

**DPW ANNUAL**  
**Residential**  
**Recycling Report**

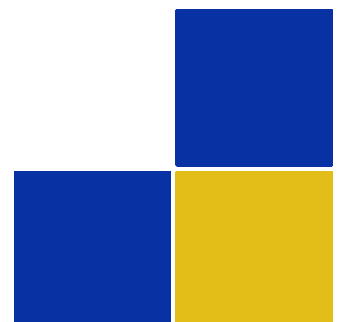
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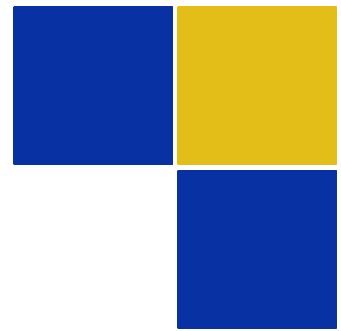
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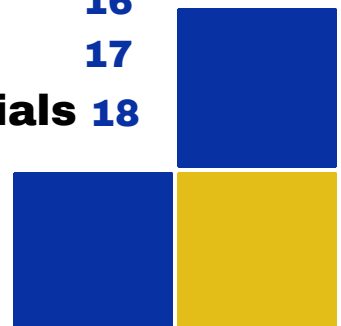
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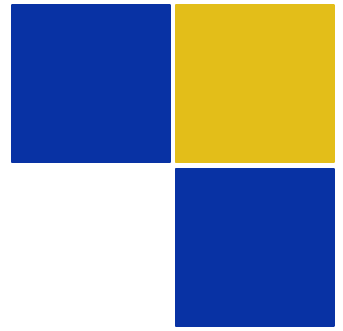


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# 1 Program Commentary

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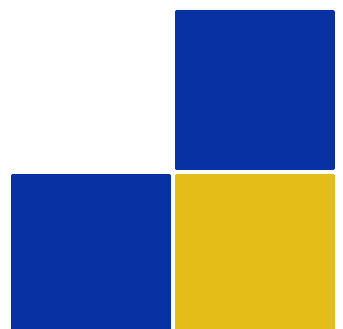
The Department of Public Works (DPW) is pleased to share the progress and milestones achieved by the recycling program in 2024. The year began much like the end of 2023, navigating the impacts of the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) fire in May 2023. To manage this, city recyclables were transferred to and processed at various regional MRFs until spring 2024, when the city recyclables were all transferred to the Waste Management Germantown MRF after it reopened from a nine-month rebuild. This strategic move enabled DPW to centralize operations, freeing staff time to focus on reconnecting with partners and expanding outreach efforts.

The expanded programming and partnerships have been both productive and enjoyable. DPW partnered with Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful (KGMB) to enhance composting and recycling outreach at the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) and in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). The three organizations also partnered on a pilot art project, celebrated on America Recycles Day, which was showcased for a month at the Mitchell Street Library. This pilot was well-received, and all partners will collaborate again for America Recycles Day 2025 programming. Furthermore, the collaboration with KGMB included composting workshops and a plant sale with the Garden District Neighborhood Association during the 13th Annual Compost Bin Sale pick-up day. These initiatives have been key in raising awareness and increasing community participation.

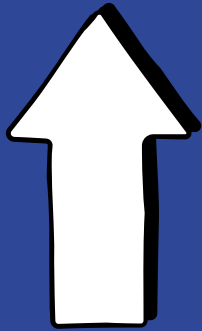
Read on to explore more about the recycling program outcomes and engaging initiatives of 2024!



LET'S MAKE MILWAUKEE CLEAN & GREEN.  
[MilwaukeeRecycles.com](http://MilwaukeeRecycles.com)



# 1.1 Program Highlights



Recycling  
Tonnage  
Increased  
5.8%



\$1.1 M  
Increased  
Revenue  
From Sale of  
Recyclable  
Materials

251 Compost  
Bins Sold



60 MPS Students  
Participated In  
America Recycles  
Day Art Gallery

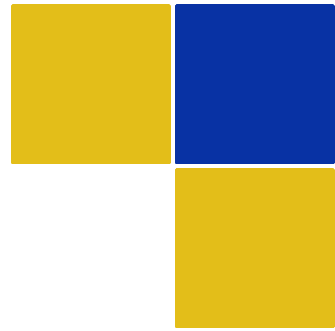


FEED MKE Project  
Awards \$190,000  
to 11 Organizations  
For Food Recovery  
And Composting

