

# Plan On It

A Dutchess County Planning Federation eNewsletter

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## Rethinking Waste: A New Age of Recycling

By Lindsay Carille, Director, Division of Solid Waste Management

Dutchess County released the Local Solid Waste Management Plan, [Rethinking Waste](#), for public comment this past January. The document outlines how our County will manage waste for the next ten years. So what do we mean when we talk about managing solid waste?

First we need to know what solid waste is and who generates it. Often referred to as municipal solid waste (MSW), it includes food scraps, leaves, brush, electronics, appliances, sludges, and any discarded material. There is also waste generated from the building and demolition of structures, known as construction and demolition debris, or C & D. Solid waste is generated by everyone — residents, tourists, businesses, and institutions such as schools and hospitals.

Second, we need a plan to manage all these materials. Historically, all discarded materials were “landfilled,” which means they were dumped on the ground and covered up (there are 122 inactive landfills in Dutchess County). By the 1980s, landfills were closing and some of the materials that were being buried were found to have value when recycled or reused. In response to this, Dutchess County authorized the creation of a [waste-to-energy facility](#) for solid waste, which opened in 1989. Mandatory recycling was enacted in 1990.



*In Dutchess County, we currently recycle about 23% of the MSW generated [left], we convert about 56% into electricity at the Dutchess County waste-to-energy facility [middle], and about 20% goes to landfills (minimum of 250 miles away) [right].*

So why do we need to “rethink” waste? A 23% recycling rate is just average for New York State, and “just average” is not good enough. We need to start thinking of our waste stream as a resource. Aside from reducing the amount of materials we use in the first place, one of the best and easiest ways to decrease the amount of waste being burned or buried is to recycle.

## What is Recycling?

A material such as plastic, metal or glass, is recyclable when it can be used in the manufacturing of another product. For example, a plastic bottle can be shredded and turned into other items such as fiberfill for sleeping bags, t-shirts and toys. Glass can be infinitely recycled without losing its quality or strength and reused for the production of products such as containers, fiberglass insulation and construction fill. These are just a few examples of how materials we once threw away can now be recycled into new products.

## What is Single Stream and Dual Stream Recycling?

This is simply the method used to collect and process the recyclable materials. Dual stream facilities must handle paper separately from other materials, so it must be collected separately. Single stream collection and processing allows all recyclable materials to be mixed together – the materials are separated at the facility.

Dutchess County no longer operates a recycling facility, but there is a privately run single stream facility in the County, and there are out-of-county dual and single stream facilities. The type of collection for you depends on who is picking up or accepting your recyclables. The materials you can recycle are the same; it is just a difference in collection. Ask your hauler or transfer station operator if you're not sure whether you should still be separating paper from other materials.

## Many New Items Can be Recycled

Just about everything can be recycled. All plastics except polystyrene (Styrofoam) are now recyclable, but please do not put plastic bags in the recycling bin. They can get stuck in the recycling machines and cause damage. Plastic bags should be kept separate and recycled at your local retail or grocery store under the [NYS Plastic Bag Reduction law](#).

All paper, newspaper and cardboard can be recycled. If you have been recycling for a long time, you may remember when white and colored paper had to be separated, and glossy inserts and some cardboards, like cereal boxes, were not accepted. Not anymore. All types of paper and cardboard, including pizza boxes (please no cheese or crust in the box), can be put in the recycling bin. Flatten the boxes and recycle!



*The pizza boxes, yogurt containers, and plastic bottles should have been recycled.*

All cans, including metal and aluminum cans, metal jar lids and foil are recyclable. Scrap metal, such as pipes, wires and fixtures, should be recycled at a scrap yard, as these items cause excessive damage to recycling equipment. Scrap metals can be recycled at several local Dutchess County scrap metal dealers, and most will pay you for the material.

These are the most common materials that are recycled by residents, but there is more that can be done. Food scraps and yard wastes can be recycled through composting. These materials which make up approximately 30% of our waste, can be turned into a beneficial soil amendment. Dutchess County currently does not have residential curbside pick-up of food scraps, but you can [compost at home](#). It is a goal of Rethinking Waste to facilitate a pilot program for curbside food scrap pick-up for residents in the future.

Many other items should be recycled, although not in your recycle bin. Hazardous items such as electronics, automotive batteries, chemicals and rechargeable batteries should be taken to a [Household Hazardous Waste collection event](#) or taken back to the manufacturer under [Product Stewardship](#) regulations.

The main idea is to think about what you put in a garbage can. Before you throw it away, take a look at the material and ask:

- Can this be sold or donated for someone else's use?
- Can I put this in my recycle bin?
- Is it harmful to the environment if it is buried in a landfill?



*Electronics and other hazardous materials being diverted from the waste stream at a local Household Hazardous Waste collection event.*

### Why Should I Recycle?

It is good for the environment. It takes less energy to create new items from recycled materials than it does to create new products from raw materials. Mining minerals and milling trees into lumber require vast amounts of energy. Runoff from landfills, and metals like mercury, find their way into streams, rivers and oceans.

Recycling is good for your wallet, too. Waste that is disposed of in Dutchess County either goes to the waste-to-energy facility, where a fee is charged, or it is landfilled. Waste that goes to a landfill is trucked 250+ miles away, and there are transportation costs (both monetary and environmental) and a fee. While there are costs associated with the collection and transport of recyclables, there is usually no fee, facilities are closer to home, and there may even be payment for the materials.



*Getting children involved early on helps create a life-long recycling habit. It's so easy, even a 3-year-old can do it!*

Recycling costs less overall, and that savings is then reflected in stable disposal charges for residents and businesses. If your disposal costs are based on a per bag fee for waste, with no cost for recyclables, there are immediate savings when you recycle more and dispose of less. If you contract with a private hauler, you may be able to save money by requesting a smaller bin for your waste disposal needs.

## Recycling Goals

Dutchess County would like to more than double our rate of recycling over the next ten years. We can only do that with your help. Recycling is easier than ever to do and is an easy habit to get into. If you have a question about whether an item can be recycled, call your hauler, ask your transfer station operator, or [email us with your question](#). If you are not sure if your employer is recycling, ask them. Verify that the recyclables stay separated at the collection point. It doesn't help to recycle in your office if it ends up going in a dumpster with the trash. If your favorite deli, coffee shop or store does not have a recycling bin for customers to use, ask why not? Remember, recycling is mandatory in Dutchess County – it's the law! So let's rethink waste, save money, save the environment, and stop being average!

### More Information

Dutchess County's [Division of Solid Waste Management Website](#)

[Rethinking Waste: Dutchess County Local Solid Waste Management Plan](#)

Dutchess County's [Waste-to-Energy Facility](#)

NYS DEC's Guide for [Composting at Home](#)

[Composting Information](#) from Cornell Waste Management Institute

Upcoming [Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events](#)

ReCommunity's [Education Station](#) – Interactive Tools for Kids & Educators

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This newsletter was developed by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Dutchess County Planning Federation.

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