



Chapter 8: Waste and Recycling

Introduction

Examining Decatur's Waste/Recycling is a key component of the Decatur Sustainability Plan. The very essence of recycling is about sustainability, as the common understanding of recycling is the use of waste as a resource to manufacture new products. Reducing "landfill waste" includes three components:

- Reduce the amount of trash thrown out (landfill)
- Reuse products as much as possible
- Recycle items that can be resourced into new products (paper, glass, cardboard, etc...)

Each of "the 3 R's" is an important component to any waste management plan, but municipalities tend to focus on recycling because of its alignment with standard municipal waste removal operating procedures. Like other sustainability issues, recycling has benefits that cross over into other issue areas, like energy and climate change, economic development and land use. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cites financial, social and environmental benefits of recycling that have impacts across several key subject areas of the Plan¹:

- Recycling protects and expands U.S. manufacturing jobs and increases U.S. competitiveness.
- Recycling reduces the need for landfilling and incineration.



Providing recycling options to reduce landfill waste

¹ <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/recycle.htm>

- Recycling prevents pollution caused by the manufacturing of products from virgin materials.
- Recycling saves energy. (e.g. recycling aluminum takes 95% less energy than making it from virgin materials)
- Recycling reduces emissions (49 million metric tons in 2005)
- Recycling decreases emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change.
- Recycling conserves natural resources such as timber, water, and minerals.
- Recycling helps sustain the environment for future generations.

Over the course of the planning process for the Decatur Sustainability Plan, stakeholders identified one primary goal for 2030, but also identified key strategy areas that must be addressed to reach that goal. Stakeholders included city staff and the Waste/Recycling Working Group, who met regularly to focus specifically on the topic.

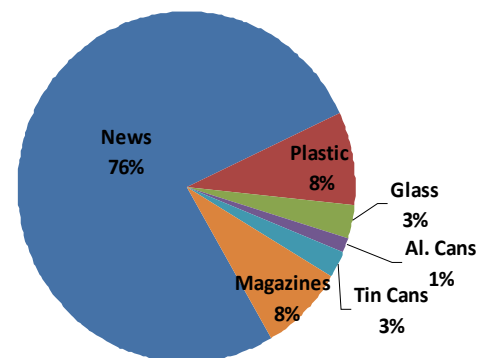
Strategies to reduce waste going to landfills, in order of importance to the Working Group, were:

1. Increase recycling practices.
2. Increase community education and outreach.
3. Reduce waste at the source.
4. Encourage use of recycled products.
5. Embrace beneficial reuse.
6. Establish a volunteer database for sustainability projects.

To best plan for ways to reach this goal, collecting and analyzing measurable waste and recycling data is imperative. Two state laws hint at the importance of keeping data and developing waste management plans. In the late 1980's, the State of Illinois passed two solid waste laws, the Solid Waste Management Act (SWMA) and the Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Act (SWPRA). The SWMA set goals for state agencies to recycle 50% of wastepaper, newsprint and corrugated containers and to purchase a similar percentage in recycled paper products. The SWPRA mandates that each county create a waste management plan that emphasizes recycling and landfill alternatives. Each plan must include recycling that diverts 25% of waste from landfills.

As such, the Macon County Environmental Management Department provided data that suggests the county has reached a recycling rate of over 50% for the past two years. While the data includes solid waste collected from municipalities (residential, municipal, some commercial and no industrial,) a breakdown by municipal jurisdiction was not available. This means there is no discernable way to determine how much solid waste is generated and goes to landfill for Decatur, where we arrive at our first problem with data analysis and goal setting for Decatur. The City should work with the County to determine how to calculate solid waste collection within its jurisdiction. Macon County also collects yard waste countywide—including Decatur—and provided number for both. However gaps in data provided from 2006 to 2009 make analysis difficult. Decatur should acquire missing data and also gain an understanding of how yard waste is collected, measured and sold/used, within the county and beyond.