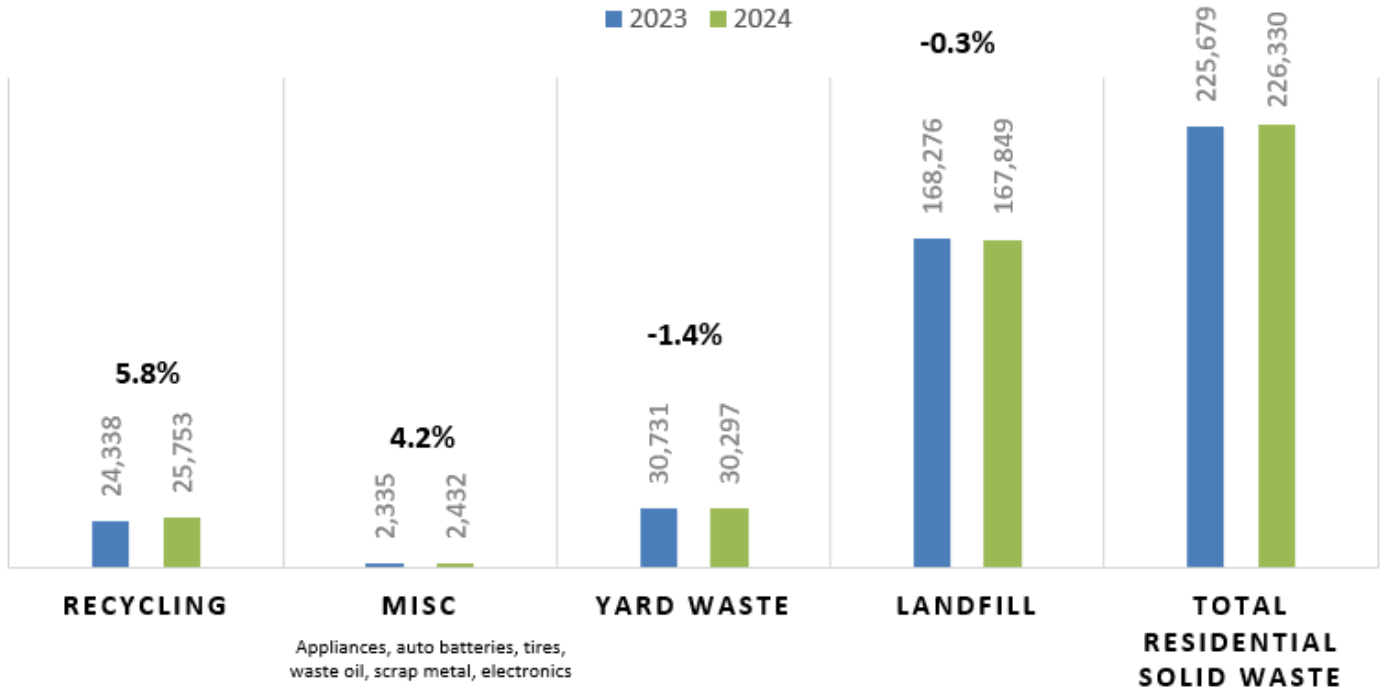


11 Presentations  
And Interviews

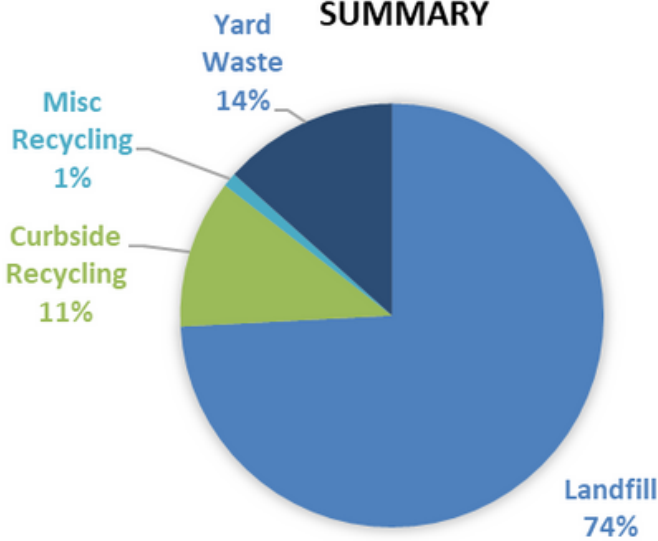
# 1.2 Program Summary



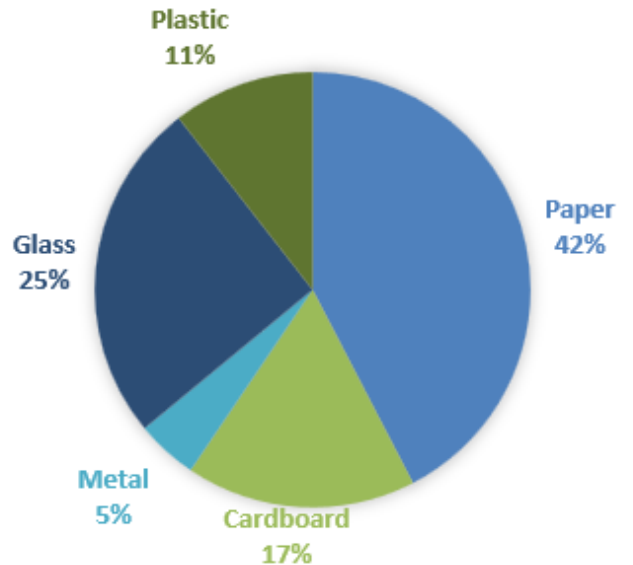
RESIDENTIAL TONS COLLECTED  
YEAR OVER YEAR PERCENT CHANGE



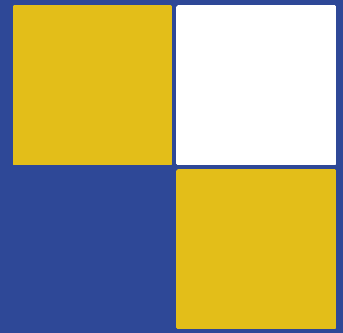
2024 TOTAL RESIDENTIAL SOLID WASTE  
SUMMARY



RECYCLING COMPOSITION



# 2 Resource Recovery Program Results



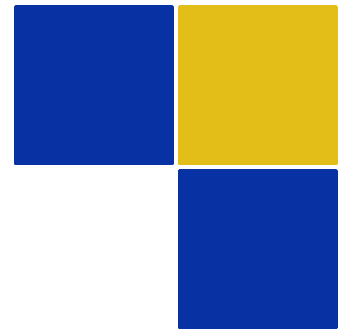
## 2.1 RECYCLING RESULTS

In 2024, the Department of Public Works (DPW) collected **25,753 tons** of residential recyclables, representing a **5.8% increase**, 1,415 tons more compared to 2023. The residential landfill diversion was 26% in 2024, similar to the previous year. The total amount of residential solid waste remained consistent with 2023 numbers at 226,330 tons. (Refer to Table 1: Residential Tons Collected on page 15). Since the program's lowest tonnage year in 2009, Milwaukee residents have increased their recycling volume by 16%, and the amount recycled per household has risen by 18%.

Several factors, including residents' spending habits, can influence the amount of waste and recycling generated at home. In 2024, DPW set a goal to increase recycling tonnage by 1%. This objective was to be achieved through enhanced programming and outreach efforts, which included strengthening existing partnerships and engaging new ones. DPW staff participated in presentations and interviews, and collaborated with community groups to develop new programs. Notably, the department increased its programming efforts with Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful (KGMB) and expanded recycling initiatives in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) and Milwaukee Public Library (MPL), with pilot programs launched for America Recycles Day. For more details on these programs, please see page 8.

