



Organic Recycling Options & Council Direction

July 7, 2026

Agenda

1. Why staff revisited organics Recycling
2. What Staff Learned
3. Policy & Legal Considerations
4. Pathways forward
5. Request for recommendation from EQC



Context of Discussion



Composting was removed from the residential waste contract in December 2025.

Staff identified three pathways forward. The presentation will share the tradeoffs, estimated impacts, and questions requiring Council direction.

City Goals & Priorities



Strategy 5: Reduce solid waste through diversion, recycling, and reuse

Northfield will be a zero-waste community.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Northfield has robust policies and procedures in place to reduce the quantity of solid waste that is sent to the Rice County landfill.
2. All organic materials are diverted from the waste stream through a community-wide curbside compost collection system available to all property owners and renters.

Comprehensive Plan

- Coordinate with local waste and recycling haulers to offer curbside compost pick up for residents

Climate Action Plan

- Calls out Materials & Waste as one of six core areas of focus
 - Zero Waste Plan
- Greenhouse Gas emissions: In 2024, waste was 3% of community wide emissions

Rice County Landfill

- Expected to be at capacity in 12 – 15 years

Composting: New Information



[MN State Statute 115A.93](#)

- Mandates all residents be charged equally for recycling services, including organics recycling
 - All residents must be charged for the service
- Example City of Bloomington:
 - Minnesota State Statute 115A.93 requires licensing authorities, like the City, to require that residents who recycle organics and regular recycling must not pay more than residents who do not recycle organics or regular recycling. Therefore, the City is required by Hennepin County to offer organics and State law requires that in communities where organics recycling service is available, **all residents must be charged for the service.**

Northfield Today



Waste Contract (2026-2030) does not include organic recycling

- Serves about 5,058 residential households

Organics Recycling

- City provides two locations for residents to drop off their organics
 - Free service
 - Drop off locations: Composting site & Streets Shop
- Voluntary Program residents can sign up for Curbside Compost
 - \$15/month
 - Approximately 15% of the residential households participate in curbside service

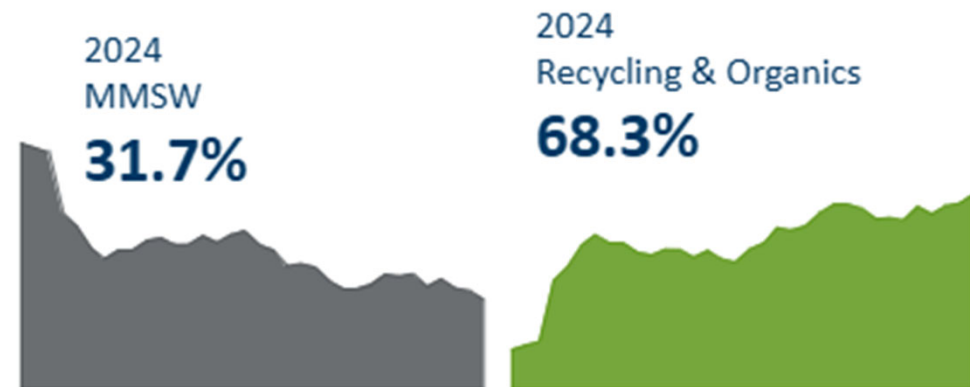
Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan



Primary Recycling Goals

- 2030: Recycling rate 75%
 - 2024: Rice County's recycling rate was 68.3%
 - 2024: State average recycling rate was 44.7%
- Make residential curbside collection available in cities with a population greater than 5,000 by 2030

Trends in MMSW and recycling rates (1991-2024)



[Data comes from 2024 Score Report](#)

**The City of Northfield is technically excluded from the Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Plan

What Staff learned from other Communities



- Participation is highest when service is universally available
 - Voluntary subscription programs tend to remain limited
- Most cities begin with food scraps only
- Education and contamination management are critical
- Regional communities are increasingly expanding organics access

ORGANICS

Put these items in your organics collection- **use BPI-certified compostable bags.**

Food scraps

- Bakery and dry goods
- Coffee grounds
- Dairy products
- Eggs and eggshells
- Meat, fish and bones
- Produce: fruit and vegetables



No Recyclables



No Yard Waste



No Trash

For more information, visit www.dakotacounty.us, search *organics collection*.

Comparison Cities



- Have curbside collection of residential organics

City	Population	Start Date	% Participation
New Hope, MN	Approximately 22,990	Spring 2025	11%
Crystal, MN	Approximately 23,300	2025	11%
Robbinsdale, MN	Approximately 14,700	Spring 2025	20%
Golden Valley, MN	Approximately 22,700	2022	39%
Minneapolis, MN	Approximately 430,000	2015	53% (Highest)
Northfield*	Approximately 20,700	2017	About 15%

Pathways Forward



Options	Description
Status Quo	Voluntary subscription
Phased Expansion	Align with Dakota County & look at expanding drop of sites for composting
Universal Composting Service	All residents pay for service

Pathways Forward: Option 1



Status Quo: Residents sign up to receive organics recycling program in Northfield

- Flexible for residents – only those who are interested sign up
 - At higher cost for interested residents (\$15)
 - Is available at on a sliding scale to make it more affordable to all residents if they want to participate
- Participation rates are likely to remain limited under a opt -in
- Lower impact on waste diversion & sustainability goals

Pathways Forward: Option 2



Phased Expansion: Align with Dakota County timeline of expanding organics recycling. Add additional composting drop-off sites

- Alignment with County rollout
 - Discussions with haulers expected to happen in 2027
- Additional drop off locations
- Participation rates may remain limited
- Slower progress toward waste diversion and sustainability goals

Pathways Forward: Option 3



Universal Organics Recycling: Have a single hauler waste contract for organics recycling

- Alignment with Comprehensive Plan & Climate Action Plan
- Lower cost entry is expected to increase participation
- Greater participation = more progress on waste diversion and sustainability goals

- Requires resident fee regardless of participation
- Would require request for proposals and coordination with hauler

Universal Organics Recycling Program



- **Estimated Cost of Single Hauler Curbside Compost**

Participation Percentage	Estimated Monthly Price for Residents
15%	\$4.00
20%	\$4.50
25%	\$5.20
30%	\$5.70

Note: Generally to start universal organic program the City needs to Collect \$250,000 in revenue to offset hauler collection charges. Estimates are intended to support policy discussion only.

Current Garbage Rates



Garbage collection rates

Service	2026 rate
Drive by service	\$10.74 flat fee per month
20 gallon container	\$12.06 flat fee per month
35 gallon container	\$13.37 flat fee per month
64 gallon container	\$18.15 flat fee per month
96 gallon container	\$23.25 flat fee per month
Yard waste container	\$97.78 flat fee per year

Questions to City Council



Should staff pursue:

Pathway 1: Maintain the current voluntary model?

Pathway 2: Further evaluate additional drop off locations & align with Dakota County timeline of organics implementation?

Pathway 3: Explore a universal organics program?

Dave Bennett, Public Works Director

Sara Pabian, Sustainability Coordinator

Staff identified three pathways forward. The presentation will share the tradeoffs, estimated impacts, and questions requiring Council direction.