Residential Recycling
2008 - 2009 by Sector



Because the City does provide recycling services, Decatur's recycling data for its single family curbside recycling program is fairly detailed and provides a comprehensive breakdown of types of materials being recycled, and enough information to calculate a participation rate. However, data for recycling in the commercial and industrial sector (including schools and businesses) is limited to weight in tons and number of customers in a two quarter period, as provided by Midwest Fiber. The City should work with Midwest Fiber to provide more detailed data reports on a regular basis, especially if the company is considered a preferred service provider in Decatur. At a minimum, data should include recycled materials in pounds (or tons), breakdown of types of materials recycled, number of participating businesses per quarter (by unique customer, not by number of pickups), total number of scheduled pickups per quarter, average number of scheduled pickups per customer.) Assuming each of these customers are billed by weight, one can safely assume that all of this information is available.

Establishing data protocols with partnering agencies is necessary in order to develop measurements to analyze whether or not Decatur meets its ultimate goal of reducing landfill waste by 50% in the year 2030. However, the existing recycling program and rather low participation rate are clear indicators that regardless of whether or not we have a complete analysis of data, there is work to be done in advance of additional data collection and analysis.

In the proposed strategies and projects below, it is important to be clear about who is being targeted for recycling programs and what kinds of recycling efforts are being made.

- **Who:** Decatur currently provides recycling services for single family homes, and a call-in service is available for schools and businesses, though it doesn't appear it is heavily used. Recycling efforts should be offered to different sectors, and should take into account issues unique to them, including space for recycling bins, hours of operation, ease of integrating recycling habits into standard operating procedures.
- **What:** Recycling is very broad in scope, yet the average person tends to simplify it as just recycling paper, aluminum, plastics and cardboard. The City should deliberately address the different areas in recycling (e.g. waste, single stream recycling, food waste and yard waste) by targeting specific consumers with different messages. For example, while the typical household may generate enough food waste for a small composting bin, restaurants and schools may experience much larger benefits from participating in a comprehensive food composting program.

2030 Goals

- **Waste going to landfills will be reduced by 50% by 2030.**

In 2009, the total weight of waste for Macon County going to landfills was 172,542.09 tons. Setting a target of reducing waste by 50% can be accomplished through increased recycling, increased material reuse, increased yard waste reuse, and reducing waste generation through the initiation of a composting (food waste) program and other efforts.

Key Waste/Recycling 2020 Goals, Strategies, and Projects/Actions

GOAL 1: REACH OUR REGION'S FULL POTENTIAL FOR RECYCLING

STRATEGY 1.1: INCREASE RECYCLING PRACTICES.

The main action required to reduce the amount of waste going into landfills is to increase recycling in significant proportions. As indicated in the Decatur Baseline Analysis, only about 14-15% of Decatur residents participate in the City's recycling program. This will probably rise dramatically at the onset of single stream recycling, which is expected to occur in the coming year or two.² However, an official recycling program does not exist sector beyond single family residential—no multi family units, commercial, industrial and even institutional. Owners of those buildings are left to fend for themselves, so to speak, and can contract with Midwest Fiber for recycling pickup, and even so, only on a call in basis. In the last quarter of 2009 and first quarter of this year, Midwest Fiber reported just 204 customers. Clearly, there is room for major advances in Decatur, both in the recycling program as it currently exists, and by including other sectors beyond single family residential. Success in this strategy area alone could easily achieve the goal of reducing waste that goes into landfills by 50%.

Projects/Actions

1.1.1 Improve existing residential waste and recycling collection procedures.

As stated above, Decatur's current recycling program only serves the single family residential sector and over the past 5 years has experienced a rather low participation rate compared to the national average of 24%. Below are projects and actions that will help improve the current recycling program.

- a. Create incentives for recycling participation.

Creating an incentive program will increase participation while also exposing more people to recycling education and getting into the habit of recycling practices. "RecycleBank" is one such program that allows participants to earn points that can be redeemed at thousands of businesses. (www.recyclebank.com or <http://www.recyclebank.com/how-it-works>)

- b. Eliminate back door service and twice-a-week service.