Resident participation in the household recycling program helped **avoid over \$1.2 million** in landfill disposal costs in 2024. Additionally, **revenues** from the sale of recyclables saw significant growth, increasing by **\$1.1 million**. Prior to May 2023, the City benefited from favorable pricing under its long-term Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) operating contract, which resulted in lower processing costs and higher revenues from recyclable sales. However, starting June 2023, recyclables were sent to regional MRFs, causing a loss of the advantageous pricing structures enjoyed under the previous contract. Starting in March 2024, after a planned nine-month reconstruction, WM (formerly Waste Management) began accepting all city recyclables for processing, allowing the city to secure better pricing and improved revenue. For more details on the recycling program costs, please refer to Table 3 on page 18.

# 2 RESOURCE RECOVERY PROGRAM RESULTS



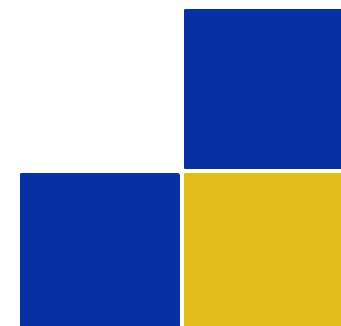
## 2.2 DROP OFF CENTERS

The two Drop Off Centers (DOC), located on Lincoln Avenue and Industrial Road, provide residents with a convenient way to recycle, compost, or safely dispose of over 20 different materials. Additionally, the City continues to collaborate with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District (MMSD) to offer a hazardous materials collection program at the Lincoln Avenue site, which is one of three collection sites available to all residents of Milwaukee County. In 2024, the DOCs served **281,385 visitors**, averaging over 1,020 visitors per day. In total, 72,418 tons of material were managed through the Drop Off Centers, with 17% being diverted from landfills.

