



FACT SHEET: MANAGING MUNICIPAL FOOD WASTE

Food waste represents over 21% of all trash disposed in Massachusetts, totaling 930,000 tons. Approximately 430,000 tons, or 46% of the total, comes from homes and municipalities. The [Massachusetts Solid Waste Master Plan](#) sets a goal of diverting or reducing food waste going to landfills and incinerators by 750,000 tons per year by 2030. Municipal, residential, and small business food waste programs play a critical role in meeting this goal.



Communities throughout Massachusetts are making efforts to divert organic material and food waste out of the waste stream. In doing so, less material is going to landfills, being shipped out of state, and being incinerated. Instead, the separated food waste is being composted and turned into a valuable soil amendment or going to an anaerobic digestion facility and being turned to energy.

- **Statewide, 89 municipalities** in Massachusetts have a residential food waste collection program. In 2023, these municipalities reported **diverting over 20,000 tons of food scraps** from the waste stream.
- **Drop-off food waste programs** are available in **72 of these communities**. Residents can bring their food waste to these collection sites weekly or whenever they have a bag of scraps. Collection containers are then picked up and taken to a compost site or anaerobic digestion facility for processing. Food waste collection is typically offered free of charge to residents with transfer station access. Some communities provide drop-off bins that are accessible for free or a small fee in public spaces.
- **Curbside food waste collection programs are growing in Massachusetts**. Twelve communities have a municipally supported curbside program, where residents put their food scraps in a separate bin, to be picked up curbside along with their trash, or by a separate hauler. Some municipalities support these programs by providing free curbside food waste containers or kitchen counter bins; or they may provide subsidies or fully fund the program.
- There are five communities in Massachusetts that offer **BOTH curbside and drop-off food waste programs**.
- Backyard composting is easy and affordable for many households. **Over 165 municipalities sell backyard compost bins** at cost or at a discount to residents.
- [The Green Team](#), which supports school recycling and composting programs and education, has **distributed backyard compost bins to 140 schools**.

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02114

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- [RecyclingWorks](#) MA, a program funded by MassDEP, provides technical assistance to compost operators, as well as assistance to businesses, institutions, and schools to plan and implement food waste diversion programs.
- MassDEP's Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP) has awarded **\$350K in grants to municipalities over the past 10 years** to start or expand upon their own curbside collection program or residential food waste diversion programs. Municipalities can use grant funds to purchase residential curbside food waste carts, or kitchen counter food scrap bins, or help with outreach and education. Additionally, municipalities reported spending \$625K since 2021 of organics diversion programs.
- MassDEP manages [Statewide Contract FAC113, which includes](#) recycling containers, compost bins and rain barrels, curbside wheeled carts for organic and food waste material, kitchen counter buckets and backyard compost bins. Municipalities can procure items directly from this contract without bidding publicly.

Waste Ban Background:

In 2014, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection implemented a [ban on commercial food waste](#), requiring businesses and institutions generating more than one ton of food waste per week, to divert that material away from the trash. This threshold was reduced in 2022 to ½ ton per week. Currently, about 4,000 business and institutions in Massachusetts are subject to the food waste ban. As of 2024, Massachusetts has succeeded in diverting 380,000 tons of commercial food waste from the trash annually.

Additional Resources:

MassDEP Solid Waste Master Plan

www.mass.gov/guides/solid-waste-master-plan

MassDEP Organics Action Plan

www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-organics-action-plan-november-2023/download

MassDEP Recycling & Solid Waste Data for Massachusetts Cities and Towns:

www.mass.gov/lists/recycling-solid-waste-data-for-massachusetts-cities-towns

MassDEP Composting and Organics Webpage

www.mass.gov/composting-organics

RecyclingWorks Massachusetts

recyclingworksma.com

Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Municipal Grant

www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-sustainable-materials-recovery-program-smrp-municipal-grant

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