These "extra" waste collection services are becoming a thing of the past in most municipalities because they require additional workers/hours, and more trucks out on the street for more hours. From an energy standpoint, less hauling means less fuel consumption and vehicle miles traveled.



Decatur will be switching to a single stream recycling approach that is an easier "all-in-one" approach for participants. Recycling rates often rise quite dramatically.

² The City of Decatur initiated an RFP for the development of a single stream to put all recyclable materials in one container, by far the easiest approach. shown to increase participation rates almost immediately.

- c. Limit collection of yard waste (and encourage composting at residential scale and/or existing county composting.)

Yard waste should be composted whenever possible. While the county has a comprehensive program, residential consumers should be educated on the benefits of yard waste composting, how to do it (including demonstration projects), and provided with the necessary resources to do it themselves.

- d. Require volume based garbage collection rates.

If Decatur wants to increase recycling and reduce waste that goes to landfill, one surefire way to encourage this is by increasing collection costs for waste collection (and encouraging/rewarding recycling by collecting that for free.) Often times, cities are still charging for recycling instead of trash, thereby unintentionally penalizing those who are recycling.



Known as “Pay-as-you-throw,” many cities are now implementing unit pricing to encourage consumers to realize the social costs of the waste they generate and to only create the amount of waste they are willing to pay for. In Aurora, Illinois each 32- gallon garbage container requires a \$2.60 waste sticker that can be bought at city hall, local stores, or at the garbage company’s headquarters. Bloomington, Indiana offers tiered pricing, enforcing per-unit collection costs of \$2 for trash, \$1 for yard waste and no cost for recycling. Both Urbana and Quincy, Illinois have similar programs in place, as do the communities listed here: <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserves/tools/payt/states/contacts.htm>. The US Environmental Protection Agency provides research on lessons learned from various programs across the country (<http://www.p2pays.org/ref/02/01914.pdf> .)

1.1.2 Expand beyond residential recycling to include other sectors.

Expanding recycling options to other sectors is extremely important in the effort to increase recycling, especially in consideration of all of the schools and other institutions, multi family (approximately 23% of all residential units) and thriving commercial/industrial community. If Decatur added these virtually untapped sectors to its recycling program, or partnered with an agency or agencies like Midwest Fiber (who currently provides recycling collection services), recycling could be a viable option for all sectors in the City, and more importantly, would significantly decrease the amount of waste that goes into landfills.

- a. Research the requiring of businesses to recycle as part of annual licensing (e.g. liquor licensing.)
- b. Research requiring recycling for all sectors.

Mandatory recycling is not a new concept in the United States or even Illinois. Beginning in 1997, Kane County (northeastern Illinois) requires all commercial establishments to recycle the two largest recyclables in their garbage. Garbage haulers cannot collect waste from an

establishment that is not recycling. Owners of multi-family buildings must provide recycling service to the occupants in their buildings. Violators are fined \$25-\$100 per day in violation.³

Portland, Oregon requires that multifamily property owners provide recycling drop-offs that are as accessible as trash dropoffs and that recycling information is provided to tenants within 30 days of move-in and then on an annual basis. The city offers free signs, magnets, and posters. Recycling representatives are available to hand-deliver the materials and meet with tenants.⁴

- c. Coordinate recycling efforts with non-profit, business, public sector organizations.

Whether recycling is required or not, there are many best practices from across the country that incorporate the business community (whether for profit, nonprofit or even public sector). For example, shared-commercial recycling provides shared recycling centers for commercial areas with little space or access for recycling containers. One such example is from Ojai, California, in which a downtown redevelopment area created a joint assessment district. The district provides a shared common area for waste and recycling services for commercial establishments that would otherwise lack convenient access to recycling. The district funds ongoing maintenance, including trash and recycling services. The City's waste hauler offers a tiered fee structure for the commercial establishments to encourage recycling.⁵



Free signage for landlords to share with tenants in Portland, Oregon.