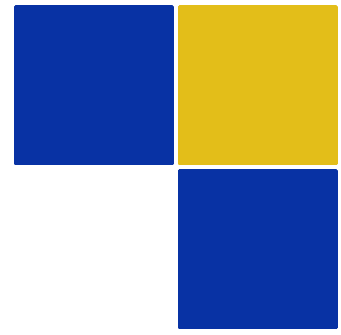


## 2.3 E-WASTE

In the 14<sup>th</sup> year of Wisconsin's E-Cycle producer responsibility program, established through state legislation in 2009, a total of **903,673 pounds** of electronics were collected at the DOCs in 2024. Compared to 2023, this represents a 7.6% decrease in the amount of electronics recycled per capita in the City of Milwaukee, dropping from 1.7 pounds to 1.6 pounds. This reduction is primarily due to fewer unwanted electronics being stored at home, along with changes in the overall composition, weight, and size of electronics. Additionally, the City benefited from improved pricing for its electronics recycling program in 2024.



# 2 RESOURCE RECOVERY PROGRAM RESULTS



## 2.4 CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTION

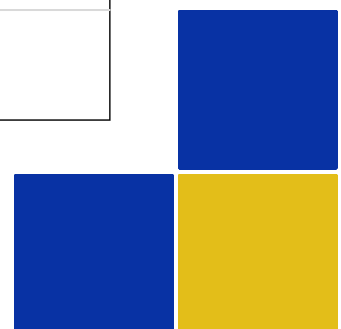
DPW modified its management of discarded Christmas trees during the 2023/2024 holiday season to comply with newly clarified state requirements. Traditionally, Milwaukee residents have been encouraged to bring their trees to the Drop Off Centers for disposal alongside yard waste. They also had the option to dispose of them curbside as bulky items collected by garbage crews.

To ensure proper handling, DPW established a segregated yard waste collection program specifically for Christmas trees, running from December 26, 2024, to April 1, 2025. During this period, approximately **3,534 Christmas trees**, weighing over 120,000 pounds, were collected from households.

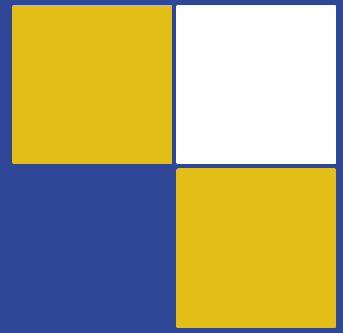
## 2.5 COMPLIANCE

DPW's recycling program staff is responsible for enforcing and managing local recycling ordinances. Wisconsin state law mandates these ordinances and requires the development of a compliance enforcement plan. During the enforcement process, property owners receive education and guidance to help them implement and operate effective recycling programs. Below is a summary of the DPW's recycling enforcement activities for 2024.

Property Type	Written Warnings	Citations	Fines and Late Fees
1-4 units residential (79-29)	3,108	1,655	\$ 45,800.00
5+ units residential (79-33)	5	2	\$ 905.19
Non-residential (business) (79-35)	-	-	-



# 3 EVENTS AND EDUCATION



## 3.1 COMPOST BIN SALE

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Compost Bin Sale took place from March to May 2024. For the fifth consecutive year, DPW partnered with Recycling Connections to organize the online sale. The goal of this event is to divert organic waste from landfills by encouraging home composting. This year, a total of **251 bins and 83 pails** were sold across 306 orders. Since the inaugural sale in 2012, the total number of bins sold to residents has reached 3,321.

In 2024, the distribution day was relocated to the Sanitation yard at 6th and Howard to improve the efficiency of order pickups and provide more flexible pickup times. This location is conveniently situated across from the Garden District Community Garden, which created an opportunity to engage new community partners. DPW collaborated with Alderman Spiker's office and the Garden District Neighborhood Association (GDNA) to host a plant sale. To further engage residents, DPW also partnered with Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful (KGMB) to offer three workshops during the pickup times. The plant sale and workshops aimed to educate residents about composting and help kick-start the growing season. Despite the all-day rain and cold weather, the plant sale sold out, and 30 attendees participated in the compost workshops.



DPW staff unloading compost bins



GDNA Plant sale



Bins ready to be picked up

# 3 EVENTS AND EDUCATION

## 3.2 AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

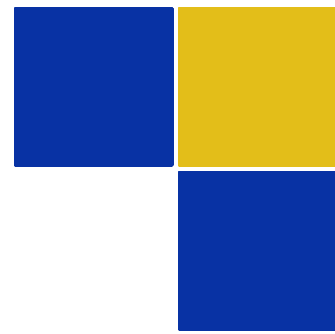
To celebrate America Recycles Day on November 15, the DPW partnered with Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful (KGMB), Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), and the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) to create the Recycling Contamination Art Gallery. KGMB visited three MPS classes to provide recycling education and guide the art project.

The artwork featured in the gallery was created by middle and high school students at MPS, using materials that are often mistakenly thrown into recycling bins. Each piece of art included information aimed at helping the community understand why certain items are considered contaminants, their impact on the recycling system, and the proper ways to dispose of them.

