

STRATEGY 2: Diversion of Valuable Materials from Landfill

“Diversion” as we define it in this plan, sets actions that target the removal of materials from waste streams that are currently destined for landfills or incinerators that can be recycled and remade into useful products. Expanding recycling and composting is one of the fastest, least expensive, and most effective strategies to reduce GHG emissions. Although citizens are motivated to manage their waste responsibly, the average municipal recycling and organic diversion rate in Erie County is 29%, indicating much room for improvement. However, the solutions are not simple. In order to achieve significant reductions in GHG emissions, Erie County is continuing to expand waste diversion infrastructure, to educate local leaders, citizens, businesses, and commercial entities on how to separate organics, “[Recycle Right](#),” and to support existing and proposed waste diversion programs. Furthermore, the County will participate in a waste flow study in order to characterize the types, quantities, and current solutions to waste management available to determine how to most effectively support and improve waste diversion in Erie County.

Diversion streams include recyclables, food waste and other compostable materials, textiles, mattresses, carpets, construction and demolition debris, and disaster debris. Another key component of waste diversion is proper management of hazardous, and other difficult to dispose of materials, which should reduce instances of illegal dumping. Materials such as fluorescent light bulbs, pesticides, chemicals, and automotive fluids cannot be disposed of through weekly trash collection, and instead need to be disposed of through the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Program. The County will address barriers associated with HHW, such as serving community members that do not have vehicles by partnering with local community centers/organizations who can help educate and provide support with more accessible collection events and opportunities for drop offs.

Additionally, the County will work to encourage private-public partnership to improve the recovery and collection infrastructure that is currently in place, so as to better maximize the effectiveness of our diversion rates, and mitigate the damaging effects that improper waste disposal has on our communities. Finally, we understand the need to promote and encourage our citizens and commercial entities on why quality participation is valuable and essential for a successful climate action plan for all.

ACTION ITEM	HORIZON	SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	LEAD COUNTY ENTITY	PARTNERS
2.1: Encourage compliance with NYSDEC Food Waste law for business enterprises through outreach and education, and identify possible funding sources for ensured compliance.	Ongoing	Indirect/ Support	DEP	NYSDEC, Sustainable Business Roundtable, Sheriff's Department, DPW, Local service providers
2.2: Develop and expand food and yard waste recycling programs at municipal buildings and operations. Train on and promote residential and commercial collection programs, including backyard composting.	Short-Term	Direct	DEP	Local municipalities, Environmental Management Council, DPW, DSS, Local service providers
2.3: Develop and enhance local recycling solutions for C&D debris, mattresses, textiles, and carpets.	Medium-Term	Indirect	DEP	Waste haulers & recycling companies, Local trade organizations
2.4: Support recycling options for multi-family residential buildings, public housing, and commercial entities.	Ongoing	Indirect/ Support	DEP	Building owners & management associations, SBR, Local municipalities, Waste haulers & recycling companies, EMC
2.5: Reduce GHG emissions during the collection and processing of recycling and waste through electrification of fleets and use of efficient routing methods. (reference Transportation WG)	Short-Term	Indirect	DEP	Waste haulers, NYSERDA, municipalities

2.6: Educate and promote responsible waste management practices throughout all sectors of Erie County	Ongoing	Direct/ Indirect/ Support	DEP	SBR, Local municipalities, P2I, K-12 schools, Erie 1 Boces, Grocery stores and other large sources of consumer recyclables, Religious and cultural institutions, DSS
2.7: Develop local solutions for managing disaster debris.	Medium-Term/ Ongoing	Direct/ Indirect/ Support	DEP	Emergency Services, Local municipalities, EMC
2.8: Support a waste flow study to determine how waste moves throughout the County, local capacities for management, and baselines.	Short-Term	Direct	DEP	Academic institutions
2.9: Promote and expand participation in Household Hazardous Waste collection events and Household Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Voucher program and address barriers to participation in existing and emerging programs.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	Local service providers, EMC, Local municipalities