Tiered fee Structures are an approach that work well with any kind of business recycling programs, required or not. The City of Fresno, California made recycling for commercial establishments mandatory and offered a tiered trash pickup fee with significantly lower rates for recycling pickup than trash pickup. Citywide diversion rate (rate of waste diverted from landfill) climbed from 32% to 62%.⁶

- d. Develop recycling guidelines for standard municipal staff operating procedures.

Decatur should consider the development of a municipal “green team” made up of representatives from different city departments to examine its in-house



Seattle's “Fantastic Three Program”: recycling, composting and waste.

³ <http://www.co.kane.il.us/Environment/recycle/index.htm>

⁴ <http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?c=45517>

⁵ <http://www.ca-ilg.org/node/1634>

⁶ <http://www.ca-ilg.org/node/1624> and <http://www.fresno.gov/NR/rdonlyres/9112A6F6EBC0E0523B70/ZeroWasteStrategicActionPlan.pdf>

recycling procedures, among other in-house municipal sustainability goals outline in other areas of this Plan. The Town of Normal, IL created a green team to examine both in-house and community-wide practices in sustainability, and developed recommendations for action in said areas. Instituted recommendations that are still being calculated for bottom-line savings include the use of electronic copies in place of hard copies for meetings, changing default printer settings to double-sided, and the reuse of paycheck envelopes.⁷

Expanding to the larger community, Portland Metro's Recycle at Work Program provides its businesses with free recycling boxes, posters, information about recycling, and recycling specialists to work with current custodial staff and a "Green Team" to create a customized recycling strategy and program.⁸

1.1.3 Expand recycling to include other recyclable materials.

Traditional recycling includes paper, glass, aluminum and plastics. However, both food and yard waste are recyclable, but still often end up in landfills—and unnecessarily so. Below are some potential actions that Decatur should consider.

- a. Collect residential food waste and create program to offer composting bins.

San Francisco is the first to offer curbside composting in the United States. The Fantastic Three Program provides residents with three pickup containers; for trash, recycling and composting (yard waste and food scraps). Larger sized composting and recycling containers are available at no extra cost, but larger trash containers require an increased monthly fee. The organic materials are sold to farms and vineyards across the state after 60 days of processing.⁹

In Lake County, Illinois (northeastern Illinois), the county's solid waste management team developed a compost bin program that allows residents on a first come, first serve basis to buy bins at a highly reduced rate. Coupled with education, residents can easily and effectively divert up to 500 pounds of waste from landfill each year.¹⁰ The City of Santa Cruz, California offered reduced cost composting bins by partnering with local businesses.

- b. Establish program to compost food waste from cafeterias and restaurants.

Very large amounts of food waste are generated in schools, hospitals and restaurants. Decatur should consider developing a program to address these sectors. Here are some best practices from across the country:

The City of Portland, Oregon encourages a composting program, Portland Composts! that allows businesses with high amounts of food waste and paper (e.g.



A Portland restaurant participating in the composting program.

⁷ <http://www.normal.org/Files/GreenTeamReport.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.recycleatwork.com>

⁹ <http://www.sunsetscavenger.com/residentialServices.php>

¹⁰ <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/swalco/programs/compostbins.htm>

grocery stores, restaurants, and institutional kitchens) to send food waste to a composting facility. Compost can be bought in local stores and the business can gain recognition of composting efforts by displaying a sticker in their window.¹¹ Another program out of Portland is Portland Metro Program, Fork It Over! which donates surplus food from businesses to local food shelters, reducing waste hauling costs for the business and providing tax deductions.¹² In yet another project, three schools in Portland began pilot programs allowing children to pick parts of their meal rather be served than the traditional fully pre-packaged meal. Food waste decreased as well as an increase in reusable materials from students who brought their lunch through education that was partnered with the program.¹³

Closer by in Champaign at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a student-run farm that produced 20,000 pounds of produce for campus dining halls in 2009 is developing a composting program to return organic waste back to the farm.¹⁴

Lastly, A Ventura County, California elementary school set a goal of zero waste generation during lunches and snack activities by creating school-wide mandates prohibiting non reusable lunch containers, paper napkins, and non-recyclable drink containers. Trash generation has been reduced by almost 90%.¹⁵

- c. Create program to expand materials collection for recycling of construction debris (shingles, silt, paint and other construction debris.)