The gallery was officially opened during a press event with Mayor Cavalier Johnson on Friday, November 15, at the Mitchell Library. It was on display during regular library hours until December 14. **Over 60 students** from South Division High School, Marshall High School, and Walt Whitman participated in the project.



# 3 EVENTS AND EDUCATION



## 3.2 AMERICA RECYCLES DAY CONT.



To further promote America Recycles Day, DPW collaborated with the Mayor's office to create a recycling video in which Mayor Johnson teaches Milwaukee residents what belongs in home recycling carts and where to dispose of other materials like batteries.

On Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, DPW partnered with Mermaid Echo and Discovery World for Sci-Fi Family Day. During this event, an underwater performance educated families about the impacts of plastic pollution in our waterways. Over **120 attendees** attended two shows, where they learned about the effects of plastic pollution and the importance of recycling correctly.



Mermaid Echo



Join us November 17th  
at Discovery World



# 3 EVENTS AND EDUCATION



## 3.3 KEEP GREATER MILWAUKEE BEAUTIFUL

The ongoing partnership between DPW and KGMB brought together promotions like the Compost Bin Sale workshops and America Recycles Day. In addition to those programs, twenty-six schools in the City of Milwaukee, including **97 adults and 1,749 students**, participated in KGMB's Recycle for Good educational programs.

## 3.4 INTERVIEWS AND PRESENTATIONS

In 2024, DPW staff led **five presentations** and were interviewed for **six articles and news segments**. Topics included tips for recycling correctly, promoting the annual compost bin sale, and raising awareness about the FEED MKE project.

## 3.5 WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The main page of [MilwaukeeRecycles.com](https://www.milwaukee-recycles.com) received 29,400 unique page views. The [recycling directory page](#), which offers information on items collected curbside and those that need to be taken to the Drop Off Centers or other facilities for recycling or safe disposal, remains the top-performing page. [Additionally, the pages for recycling electronics](#), resources for [donating items](#), and downloading the [curbside guide](#) also attracted significant traffic.

At the end of 2024, the [@MilwaukeeRecycles Facebook](#) page had over **2,740 followers**, which represents a 5% increase compared to 2023. The posts featured educational content and tips on reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting. They also included helpful resources, service reminders, and advertisements for special events. The two most shared posts provided information about Project Clean and Green, while the third most shared post promoted the Annual Compost Bin Sale.



# 3 EVENTS AND EDUCATION

## 3.6 FALL MAILER

In the fall of 2024, DPW released its annual Recycling and Waste Reduction mailer. This mailer is designed to educate residents about recycling, confirm the schedules for upcoming seasonal services, and provide resources for the proper disposal of various materials.

The featured article, "Safety First! Avoid Disposal Dangers," discusses hazardous items such as batteries, propane tanks, and plastic bags that can pose dangers during the recycling process. It also offers residents guidance on how to dispose of these items safely.

Additional content includes information about the City's yard waste disposal services, updates on the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and where recyclables are processed, reminders of seasonal schedules, and a list of holidays observed by the city. Residents can access DPW's annual fall mailer online at [www.Milwaukee.gov/RecycleReports](http://www.Milwaukee.gov/RecycleReports).

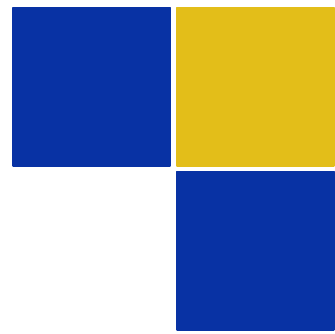


## 3.7 E-NOTIFY

Press releases and e-notices are sent to inform residents about service and program updates while highlighting various topics related to waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. Below are some of the e-notifies distributed to the Milwaukee Recycles list:

- Waste and Recycling Tips
- DPW Sanitation Spring Updates
- Compost Bin Sale press release
- Spring into the Season with DPW Sanitation
- International Compost Awareness Week
- DPW Sanitation Fall Updates
- America Recycles Day
- Holiday Recycling Tips and DPW Reminders

# 3 EVENTS AND EDUCATION

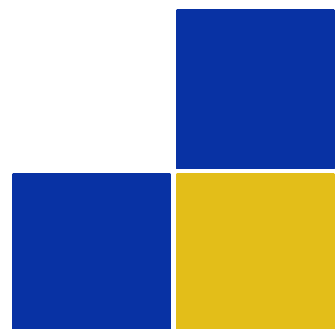


## 3.8 FEED MKE PILOT PROJECT

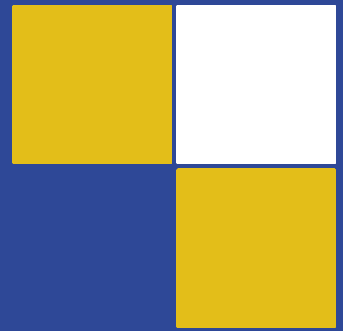
In 2024, the Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO) received a **\$500,000 Cooperative Agreement** from the United States Department of Agriculture's Compost and Food Waste Recovery program. This funding supports ECO's Food Excess, Equitable Distribution (FEED) MKE Pilot Project, which aims to coordinate and expand initiatives among public, private, and government partners to tackle the interconnected issues of food insecurity, waste reduction, landfill diversion, and climate change.

