

DURANGO CITY COUNCIL COMPOSTING TALKING POINTS

- In the La Plata County region, nearly half, or about 40% of what goes to our landfills is food and other organic matter. This is a total waste – for our community, our soil, our farmers, and for our climate.
- In 2015, the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments conducted the Southwest Colorado Waste Study. This key study showed that the region buries approximately 91,000 tons/yr of waste in landfills, 37.5% of which is organic waste, and 24.4% of that is recoverable organic waste (food and yard waste) and could have been diverted.
- In July 2021, Table to Farm Compost entered into a 5-year Public Private Partnership (PPP) with the City of Durango to “implement an innovative curbside organic waste collection program.” The PPP states that “it is anticipated that residential participation in a city-wide curbside compost collection program will initially be on a voluntary basis, with the potential to scale up to mandatory participation for all residents within three years.”
- The City of Durango has committed to **sustainability goals**¹ and **greenhouse gas emission**² goals. Composting will make great strides in achieving those goals as well as the adoption of the **Destination Management Master Plan** (DMMP) that has a strong emphasis on sustainability management of tourism and visitation.
- Composting of wildfire mitigation, a strong focus of Table to Farm, also helps to implement the Sustainability Plan’s Natural Systems and Ecology goals.
- The City will be tracking the development and rollout of the extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation which will guide the structure and funding of statewide recycling services. Community-wide recycling and composting will place our local government ahead of the curve in this effort to ensure it receives as much statewide support as possible.
- With the Bondad Landfill nearing its capacity, the financial case to increase composting is compelling. Landfills cost about \$1.5M per cell to expand while doubling the number of households currently composting in the city limits using a 50/50 cost-share, or \$9/month, would cost approximately \$173,000. Achieving city-wide composting would cost approximately \$500,000.
- **Composting is low-hanging fruit to achieve significant climate change goals locally. It is now time for the City of Durango to take meaningful steps to increase the scope and scale of composting in Durango by: 1) Providing a 50/50 cost-share incentive for household food waste pick-up service for all city residents who voluntarily choose to compost in 2025 and beyond, and 2) Direct and empower City staff to research and implement community-wide composting by 2026.**

COMPOSTING IMPACTS!

- Diverting food scraps and organic matter such as yard waste from the landfill reduces methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and turns these resources into a soil amendment for use in backyard gardening, farming, and much more.
- In instituting an organics-free landfill practice, the City of Durango would be joining other cities/counties across the state of Colorado, including Aspen, Denver and Boulder, in a growing trend to meaningfully reduce atmospheric pollution.
- Project Drawdown and many other climate change initiatives call out composting as one of the most important, effective, and easy ways to reduce impacts on the planet and increase sustainability.
- With a composting facility just 5 miles outside the city limits, recycling food scraps and yard waste no longer entails costly transportation expenses which benefits La Plata County’s budget. And, the roundtrip transport to the landfill is 40 miles, making it more cost-effective to move organic matter to the compost-facility.
- It takes 3 to 4 months for the microorganisms in compost to break down food scraps and create a nutrient-rich soil amendment. Compare that to the 25 years it takes for a head of lettuce to break down in the landfill, all the while emitting methane, an atmospheric pollutant that contributes significantly to catastrophic climate disasters.
- Compost’s nickname is “Black Gold” for its high nutritional value when added to soil and plants. Not to mention, compost acts as a carbon sink, meaning it captures carbon from the atmosphere and safely stores it in the ground, helping to fight climate change.

¹ <https://www.durangoco.gov/1614/Sustainability-Plan>

² <https://www.durangoco.gov/1316/Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions>