

Zero Waste Action Plan:

Draft Action Items for City Internal Functions

What is Zero Waste?

Zero Waste is a shift in waste management from a linear to circular economy where we can recover all resources and send nothing to the landfill. Zero Waste sees a value in all materials even when they are not realized. Often lack of realization of a materials value is due to infrastructure, systems, policies, and a culture which is structured in a way that waste is expected as an output. Zero Waste challenges the idea that waste is a necessary part of modern life and looks to municipal and community planning as the answer in order to transform the systems which support and enable waste. The Zero Waste Hierarchy describes a progression of policies and strategies to support the Zero Waste system, from highest and best to lowest use of materials: Rethink/Redesign, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle/Compost; which are prioritized in such order throughout this document.

City Internal Functions Section

This section of the Eureka Zero Waste Action Plan (ZWAP) will benefit Eureka City government by providing a source of prioritized, consistent and timely information and guidance on actions that will help the City to reduce the waste it generates.

The City of Eureka has the direct ability to reduce waste and efficiently manage materials within its own facilities and operations to achieve Zero Waste. As the City aspires to become Zero Waste, city departments must embrace a unified and consistent vision and mission.

Although waste reduction is already practiced internally by many City employees, this document provides the goals, strategies and objectives needed to expand and streamline Zero Waste efforts for City Internal Functions.

By leveraging the City's purchasing power, enhancing its operating policies and procedures, utilizing its properties and assets, and leading by example through its labor force, the City can reduce its contribution to the overall amount of waste generated in Eureka. Additionally, the City can demonstrate transferable knowledge and create opportunities for the public, organizations, the business community, and other municipalities and levels of government.

Background / Current Department Structure

- The City of Eureka has approximately 232 full time employees across at least 10 different facilities.
- Many city buildings have older infrastructure and may not have modern amenities.
- Employees who work in the field likely have entirely different experiences regarding daily work habits and waste generation.
- It is important for the City to lead by example and align city operations with Zero Waste strategies, thereby demonstrating waste reduction practices.
- Identifying and investing in city leadership development related to waste reduction will be vital to carrying improvements forward by investing in internal leaders.

- Waste generated by the City as an organization can come from (1) employees themselves; (2) incidentally from their job tasks or (3) by systems and programs that the City oversees and manages.
- The City hosts training sessions for staff and integrating Zero Waste training for employees will help the City reduce the amount of waste generated through a well-informed, trained workforce.
- The City reuses office furniture and equipment from department to department.

Information Gathering Process:

State and National Research

Staff have researched the trends among state and local governments in Zero Waste innovation and technology, state and national mandates, ordinances, best practices, and more.

- California Resource Recovery Association (CRRA)
- National Reuse Network
- CalRecycle
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Local Meetings:

- Economic Development (Special Events)
- Zero Waste Humboldt

Survey:

- 68 employees responded to the survey
- Majority of employees recycle and have an understanding of what is and isn't recyclable, with the desire to learn more
- Many employees eat and snack at work
- Additional access to hydration stations would lessen employees use of single-use beverage containers

Zero Waste Goals, Strategies and Objectives

There are 3 main goals in City Internal Functions which follow the Zero Waste Hierarchy and are organized by:

Strategies: are underlined and are an overarching approach taken to meet or exceed goals.

Objectives: are in bullet points and will provide steps to achieving the strategy and will serve as the document action items.

I. Goal: Waste Reduction in City Offices and Facilities

Formulate a City Waste Characterization Study – This study will help us to understand how much and what types of materials are currently discarded, thereby establishing a baseline for all future measurement and monitoring of waste generated by City government. It will identify which materials are wasted (1) in the greatest quantity and (2) greatest toxicity to target for reduction. It will determine how

and where discarded materials are generated as well as how they flow through City offices and facilities to ultimately be reduced, reused, recycled or composted.

- Research ways to conduct a waste audit of all City department offices and facilities.
- Administer audit and determine what discarded materials are prevalent in what facilities/departments including examining the physical environment and how they could be reduced according to the Zero Waste Hierarchy.
- Target top discarded materials with a cost-benefit analysis to compare the cost of beneficial changes to costs of current (disposable) practices.

Implement waste reduction changes for offices - Use waste audit data to identify areas where discarded materials can be reduced and implement best waste reduction changes per office/facility.

Implementation has the potential to include small changes that are easily achievable by everyday staff with minimal financial investments.

- Research digitization options for city communications and recordkeeping systems that currently rely on hard copies.
- Research and implement waste usage reminders with IT Alerts. Such as, how much was printed in your office printer for the month OR pop-ups 'are you sure this needs to be printed?'
- Strengthen systems to negotiate with vendors to take back packaging such as reducing the packaging used for shipments.
- Develop programs to phase out single use, disposable office items such as batteries, pens, ink/toner, cups, etc.

Implement waste reduction changes at meetings & events - Regularly practicing waste reduction strategies at all meetings and functions within City facilities or externally is critical to ensuring behavior change.

- Ensure current meetings are being prepared as paperless as possible, projecting the agenda and meeting materials, and providing on-line access to meeting materials that can be downloaded and provide support where needed.
- Ensure visible and accessible reduction, reuse and recycling opportunities and signage in every meeting room.
- Ensure frequent meeting spaces have access to reusable serving ware and refillable beverage containers.
- Have on-the-go reusables/Zero Waste kits available for external meetings.
- Communicate actions taken to reduce waste and encourage meeting participants to bring these methods back to their offices and homes.

Invest in Equipment to reduce single-use – Investment strategies would require significant capital improvements approved by city leadership, and should be included for consideration in the annual budget review process.