In the summer of 2024, a grant coordinator was hired to launch and manage the program. Throughout the remainder of 2024, the DPW partnered with ECO to develop and evaluate applications for the FEED MKE Mini Grant program. This program awarded **\$190,000 in mini-grants to 11 organizations**, supporting capacity-building for food recovery and community composting initiatives.

ECO and DPW are actively collaborating with the mini-grant recipients to implement projects and strengthen partnerships throughout 2025. Furthermore, DPW will launch the Free Food Scrap Drop-Off Pilot program to encourage food waste diversion. DPW is partnering with local community groups and organizations to host collection carts, where residents can bring food scraps collected at home to designated drop-off locations.



# 4 MRF UPDATE



## 4.1 BACKGROUND

On the afternoon of Wednesday, May 31, 2023, a significant fire broke out at the MRF. All staff were evacuated promptly and there were no reported injuries. The Milwaukee Fire Department responded to the incident and worked to extinguish the flames throughout the evening, remaining on site until the following day. The cause of the fire is still unknown, largely due to its severity. Based on previous incidents at the MRF and similar facilities across the country, it is possible that the fire was ignited by contamination from items such as batteries or other flammable materials. The City's insurance provider has determined that the equipment involved in the fire is a total loss, and much of the building requires extensive repairs.

## 4.2 COST IMPACTS

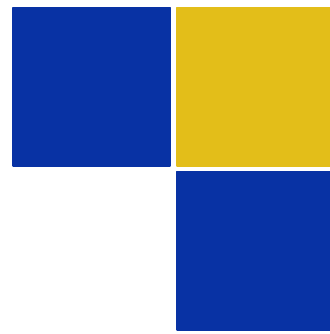
DPW and the City Attorney's office continue to work through the insurance process to recover costs related to the fire, which includes damages to buildings and equipment as well as additional operating expenses for 2024. While the City's insurance is covering some of these costs, the financial repercussions are ongoing. The most significant of these are the increased processing and hauling costs.

Under a long-term operating contract for the MRF, the City previously enjoyed favorable pricing, resulting in lower processing costs and higher revenues from the sale of recyclables. However, since the fire, recyclables have been sent to regional MRFs, causing the City to lose the advantageous pricing structures that were part of the previous MRF contract. This has led to not only higher processing costs and reduced revenues but also an additional expense for transferring recyclables from the City's transfer station to regional MRFs.

From May 2023 until early 2024, Waste Management (WM) temporarily closed its Germantown MRF for a major reconstruction project. This construction project was completed in spring 2024, allowing the City to transfer or directly haul all its recyclables to the WM Germantown MRF. As a result, the pricing structure became similar to that of the long-term operating agreement, leading to lower processing costs and revenue sharing for the City. The new structure led to a **revenue increase from the sale of recyclables by \$1,153,103 for a total of \$1,563,192 and a decrease of \$266,017 in hauling costs.**

