ON THE ROAD TO ZERO WASTE

When it comes to waste, our choice is simple: Every day we get either closer to or further from a Zero Waste future. We can choose to use our limited resources sustainably, so we can support future generations. We can choose to reduce our climate impact and build resilient communities. We can choose to invest in green jobs and our local economy. Or, we can continue to throw away our “trash” and with it all these opportunities for positive change.

We choose a Zero Waste future, and with this step-by-step guide, we can help you do the same for your community. Let’s get moving!
WHAT IS ZERO WASTE?

Zero Waste redesigns our systems and resource use—from product design to disposal—to prevent resource depletion, conserve energy, mitigate climate change, reduce water usage, prevent toxins creation, and stop ecosystem destruction.

Zero Waste then captures our discards and uses them, instead of virgin natural resources, to make new products, creating far less pollution and feeding the local economy.
WHAT YOU NEED TO CREATE A ZERO WASTE FUTURE

This Roadmap provides a high-level overview of the key infrastructure, policies and programs that have been proven to work in the communities pursuing Zero Waste around the globe. It is presented as a three-phase, 10-year plan to recover 90% of the discards in your community and to reduce waste at the source. We know that ten years is the best case scenario, so don’t let that ambitious timeframe prevent you from getting started.

Most communities will start on Phase One, with a simple yet powerful goal: Everyone in the community should have the opportunity to recycle and compost everywhere in your community—at home, at work, at school and on the go. By building an equitable and universal Zero Waste collection system, you’re making it easy and convenient for everyone to participate and inspiring them to start down the Zero Waste path.

So if you’re going to stop throwing away your discards into a landfill or an incinerator, where are you going to put them? The creation of alternative facilities is essential for your Zero Waste success. These six facilities are required at some point in your journey to achieve a Zero Waste community:

- **RECYCLABLES**
  Materials recovery facility (MRF) for traditional recyclables
- **HARD-TO-RECYCLE**
  Center for hard-to-recycle materials (CHaRM) for non-traditional recycling
- **REUSE & REPAIR**
  Reuse and repair facilities for highest and best use before recycling
- **CONSTRUCTION**
  Construction, demolition and deconstruction (CDD) facilities for recycling and reuse of building materials
- **ORGANICS**
  Organics recovery facility (ORF) for composting and energy production
- **WHATEVER’S LEFT**
  Materials recovery biological treatment (MRBT) facility for “whatever’s left”

These essential Zero Waste facilities use off-the-shelf technology with established construction and operating costs. Many communities will already have some of these facilities. They don’t all need to be built at once (see where they fit in the timeline on the next page), but the facility planning process needs to start early in the Zero Waste effort.
21 ESSENTIAL ACTION STEPS FOR A ZERO WASTE FUTURE

While there are hundreds of actions you can take on the journey to Zero Waste, we’ve identified these 21 steps as the essential policies, programs and infrastructure you need to succeed. Download the full version of this Roadmap to find best practices for each of the steps below so you can learn more about how this strategy is working on the ground.

Find sample policies and real-world examples for each action step at ecocyclesolutionshub.org.

**PHASE 1**
Access to Services
YEARS 1-5

- Commit to the Zero Waste path and start measuring your progress
- Universal household recycling with unit-based pricing (PAYT)
- Universal recycling for all businesses and multi-family units (MFUs)
- Universal composting programs for households, MFUs and some businesses
- Product fees and bans
- Public space, school and government initiatives including Zero Waste events
- Incentives for construction, demolition and deconstruction (CDD) recycling
- Community education

**Supporting Infrastructure:**
- Materials Recovery Facility, Organics Processing Facility

**PHASE 2**
Building Participation
YEARS 6-9

- Recycling required for all businesses, homes and MFUs
- Composting required for all businesses, homes and MFUs
- Expand waste reduction and reuse initiatives
- Biweekly trash service for residents
- Landfill and incinerator disposal bans
- Producer responsibility for hard-to-recycle (HTR) materials including electronics, paint, mattresses, carpet, batteries and other misc. products.
- Recovering materials from mixed construction loads
- Community education

**Supporting Infrastructure:**
- Center for Hard-to-Recycle Materials, Construction Reuse and Recycling Facilities

**PHASE 3**
Recovering Whatever’s Left
YEARS 10+

- Enforcement of source-separation requirements
- Public policy support for sustainable consumption
- Economic policy changes and full-cost accounting
- Residual waste processing and ban on incineration
- Community education

**Supporting Infrastructure:**
- Materials Recovery Biological Treatment (MRBT) Facility
Now that we've laid out “what” to do on the road to Zero Waste, how do you get there?

The Zero Waste journey should ideally be spearheaded by at least two Zero Waste Champions. We call this the “inside-outside” partnership strategy. The inside Champion is from the public sector (either staff or elected) and the outside Champion is a citizen or citizen group. In our experience, the inside-outside partnership is one of the most powerful coalitions for change in your community.

Once you have an inside-outside partnership, it's time to establish your vision for the community. Traditionally that means coordinating stakeholder meetings to hear everyone's input on the vision and its implementation. However, this strategy may be premature in the case of complex issues like Zero Waste. We recommend first that the citizens and government partners create a vision statement that defines their goals for the community. We call this process the Community Table.
Once the community goal of Zero Waste is documented in a vision statement, then it is ready for a broader stakeholder process that includes private benefit players, like for-profit businesses or consultants. The objective is to bring diverse viewpoints together in a constructive, creative way to further the community vision.

**CHANGE STARTS WITH THE INSIDE-OUTSIDE PARTNERSHIP.**
It then expands out to the Community Table where the vision is refined before it reaches the larger Stakeholder Table.
GET MOVING: **SIX STEPS TOWARD ZERO WASTE**

Are you ready to dig in? Moving toward Zero Waste boils down to six key steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Get inspired by Zero Waste and understand what it takes to get there at <a href="http://ecocyclesolutionshub.org">ecocyclesolutionshub.org</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Share this vision and find other Zero Waste Champions to join you. Look for existing community groups to support your efforts, and focus on building an inside-outside partnership between government and citizens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>With your new partners, assess where your community is on the road to Zero Waste and prioritize your next steps.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Gather key community members in a Community Table process to create a Zero Waste Vision Statement that declares your goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Create a Stakeholder Table to discuss how everyone has a role to play to fulfill the community’s Zero Waste Vision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Work collectively to implement your Zero Waste Vision, returning to the Community Table process as needed as you move forward with new Zero Waste policies, programs and infrastructure.</td>
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**LET’S GET STARTED!**

Zero Waste is one of the fastest, easiest and most cost-effective ways our local communities can take meaningful action to create a more sustainable, resilient and prosperous world for future generations. Our goal with this Roadmap is to help your community get moving on the Zero Waste path and take measurable steps forward. The key is to just get started, no matter where you are. So let’s make today the start of your community journey toward Zero Waste. Your children and grandchildren will thank you for it.

*With help from experts and peers, you’ll never feel like you’re going it alone. Join us at [ecocyclesolutionshub.org](http://ecocyclesolutionshub.org).*