- Seek funding to expand Zero Waste infrastructure: (water bottle refill) hydration stations, across city facilities.
- Require that new or renovated city buildings have hydration stations.

- Evaluate options at all city facilities to better service dishwashing needs such as plumbing, equipment, dishware to work towards phasing out all disposable dishware.

Invest in updated and enhanced waste signage - City facilities currently have visible and accessible reduction, reuse and recycling opportunities but by rebranding disposal areas with emphasized proper disposal, educational information and environmental effects, people are more likely to dispose properly, take away beneficial knowledge, and potentially change behaviors.

- Seek funding to rebrand and update waste disposal areas with elaborate and informational signage.

Repurpose equipment – Balance the long-term effectiveness of specialized tools, equipment, and vehicles with other concerns such as maintenance requirements and other cost considerations.

- Expand/Improve the City's current process of redistributing excess city equipment and supplies.
- Explore options for an internal City equipment/supplies share program.

Build on the City's existing Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Policy (as it relates to waste) - EPP is the procurement of items that have minimized or reduced environmental effects and is a key strategy for waste reduction.

- Review the EPP, how it is being implemented, and seek departmental feedback on current employee understanding of the policy and its effectiveness.
- Reevaluate options and strategies for local waste disposal and recycling infrastructure to sell and use materials locally.
- Develop systems within each department to better track inventory and review purchasing.
- Develop an educational program that highlights EPP and brings awareness to its function.

II. Goal: Waste Reduction for Public Functions and Special Events

Streamline event permit requirements across permitting bodies - Unclear standards and expectations of waste management/reduction for both employees and the public at City events leads to recycling contamination, waste overflow, increased labor costs for sorting and clean-up, and pollution. City sponsored or public events on City property are high-visibility opportunities for educating the public about the Zero Waste Hierarchy priorities of waste prevention and reuse; and how to not contaminate recycling and compost.

- Research and reevaluate City permit policies per department, streamline requirements and information resources.

Phase 1

Implementation of basic waste diversion practices for events - Currently event holders are responsible for providing portable toilets, security personnel (if needed), garbage bins and all necessary permits and insurance documents for their event. However, events are not currently required to reduce, reuse, recycle, compost, restrict purchases or otherwise reduce waste.

- Require permitted events on city property (specifically Old Town) to provide adequate garbage management plan depending on estimated attendance and not rely solely on permanent city installed waste receptacles.
- Permitted events on city property will also be required to establish prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting protocol when recyclable materials are generated; composting requirements would come into effect when more resources to divert food waste become available.
- Evaluate options to provide special event disposal bins that can be rented by event holders.

Create a long term Zero Waste Event Plan – This plan would include best practices and policies and provide clear expectations of permitting staff in the City of Eureka and to event organizers.

- Evaluate event attendance thresholds which may require stricter waste reduction requirements.
- Research and consider a ban on specific non-recyclable materials (such as Styrofoam and straws).
- Research the necessity of large events being required to hire or provide resource management services. This could include advance planning for event waste prevention, reuse, recycling and composting support.
- Consider financial incentives for compliance such as deposits.
- Permitting staff will need to be educated and assigned to review each plan prior to permit issuance, to monitor compliance and to measure diversion.

Phase 2

Implementation of Zero Waste Event Plan – This would occur after permitted events show improvement at accomplishing basic waste reduction practices and a Zero Waste Event Plan is has been adequately developed.

- Implement a ban on specific non-recyclable materials (such as Styrofoam and straws)
- Events planned with a large attendance on public property would be required to submit a Zero Waste Event Plan and deposit prior to permit issuance.
- Require large events to work with vendors on waste reduction. Including, ensuring that vendors provide reusable, recyclable or compostable products to sell their products in.
- Compliance with Zero Waste Event Plan objectives would be documented with an event inspection and by service receipts after each event. Event organizers who do not fulfill their Zero Waste Event Plan would lose their deposits and be flagged for review before future events.
- For events that are ongoing or annual, provide event organizers with a tracking form for them to monitor the success of their waste reduction efforts from year to year.
- Establish a recognition program to celebrate event holders that meet or exceed waste diversion standards.

- III. Goal: Leading by Example - City agencies should lead by example to implement all the Zero Waste actions asked or required of residents and businesses.

City staff Education & Training – Expand recycling access and waste reduction/reuse education in the prioritized Zero Waste Hierarchy for city employees.

- Coordinate with the Human Resources Department to include these practices into job descriptions, training modules, new employee orientation, personnel manuals, goal setting and performance reviews.
- Explore the feasibility of Zero Waste professional development of assigned staff members – which could include more advanced trainings and give those employees the ability to coordinate Zero Waste efforts and/or lead a green team in their department.

Seek Department & Community Collaborations - Collaborations would expand and enhance opportunities for development & reaching goals.

- Streamline waste reduction expectations and requirements across all departments and city functions.
- Explore options for issuing waste reduction grants for community participation and support (for example, non-profits could apply for funding to produce a waste reduce, reuse or recycle campaign).

Sustain & Promote Best practices – Include Zero Waste best practices in citywide Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), while encouraging each department to adopt additional waste reduction SOPs specific to their operations.

- Explore the feasibility of requiring departments to submit waste reduction updates.
- Determine whether additional waste reduction goals should be reflected in other city planning documents such as the General Plan, and Strategic Goal and Objectives Plans.
- Encourage officials (Council, Commissions, etc.) in televised meetings to role model reusable choices such as beverage containers.
- Improve public facing trash and recycle bins to include educational signage (such as this is a city committed to Zero Waste).
- Update and Improve City Outreach, Marketing & Website about ZWAP efforts.
- Launch (program) campaign to bring awareness about the City's goal of becoming Zero Waste.