The current economy has slowed the construction industry considerably over the past few years. Now is a good time to analyze construction habits, specifically recycling, and put new sustainable practices in place. The City may wish to consult with a trusted group of builders and other stakeholders during this process to develop local buy-in for what may be a new concept to some. One example of a construction debris recycling program is from the City of Stockton, California. Recognizing its state goal to reduce landfill by 50%, the City passed a "Construction and Demolition Debris Ordinance" that requires contractors to divert 50% of all project waste generated, by weight, from landfill. Before obtaining a building permit, contractors must In order to ensure compliance, contractors must complete a recycling plan before obtaining a building permit, contractors are required to complete a recycling plan, and upon project completion must file a report outlining their compliance. The program supplies helpful information including a list of approved recyclers and the materials each company will recycle.¹⁶

¹¹ <http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?c=41682>

¹² <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=749>

¹³ <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/ReduceWaste/Schools/food/OfferServe.htm>

¹⁴ <http://news.illinois.edu/ii/09/0507/sustainability.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/ReduceWaste/Schools/Models/default.htm>

¹⁶ <http://www.stocktongov.com/recycle/pages/CDprogram.cfm>

1.1.4 Collect, monitor and analyze waste and recycling data.

As mentioned in the introduction section of this chapter, it is crucial to establishing data collection with Macon County, Midwest Fiber and any other agencies that service Decatur residents, businesses and institutions. Having complete data will allow the City to measure its progress over time, both in reaching the overall goal, and in specific projects and actions.

- a. Establish a comprehensive data center for waste and recycling for Decatur and the surrounding area.
- b. Provide comparison data with cities similar to Decatur (e.g. what works and what doesn't, benefits of recycling.)

The nearby cities of Springfield, Champaign and Urbana all have recycling programs and may offer some best practices and new concepts that are applicable to Decatur. Here are just a few ideas of programs that are already in place in these communities:

| | Single Family Recycling | Multi Family Recycling | Commercial Recycling | Waste Hauling | University Recycling |
|--------------------|---|---|---|--|--|
| Champaign | Yes; not mandatory (free) | Yes, mandatory (will begin in late 2010) | No (unless through private owners and contractors) | Does not provide waste hauling or "garbage service"; requires contracting with private haulers | (UIUC-see below) |
| Urbana | Yes, not mandatory but all owners pay small recycling tax | Yes, mandatory that owners supply cart, but tenants not required to recycle | In talks with waste hauler to mandate commercial recycling. | Volume-based pricing, increases with more waste | (UIUC) Waste Transfer System- Diverted landfill costs: \$200,000 Recycled Commodities revenue: \$500,000 |
| Springfield | Yes; not mandatory (free) | No (unless through private owners and contractors) | No (unless through private owners and contractors) | Monthly fee based on number of containers | (UIS) Recycles 76 tons annually |

STRATEGY 1.2: INCREASE COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH.

Similar to energy efficiency, many people understand in some respects that recycling is important, and mainstream media has engrained the pictures of overtopped landfills and barges filled with garbage floating down rivers, but there is little connection to recycling and its benefits. A broad-based sustainability campaign that encompasses recycling (and other issues including energy, transportation and water) should connect the "big picture" benefits of recycling in Decatur, the region and even nationally, with individual action and responsibility. Again, when requesting behavior changes to occur, it is important to communicate the following:



Children learning about composting in their community.

- Why should we take action?
- Who should take action?
- How is it done?
- What is the expected outcome and benefits for me? My community?
- Are there any costs, upfront or hidden?

It is also important to consider multiple audiences and crafting messages specific to them, including single family, multi family, small business, large commercial, and institutional.

Projects/Actions

1.2.1 Establish a volunteer database

There is already a network of interested stakeholders in Decatur as evidenced in the number of people expressing views and opinions in the planning process for the Decatur Sustainability Plan. The City should take advantage of this already-engaged group of people and continue with focus group meetings and engage them in action projects as outlined and approved in this plan whenever possible.