# 4 MRF UPDATE

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## 4.3 NEXT STEPS

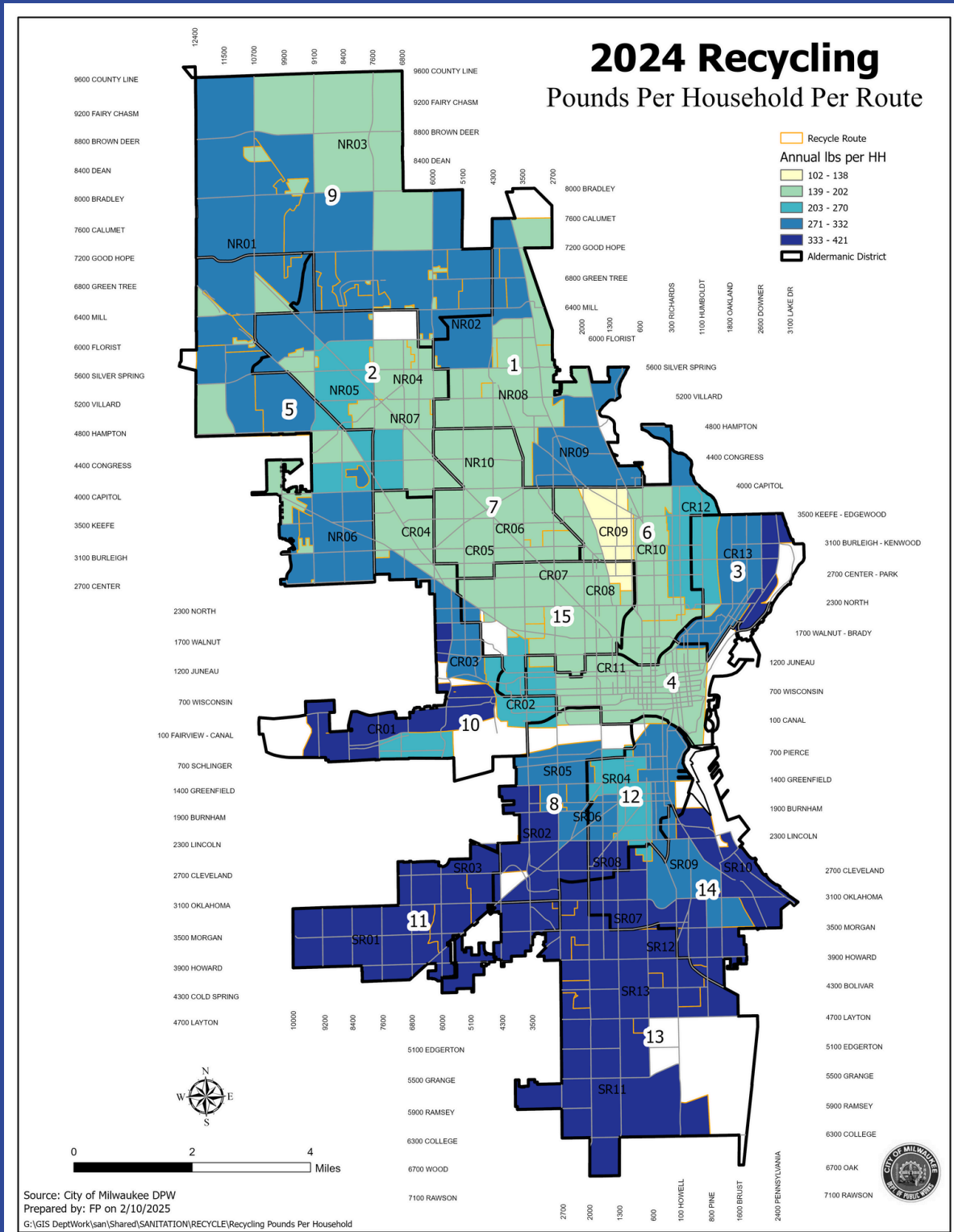
DPW and Waukesha County engaged industry consultants RRS to conduct a feasibility study that assessed long-term options for managing combined tonnage in the most cost-effective way. The study evaluated the financial projections for developing and operating a public MRF and compared these projections to the transfer of recyclables to a private MRF.

The study's findings led to a mutual decision between Waukesha County and the City of Milwaukee not to rebuild at the existing site and to terminate the Intergovernmental Agreement in 2025. Currently, DPW continues to transfer recyclables to Waste Management (WM) and plans to release a bid for a long-term processing agreement. DPW will also continue to engage local partners and collaborate with consultants to develop a long-term strategy that is both economically viable and operationally sustainable.



# 5 ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

## 5.1 RECYCLING POUNDS PER HOUSEHOLD



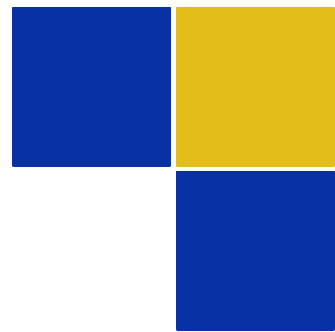
# 5 ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

## 5.2 TABLE 1: RESIDENTIAL TONS COLLECTED

Table 1  
Residential Tons Collected  
YOY

	2023	2024	Change	
			Tons	Percent
<b>Recycling Materials - household</b>				
Combined Paper	10,274	10,917	643	6.3%
Corrugated Cardboard	4,238	4,395	158	3.7%
Aluminum Cans	299	317	19	6.3%
Steel Cans	543	577	34	6.3%
Scrap Metal	266	282	17	6.3%
Glass Containers	6,166	6,552	386	6.3%
Plastic Containers	2,553	2,713	160	6.3%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>24,338</b>	<b>25,753</b>	<b>1,415</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
<b>Recycling Materials - other residential*</b>				
Appliances with Refrigerants	128	166	38	29.6%
Lead Acid Batteries	16	19	3	15.5%
Waste Tires	575	646	71	12.3%
Waste Oil	173	194	20	11.8%
Electronics	489	452	-37	-7.6%
Scrap Metal	926	905	-21	-2.3%
Miscellaneous	28	52	24	85.6%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2,335</b>	<b>2,432</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Yard Waste &amp; Organics</b>				
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>30,731</b>	<b>30,297</b>	<b>-434</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>
<b>Total Diverted</b>	<b>57,403</b>	<b>58,482</b>	<b>1,079</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
<b>Household Solid Waste</b>				
Cart collection (1-4 unit HHs)	155,582	154,400	-1,181	-0.8%
Dumpster service (>4 unit HH)	5,799	5,736	-63	-1.1%
Skid loader	3,546	4,398	852	24.0%
Clean & Green program	1,227	1,251	24	1.9%
Miscellaneous	2,122	2,064	-58	-2.7%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>168,276</b>	<b>167,849</b>	<b>-427</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>
<b>Total Residential Solid Waste</b>	<b>225,679</b>	<b>226,330</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>0.3%</b>

