

## Chapter 5: Consumption and Waste

### **GOAL: Responsible production and consumption of resources and sustainable management of waste.**

Managing waste through responsible consumption and production of resources means minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of a service or product so as to not jeopardize the needs of future generations.

Although waste is a relatively small part of Erie County's GHG inventory and consumption is not included in the inventory, they contribute to far-reaching environmental impacts felt by our community and beyond. In particular, disadvantaged communities disproportionately experience the detrimental effects of rampant consumption and waste. For example, the siting of waste facilities has historically been in low-income communities.

The Erie County government does not own or operate any active landfills and most of the waste generated in the County is transported to areas outside the County. However, waste management facilities, such as transfer stations, exist within the County's borders. Additionally, many of the products and resources that Erie County residents consume come from national and even global sources, further adding to our "hidden" GHG impacts surrounding waste and consumption. While the majority of GHG emissions that result from consumption and waste within Erie County are not accounted for in any GHG inventory, this does not alleviate the County's responsibilities as policymakers or consumers to reduce waste. Erie County's current efforts to reduce the production of waste include outreach and education with municipalities and commercial entities, but significantly more work is needed to reach greater reduction and diversion goals.

With this plan, Erie County has a tremendous opportunity to reduce waste, consumption of resources, and GHG emissions by means of responsible production and consumption of resources. With an equity-driven, inclusive approach, and through our overriding strategies of Reduction, Diversion, and Reuse/Repair, this Plan will positively impact the environment of individuals, neighborhoods, businesses, our great County, as well as our global community.

DEFINITIONS FOR ACTIONS SPECIFICATIONS
<b>Short-term:</b> By or before 2030
<b>Medium-term:</b> By 2040
<b>Long-term:</b> By 2050
<b>Direct:</b> County government can directly control the action - relating to County government operations and infrastructure
<b>Indirect:</b> Regional agencies and municipalities have control and/or the County government can support/influence
<b>Support:</b> State or Federal policies and programs

## STRATEGY 1: Reduction

Waste reduction means reducing waste at the source. As a consumer this can be achieved through avoiding disposable products, buying in bulk, and developing mindful consumption habits. As a business, this can be accomplished through improved purchasing and packaging, eliminating the toxicity of products and in operations, and by refurbishing, selling, or donating used equipment and tools. The simple act of not creating waste is often overlooked as we strive to help our communities properly divert as much material as possible. Waste reduction decreases GHG emissions that contribute to climate change while conserving natural resources and energy and reducing the toxicity of our waste.

The Solid Waste Management Act of 1988 established New York State's Solid Waste Management Policy. The top solid waste management priority in this policy is to reduce the amount of solid waste generated. Similarly, the United States Environmental Protection Agency lists waste prevention as the most preferred waste management strategy. The County aims to align its actions with these policies, making waste reduction the number one priority under the Consumption and Waste goal.

Additionally, Erie County manages the Northeast, Southtowns, and Northwest Local Solid Waste Management Plans in addition to collaborating on the City of Buffalo's local Comprehensive Recycling Analysis. These plans include waste reduction as the number one priority in waste management strategies. Improvements in waste reduction at the source can be achieved through education, collaboration, support, and encouragement within all sectors of the community including individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and local municipalities.

ACTION ITEM	HORIZON	SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	LEAD COUNTY ENTITY	PARTNERS
1.1: Phase out single use plastics and other single use products in government contracts and provide commercial entities with single use product reduction methodologies.	Short-Term	Direct	Purchasing	NYSP2I, SBR
1.2: Educate community members on the prevalence of food waste and solutions to food waste while promoting programs, such as the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Food: Too Good to Waste Program and USDA's Let's Glean Program.	Ongoing	Direct/ Indirect	DEP	Local restaurant associations, Local grocery stores, EPA, USDA, municipalities, EMC, Schools
1.3: Promote and educate the community and businesses on mindful consumption through campaigns such as "Buy in Bulk" and "Bring Your Own," which aim to decrease food packaging waste.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	EPA, SBR, NYSP2I
1.4: Encourage municipalities to adopt programs that foster community member waste disposal reduction habits, including potential incentives such as pay-as-you-throw pricing for municipal garbage.	Ongoing/ Long-Term	Direct	DEP	Local municipalities
1.5: Work with external organizations to educate and encourage businesses and municipalities on the benefits of reducing energy usage, toxicity of products, improved packaging, and waste in supply chains.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP/ Purchasing	SBR, NYSP2I, Local municipalities
1.6: Endorse Extended Producer Responsibility state legislation such as "Bottle Bill" legislation. (Senate Bill S1185C, Assembly Bill A10185, Assembly Bill A8668A)	Ongoing	Direct	DEP, County Executive	Statewide organizations, State and County legislatures

1.7: Encourage commercial entities to track waste, energy, and water data using EPA tools, such as its ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	EPA
1.8: Support community action groups whose goals align with creating effective changes in waste reduction practices.	Ongoing	Support	DEP	Local and state community action groups

#### Infographics/Call-Outs Boxes to Be Added Later:

- Mindful consumption
- EPA waste management hierarchy
- Food Too Good to Waste Program (EPA)
- Pay-as-you-throw garbage
- Too Good to Go
- Recycling
- Extended User Responsibility

## STRATEGY 2: Diversion

“Diversion,” as defined in this Plan, sets actions that target the removal of materials from waste streams that are currently destined for landfills or incinerators so they 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; 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 pursue a community waste flow study 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 materials that are difficult to dispose of, 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 County’s

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Program. In addition, there is a need for better regulation across municipalities for recycling across the board. The County will address barriers associated with HHW, such as deciphering new rules for collecting e-waste and serving community members that do not have vehicles, by partnering with local community centers and organizations who can help educate and provide support with more accessible collection events and opportunities for drop offs.