- a. Create a program to involve schools (community service hours)

Schools are an excellent place to incorporate community education and outreach, and in particular, recycling and other sustainability issues like energy efficiency. There are already curriculum-based activities and lesson plans available, and often times in varying age-appropriate capacities. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity regularly provides classroom materials, case studies information and a host of other resources for classroom learning in Illinois.¹⁷ Another benefit of involving schools is that children often take home lessons learned and begin to apply them at home.



A young student learns new everyday habits at school.

1.2.2 Create business program that recognizes/rewards businesses that recycle

A new recycling program, regardless of what sector, may require some sort of incentive to encourage participation, especially if the program is not mandated. In an analysis of its commercial recycling program and the need to revise its approach, the Borough of Forest Hills, Pennsylvania concurs that in addition to a very well-thought out communications and outreach plan, an incentive program that rewarding participating businesses is ideal. They suggest providing “we recycle” stickers for all participating businesses, and holding (and profiling) monthly drawings with prizes. The projects below were also highlighted by the Waste/Recycling Working Group:



¹⁷ http://www.commerce.state.il.us/dceo/Bureaus/Energy_Recycling/Education/ISTEP_program.htm

- a. Reward businesses that recycle
- b. Recognize/reward business that recycles the most.

1.2.3 Develop/implement public education program utilizing local media, TV, newspaper, neighborhood organizations, websites, and online social media (conscious shopping, recycling, etc..)

Potential actions to consider are:

- a. Highlight the benefits (individual and collective) of recycling. There are both individual and community-wide benefits to recycling. Here are just some of them that may serve well in a communications effort:

| Individual | Community (or Larger Scale) |
|---|--|
| Decrease household costs (in “pay-to-throw” communities) | Helps conserve limited resources |
| Feel good about earth-friendly habits (business: advertise your “earth friendliness”) | Energy efficient |
| | Costs less than waste processing + landfilling |
| | Creates jobs in the U.S. |

- b. Educate consumers and businesses about the need to reduce waste.
- c. Educate regarding financial and environmental costs of single use items and packaging.
- d. Involve schools (e.g. K-12 education; colleges)

1.2.4 Create networking program/opportunities between local and regional organizations (working group continue meeting beyond planning process)

- a. Waste and Recycling Working Group should continue meeting beyond the Decatur Sustainability Plan planning process.

As mentioned above, the City should continue engaging the already organized group of stakeholders, working to add more people when appropriate.

GOAL 2: REDUCE WASTE AT THE SOURCE AND AT THE CONSUMER LEVEL.

STRATEGY 1: REDUCE WASTE AT THE SOURCE AND AT THE CONSUMER LEVEL.

While recycling is an important component of Decatur’s sustainability efforts in waste management, it is extremely important to engage residents and businesses in the concept of reducing waste altogether by considering the following waste reduction messages:

- *Buying and using less.* Buy only what you need, and use all of what you buy. This is especially important in hazardous household items like paint and cleaners.
- *Less packaging.* Avoid wasteful and unnecessary plastic and paper in packaging, opting for products that package their products primarily for the protection of the item instead of the added fluff designed to attract you from other brands. Avoid single-serve containers, buy concentrates and in bulk, and aim for packaging that can be recycled whenever possible.
- *Skip the plastic bags.* Use cloth bags whenever possible. If you must use a plastic bag, reuse it or take it back to the store for recycling.
- *Durable over disposable.* Disposable items like plastic forks are convenient for those lunch meetings, but aim for durable silverware whenever possible. Same for household items, like razors. If you're feeling especially bold—cloth diapers!
- *Avoid junk mail.* Remove yourself from unwanted mailing lists.
- *Online billing.* Opt in to online bill payments and statement delivery whenever possible.



A school's zero waste lunch program utilizes reusable packaging, reusable silverware and less food packaging than what is typical.