# 5 ADDITIONAL REFERENCES



## 5.3 TABLE 2: RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM METRICS

Table 2  
Residential Program Metrics  
2024

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>Change</u>
<b>Effectiveness Measures</b>			
Household Material Recycling Rate*	10.8%	11.4%	0.6%
Yard Waste Recycling Rate	13.6%	13.4%	-0.2%
Other Materials Recycling Rate**	1.0%	1.1%	0.0%
Total Recycling Rate	25.4%	25.8%	0.4%
Household Materials Recycling lbs. Per Household	260.27	275.41	15.14
	<i>Percent change 2023 to 2024:</i>		<b>5.8%</b>

### Efficiency Measures - Household Recycling Only

Residential Recycling Program Costs (State rpt. method)	<b>\$ 14,216,371</b>	<b>\$ 14,766,735</b>	<b>\$ 550,364</b>
State Cost Sharing/Grant Revenue	\$ 2,307,372	\$ 2,310,379	\$ 3,007
Recyclable Commodity Sales Revenue	\$ 410,089	\$ 1,563,192	\$ 1,153,103
Avoided Landfill Disposal Costs	\$ 1,185,493	\$ 1,275,040	\$ 89,547
<b>Subtotal of offsets</b>	<b>\$ 3,902,953</b>	<b>\$ 5,148,611</b>	<b>\$ 1,245,658</b>
<b>Net Costs - Residential Recycling Program</b>	<b>\$ 10,313,418</b>	<b>\$ 9,618,124</b>	<b>\$ (695,294)</b>
<b>Net Cost Per Ton - Res. Recycling Program</b>	<b>\$ 423.76</b>	<b>\$ 373.47</b>	<b>\$ (50.29)</b>



# 5 ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

## 5.4 TABLE 3: RECYCLABLES PROCESSING FINANCIALS

Table 3  
Recyclables Processing Financials Comparison  
2024

*This table relates to processing of residential recyclables after collection.  
It does not include collection costs or recycling grant revenues.*

	2023	2024	Change	% Change
<b>Commodity Sales Revenue</b>				
Revenue/Ton (Market Value)	\$ 57.60	\$ 96.56	\$ 38.96	67.6%
City's Share (Rev/T Received from Contractor)	\$ 14.90	\$ 60.70	\$ 45.80	307.4%
<b>Total revenue to City</b>	<b>\$ 410,089</b>	<b>\$ 1,563,192</b>	<b>\$ 1,153,103</b>	<b>281.2%</b>
<b>Processing Costs</b>				
Processing per ton rate	\$ 89.40	\$ 95.00	\$ 5.60	6.3%
Processing tons	24,337.77	25,753.18	1,415.41	5.8%
Processing cost	\$ 1,637,147.42	\$ 2,107,569.60	470,422.18	28.7%
Transportation cost	\$ 1,044,883.71	\$ 778,866.63	(266,017.08)	-25.5%
<b>Total Processing Costs</b>	<b>\$ 2,682,031</b>	<b>\$ 2,886,436</b>	<b>\$ 204,405</b>	<b>7.6%</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>				
Net revenue (received after processing)	\$ (2,271,942)	\$ (1,323,244)	\$ 948,698	-41.8%
<b>Net revenue per ton</b>	<b>\$ (93.35)</b>	<b>\$ (51.38)</b>	<b>\$ 41.97</b>	<b>-45.0%</b>
<b>Avoided Disposal Costs</b>				
Landfill costs per ton	\$ 48.71	\$ 49.51	\$ 0.80	1.6%
Landfill costs avoided	\$ 1,185,493	\$ 1,275,040	\$ 89,547	7.6%
<b>Total Benefit</b>				
Total Net benefit	\$ (1,086,450)	\$ (48,204)	\$ 1,038,245	-95.6%
<b>Total Net benefit per ton</b>	<b>\$ (44.64)</b>	<b>\$ (1.87)</b>	<b>\$ 42.77</b>	<b>-95.8%</b>

The net benefit figure compares total processing costs with recyclables revenue and avoided landfill disposal costs. In 2024, net benefits increased due to improved hauling and processing arrangements, resulting in lower processing and hauling costs, as well as more favorable revenue sharing.