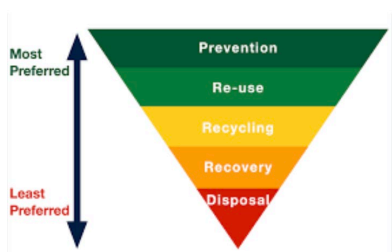


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2024 SOLID WASTE TASK FORCE | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Current household solid waste management contracts for the City of Auburn are expiring at the end of this year. The City Council has instructed the Sustainability and Natural Resources Board to evaluate Auburn's solid waste management system including how



household solid waste is collected, processed and disposed of. The findings in this report are intended to support the city in its writing of new solid waste agreements. An important context for these recommendations is the state's soon-to-be-launched EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) program. In a volatile and rapidly changing market for recyclables, the Maine EPR will provide new revenue to

support recycling programs and other solid waste initiatives in participating municipalities. This is an optimal moment for Auburn to re-evaluate its approach to the “re-use-recycling-recovery” section of the waste hierarchy, pictured above.

1. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. **Prepare Auburn households for Maine Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Program** [<https://www.maine.gov/dep/waste/recycle/epr.html>]: By recycling all items on Maine's EPR list of recyclable commodities, Auburn can access new funding to offset collection and processing costs for household solid waste. Reimbursement for these costs through the EPR program will increase with increasing recycling participation rates and tons of material recycled.
- B. **Data management:** Provide support for accurate, verifiable data collection on all aspects of Auburn's solid waste management including fixed and variable costs. Report data to key stakeholders in a timely manner.
- C. **Staffing:** Assign a qualified individual primary responsibility for setting goals and managing performance improvement of Auburn's solid waste programs using data referenced above (1.B). This individual could also manage other city sustainability programs.
- D. Create a robust **public engagement program**. Inform and involve Auburn households in all aspects of the city's solid waste program using data, regular data reports, restructured staffing, revisions to the Auburn solid waste ordinance and Comprehensive Plan.
- E. Limit the duration of new **solid waste contract(s)** to allow for improved data collection and analysis (1.B) and evaluation of how EPR (1.A), the public engagement program (1.D) and new trash-collecting technologies will impact future city budgets and sustainability efforts.

2. SOLID WASTE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Continue current service level for curbside collection of household trash and recycling (with continued Gracelawn Road drop-off option for recycling).
- B. Conduct household surveys and listening sessions to explore alternative and less costly collection strategies for both trash and recycling.
- C. Use bid (RFP/Request For Proposal) process to analyze feasibility and costs of various solid waste collection and divergence strategies including:
 - Contracted vs city operated curbside collection
 - Incentives for increased food-scrapping (IV. B-F) and recycling such as limiting the size of the trash collection container
 - Controlled access cards for Auburn resident payment, accurate recording and classification of waste stream weights at Auburn and MWE transfer stations
 - City-developed markets for collection and sale of some readily recyclable commodities
- D. Increase participation in Product Stewardship programs to divert more waste from household trash. [<https://www.maine.gov/dep/waste/productstewardship/index.html>]
- E. Incentivize and support existing re-use programs (swap shops, yard sales) for household items.

3. RECYCLING RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Auburn's recycling program must include recycling of all commodities on the state EPR list.
- B. Curbside recycling should include city-provided wheeled, lidded containers.
- C. Keep Gracelawn open as a supplemental site, consider adding additional such sites.
- D. New recycling agreements should allow the city a role in deciding which commodities are recycled.
- E. Create targets for increased household participation, based on analysis of data collected (1.B).
- F. Create unified messaging as part of the Public Engagement Program (1.D), with easy-to-understand instructions and advice available via social and other media.

4. FOOD WASTE PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Continue with Gracelawn Road and South Main Street drop off locations.
- B. Add additional drop-off location(s) in more highly traveled and accessible sites to increase convenience and participation.
- C. Enhance drop off locations with larger signs (kiosks) that include information (pictures and writing) about what can and cannot be placed in the bins.
- D. Use multiple modes of communication to promote the program, as part of the public engagement program (1.D)
- E. Include schools in the food waste collection program, including mini lessons in the classrooms and picking up food waste from the cafeterias by the contractor.
- F. Incentivize food waste collection by subsidizing the cost/or purchasing of backyard compost bins and/or kitchen compost containers.