Projects/Actions

2.1.1 Regulate use of environmentally unfriendly products (e.g. plastic bags, Styrofoam.)

- a. Research policies that aim to eliminate environmentally unsafe products and present recommendations to appropriate groups/departments.

2.1.2 Research and develop green meeting/conference policy that reduces waste.

- a. Research green meeting/conference policies and include recommendations on recycled handouts, double-sided paper, reusable badges, signage and paper products, and reusable food service. Highlight local business partners and sponsors when possible.

Municipalities and agencies are beginning to think about the resources used and often wasted at meetings. There are numerous examples online for simple meeting procedures that embrace the US EPA's "reduce, reuse, recycle" mantra:

- Reduce
 - ✓ Use electronic program brochures, registration, confirmation procedures.
 - ✓ Make presentations and handouts available online
 - ✓ Double-sided handouts, if handouts are required
- Reuse
 - ✓ Use reusable name badges
 - ✓ Use reusable signs and directions
 - ✓ Avoid buying new supplies for every meeting

- Recycle
 - ✓ Remove unused paper/documents for reuse in your office (or recycling)

2.1.3 Review and revise municipal procurement policy to include guidelines/requirements for recycled paper purchasing.

- a. Research procurement policies in other communities and develop best practices for procurement policies both nationally, and in the surrounding area.

2.1.4 Find markets for the compost and mulch and other environmentally friend products generated in our county.

- a. Research successful yard waste collection and composting programs from across the country and note their successful re-use of mulch and composting within their immediate jurisdiction and surroundings.
- b. Identify potential consumers of mulch and composting in the Decatur area.

GOAL 3: ENCOURAGE USE OF RECYCLED PRODUCTS.

STRATEGY 1: ENCOURAGE USE OF RECYCLED PRODUCTS.

In addition to recycling products, it's just as important to buy recycled products or "post-consumer content" in order to create demand for recycled products. Recycled products in paper, aluminum, glass and plastic are some of the most common items. Decatur should include the purchase of recyclable products in its municipal purchasing policies and provide information in all educational campaigns. It is also important to note the following about labels on "recycled" products:

- Recycled: It's either 100% recycled, or it must provide exact percentage of recycled material. These products are made from materials that have been recovered from waste.
- Post-consumer: Includes materials that are from already used products, such as plastic bottles, glass containers, aluminum cans, and newspapers. A notebook that is "50% post-consumer material" has half of its content from recycled substances.
- Pre-consumer: Is comprised of materials from manufacturing waste. A soda pop bottle manufacturer might recycle plastic remnants and recycle them into "new" bottles.
- Recyclable: A product is only as recyclable as the recycling availability in your community. For example, if glass is not an accepted recycling material, it doesn't matter how recyclable it is if you can't have it collected or drop it off anywhere for recycling.



King County, Washington reminds people about "closing the loop" by also buying recycled items.

- Eco-friendly/Environmentally friendly: Beware! Learn specific information on how a product is any of these things. It is now often used as a marketing ploy without meaningful information to support the claim.

Projects/Actions

3.1.1 Create a program to pursue economic development opportunities through sustainable business development (e.g. recycled products, by-products)

- a. Create a local buying guide.

3.1.2 Research and develop incentives and requirements to encourage more LEED and green building projects.

- a. Identify successful programs nationwide in communities with characteristics similar to Decatur in terms of housing stock, projected growth (residential and commercial), size and community character.

GOAL 4: EMBRACE BENEFICIAL REUSE.

STRATEGY 1: EMBRACE BENEFICIAL REUSE.

The concept of beneficial reuse is simply to reuse what is waste from one industry or company for the benefit of another industry or company. Decatur should identify potential sources of industry by-product for potential reuse within the area, or even in other areas. There are companies who exist for the sole purpose of identifying potential by-products and connecting them with other partners/users.

Projects/Actions

4.1.1 Create and support a market for reuse of by-products (based on health and safety research.)

4.1.2 Research options and/or create information clearinghouse and network for reuse of waste.

Promote existing networks like Freecycle and research opportunities for larger scale partnerships between large industries/companies and consumers.