Additionally, the County will encourage private-public partnerships to improve the waste recovery and collection infrastructure that is currently in place 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 actively pursue, promote, and encourage our citizens and commercial entities on why quality participation in this strategy is essential for successful climate mitigation in our region.

ACTION ITEM	HORIZON	SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	LEAD COUNTY ENTITY	PARTNERS
2.1: Encourage promotion and compliance with NY Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Food Waste Law and Good Samaritan Law for business enterprises through outreach and education. Identify possible funding sources for ensured compliance.	Ongoing	Indirect/Support	DEP	NYSDEC, WNY Sustainable Business Roundtable, Sheriff's Department, DPW, Local service providers, ECDOH
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, EMC, DPW, DSS, Local service providers

2.3: Develop and enhance local recycling solutions for construction and demolition 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.	Short-Term	Indirect	DEP	Waste haulers, NYSERDA, municipalities
2.6: Educate and promote responsible waste management practices, such as the recovery and collection infrastructure, throughout all sectors of Erie County.	Ongoing	Direct/Indirect/Support	DEP	Sustainability Business Roundtable, Local municipalities, NYS Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSPP2I), K-12 schools, Erie 1 BOCES, grocery stores, religious and cultural institutions, Department of Social Services (DSS), waste management companies, NYSDEC
2.7: Develop local solutions for managing disaster debris.	Medium-Term/Ongoing	Direct/Indirect/Support	DEP	Emergency Services, Local municipalities, EMC
2.8: Conduct a waste flow study to understand how waste moves throughout the County, local capacities for management, and baselines.	Short-Term	Direct	DEP	Academic institutions, local governments
2.9: Promote and expand participation in the HHW	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	Local service providers, EMC, local municipalities

collection program and address barriers to participation in existing and emerging programs.				
2.10: Identify changes or opportunities to expand and increase recycling of electronics and other difficult to dispose of products (e.g., fluorescent tubes) in Erie County.	Short-Term	Direct/ Support	DEP	NYSDEC, Solid Waste Boards, UB

#### Infographics/Call-Outs Boxes to Be Added Later:

- Recycle Right NY
- Household Hazardous Waste Program
- Recovery and Collection Infrastructure
- Composting in the backyard vs driving to a collection site
- Recycling fluorescent light bulbs or potentially hazardous materials
- Life cycle of e-waste
- NYSDEC Food Waste Law
- Good Samaritan Law

### STRATEGY 3: Reuse

According to the EPA, each person in America produces 4.9 pounds of waste every day. This translates to 1,789 pounds per year per person or to 1.65 billion pounds of waste per year in Erie County alone! Additionally, the EPA estimates that 28.1% of our municipal solid waste is made up of packaging.

As expressed in STRATEGY 1: “Reduction,” the most effective way to reduce waste is to not create it in the first place. Consider all the things we buy for use at home and work. GHG emissions from the creation of all these products and their packaging are emitted throughout the entire product life cycle, which begins during the extraction of raw materials from the earth and includes the manufacturing process, energy, waste, and transportation throughout the various stages.

As a result, reuse and repair can be extremely effective ways to reduce natural resource consumption, protect the environment, and save money. Waste reduction through reuse and repair can be achieved in many ways and has a number of benefits. When feasible, buying only what you need; buying items that can be used more than once; reusing and repurposing items;

buying used, repaired, or remanufactured items; taking good care of your things through maintenance and repair; and borrowing, renting, and sharing items can all reduce the amount of waste generated in addition to saving consumers money.

The reuse and repair methodology is intended to extend the life of a product in order to protect our resources and reduce the amount of waste we produce by encouraging a shift in mindset away from both impulse buying and a “throw-away, convenience” culture. In order to increase reuse and repair in Erie County, the County will disseminate information about current reuse and repair practices and markets, and focus on educating consumers, removing barriers, and supporting and enhancing reuse-repair activities. The County will make it easier for citizens to reduce the amount of waste they generate by informing the community on the positive impact of reuse, connecting people with reuse options, and promoting reuse through campaigns such as “Bring Your Own.” Furthermore, we will expand the reuse and repair movement through legislative support of bills that promote product stewardship by extending the life of products to reduce their impact, including the Digital Right to Repair Act.

ACTION ITEM	HORIZON	SPHERE OF INFLUENCE	LEAD COUNTY ENTITY	PARTNERS
3.1: Identify and disseminate current reuse, repair, resell, and sharing practices and programs in Erie County to determine how they can be supported and enhanced.	Short-Term	Direct	DEP	Buy Nothing Groups, Academic Institutions, local donation centers, Sustainability Business Roundtable, local tool libraries and repair cafes, Buffalo ReUse
3.2: Support right to repair organizations and legislation such as Digital Fair Repair Act and “Right to Repair” legislation. (Senate Bill S4104A, Senate Bill S149).	On-going	Direct	DEP	Chambers of Commerce, local repair cafes
3.3: Promote and educate consumers on the benefits of reusable products like refillable containers, product repair, maker spaces, and buying used goods.	On-going	Direct	DEP/ Department of Health	Local municipalities, Sustainability Business Roundtable, State agencies



3.4: Promote business reuse in commercial spaces through programs such as the Material Exchange Network through United Way.	Ongoing	Direct	DEP	Sustainability Business Roundtable, Buffalo ReUse
3.5: Support and expand the public library's Sports Equipment Lending program.	Ongoing	Indirect	DEP	Local municipalities, Library System

**Infographics/Call-Outs Boxes to Be Added Later:**

- Supply & Demand