generation begin to follow the same patterns as we had in the previous years prior to the pandemic. Commercial generation was up 9.5% from 2020 with a decline in generation for the Residential sector.

In 2021, SPU was able to push forward and help pass the Senate Bill 5022 that will help reduce single use food service items, ban certain polystyrene products and remove confusing recycle labels that are confusing for consumers. It is clear that SPU is focusing on educating Seattle residents and businesses on waste prevention and upstream sourcing in 2021 in effort to eliminate residual and contamination in the recycle and organic waste stream before it is created.

We look forward to hearing more from SPU in the future on their Diversity, Inclusion and Equality to give voice and representation to all residents living in Seattle.

The SWAC committee reviewed the 2021 Annual Waste Prevention and Recycling Rate Report in detail and our comments and recommendations can be found below.

Commercial MSW

Commercial generation made a clear jump in 2021 with businesses and restaurants running at nearly pre-pandemic levels however, the overall generation is still below pre COVID averages. While we transition into our new "norms" post pandemic, we see this as an opportunity for SPU to educate staff and set up sustainable ordering protocols and clear and organized disposal stations for patrons in effort to maintain the reduced MSW tonnage we saw in 2021.

Single-Family MSW

Single Family generation is down 7% with more residents spending more time away from their homes two years after the start of the pandemic. The Single Family sector continues to have the highest compost generation at 58% overall generation. We recommend that SPU continues to focus on Waste Prevention with the Single Family residents in Seattle to help continue to increase the waste reduction levels we are

seeing in 2021. Continued efforts for educating single family residents on food waste prevention is great messaging for SPU to share the importance of reducing waste before it's created.

Self-Haul MSW

Self Haul tonnage increased 10% representing the highest MSW generation for that sector in 22 years. More than 90% of the material brought to the transfer station was disposed of in the landfill with the recycle rate at 9%. We see this as the lowest hanging fruit for SPU to make the highest level of impact in 2022 and year to come. We recommend that SPU uses a mixture of incentives, education, and policy changes to encourage Seattle Residents disposing at the transfer station to source separate and avoid valuable resources from ending up in the MSW waste stream.

Multifamily MSW

In 2021, Multifamily hit a new record in waste generation producing more waste than they had in the past 21 years. The Multifamily sector continues to represent the highest level of opportunity for SPU to reach a high volume of residents generating a fair portion of the overall waste generated in the City of Seattle. SWAC supports SPU's continued education, outreach, and waste prevention programs with specific focus for the multifamily sector.

Construction & Demolition Debris (C&D)

SWAC is pleased to see the slight increase in recycling and diversion rates for the estimated C&D material disposed of in 2021, despite also seeing a significant decrease in overall tonnage generated. The decline in demolition permits in 2021 could account for some of the decrease in the C&D generation. SWAC recommends continued policy steps supporting increased reuse and recycling: strengthening Salvage Assessment requirements to incentivize follow-through on salvage potential, as well as moving toward a deconstruction requirement on projects where high wood salvage potential is identified.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Upstream Efforts

SWAC continues to support SPU's focus on upstream solutions and efforts to ensure a more sustainable, efficient, and equitable residential recycling system in WA. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is proven to be an effective policy to increase recycling and reuse, not just for packaging and paper products, but for a wide range of products regularly found in our waste streams. EPR programs reduce costs to ratepayers, amplify access, education, and outreach efforts, which communities, particularly multi-family residents, would benefit from.

Legislation

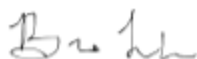
Despite the pandemic, SWAC is pleased to see that SPU was able to pass statewide legislation SB 5022, that aims to reduce use of plastic waste and pollution and also successfully champion a passage of the Industrial Symbiosis Law that will help create networks where the underutilized resources of one company, may be used as a resource by another. SWAC looks forward to the continued effort and success on the legislative front, and views legislation as a powerful and effective means to drive and support progress on waste issues trends. SWAC congratulates SPU on their hard work in passing SB 5022.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

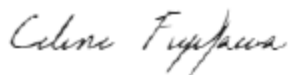
SWAC is pleased to see that the feedback given by the committee last year, to consider including a more robust section on SPU's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion priorities and practices was very well highlighted in this year's 2021 report. SWAC recognizes SPU's efforts to expand opportunities for small Women and Minority-owned Business Enterprises (WMBE) to participate in the Waste Prevention Strategic Planning Initiative in order to be deeply engaged with our diverse partners and customers to ensure that planning efforts result in equitable waste prevention outcomes and opportunities. SWAC also applauds SPU for launching a consumer food waste prevention digital media campaign to help Seattle residents better understand the saving opportunities in reducing food waste through focusing on strong community engagement and designing media with culturally appropriate language and visuals. SWAC continues to encourage SPU to further expand their reach and relevance to Seattle's BIPOC, refugee, and immigrant communities through community-led programs, businesses and policies that promote innovation via reuse and repair. The committee strongly believes that efforts to build partnerships with existing and new community based organizations, will foster interagency collaboration and long term, sustainable community-based solutions.

Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations.

Sincerely,



Brie Kuhn, Chair, SWAC



Celine Fujikawa, Secretary, SWAC

SWAC is one of Seattle Public Utilities' Community Advisory Committees. Its members are appointed by the SPU CEO/General Manager. It is administered and staffed by SPU. This letter reflects the opinions of Committee Members, independent of SPU.

Cc: Debora Juarez,, President, Seattle City Council
Andrew Lee, General Manager/CEO, Seattle Public Utilities
Jeff Fowler, Deputy Director, Solid Waste Line of Business

Stephanie Schwenger, Solid & Hazardous Waste Lead Planner
Quinn Appuzo, SWAC Coordinator and Solid Waste Community Affairs Strategic Advisor