



MISSOULA

Citizens Push for Zero Waste

Missoula, Montana, is a scenic college town and outdoor mecca, boasting five mountain ranges, three rivers and an extensive recreational and commuter trail system. While Missoula is known for its strong passion for the outdoors, the city lags far behind on recycling, recovering only 20% of its waste. A citizen-led movement is working hard to create a waste-free future. Thanks to citizens' partnership with City government, the Missoula City Council passed the first Zero Waste resolution in Montana.

POPULATION

MEDIAN
INCOME

LARGEST
EMPLOYER

LOCATION

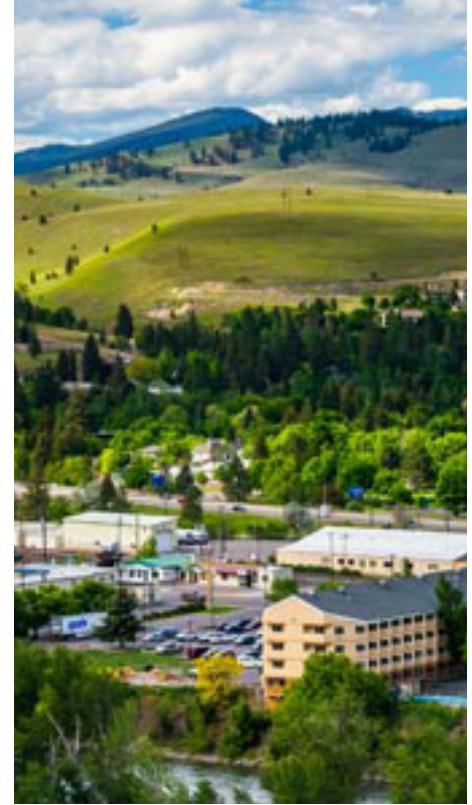
TRASH/RECYCLING
SERVICE



WASTE AND RECYCLING CHALLENGES

Like most Western towns, Missoula faces a tough set of challenges on its Zero Waste journey. As a sparsely-populated, rural area, there are high costs to transport recyclable materials to major markets in other states, and there are not high volumes of materials generated. Trash services are provided by the private sector through an open market system. There is a notable lack of competition in Missoula: One hauler, Republic Services, serves most of the area and also owns and operates the region's only landfill. This lack of competition creates little incentive to offer lower rates or expand services.

But with only 15 years of capacity left in the open, developed portion of the landfill and a strong grassroots movement for change, Missoula has its sights on a different future.



STARTING A MOVEMENT

Since 2014, the grassroots citizens group called Zero Waste Missoula has been working to improve Missoula's low recycling rate and turn the city's attention to waste reduction. The group originated from a combined community and City effort to address climate change through Climate Smart Missoula. Residents, City staff, the mayor and local groups convened in 2013-2014 for two Community Climate Summits that identified twelve key action areas for addressing climate change, including Zero Waste. As a result of the summits, a group of citizens, non-profits and businesses created Zero Waste Missoula to focus solely on these efforts, led by Home ReSource, a local non-profit building materials reuse center dedicated to reducing waste and building a more vibrant and sustainable local economy.

Throughout 2014 and 2015, members of Zero Waste Missoula participated in the "Our Missoula" city growth planning process and provided comments across multiple focus areas. The

City Growth Policy adopted in November 2015 included Zero Waste as one of its Environmental Quality Goals and references community waste reduction education as one of the "near term" actions.

In April 2015, Zero Waste Missoula partnered with a fellow non-profit, the Sustainable Business Council (SBC), to create the community's first reuse and recycling guide, "SBC's Online Guide to Moving Missoula toward Zero Waste." The 69-page guide is filled with general and local-specific ways to reduce waste, a map of places to recycle and reuse, case studies of Zero Waste businesses, and a calendar of Zero Waste-related events.

In tandem with the guide's release, the mayor declared April 2015 "Moving Missoula toward Zero Waste Month." Talks, tours, clean-up events and other activities were held throughout the town with support from local businesses.

TIMELINE TO MISSOULA'S CITIZEN-DRIVEN ZERO WASTE ACTION PLAN

SEP 2013

Missoula holds Community Climate Summits, identifies waste as a primary focus

AUG 2014

"Our Missoula" City growth planning process begins

APR 2015

Zero Waste Missoula and Sustainable Business Council release reuse and recycling guide

FALL 2015

Zero Waste Missoula and Sustainable Business Council release reuse and recycling guide

FEB 2016

Council adopts Zero Waste resolution and goals. Home ReSource launches 5th grade Zero Waste Ambassadors program (ZWAP!)

MAR 2016

Zero by Fifty Leadership team forms to draft a Zero Waste Plan

AUG 2016

City buys composting facility, securing option for future food waste composting

JAN 2013

Missoula adopts Conservation and Climate Action Plan for municipal operations

MAY 2014

Missoula holds Community Climate Summits, identifies waste as one of the primary focus areas. Zero Waste Missoula group forms out of Climate Smart Missoula

APR 2015

Mayor John Engen declares April "Moving Missoula to Zero Waste" month

JUL 2015

Climate Smart Missoula releases Community Climate Smart Action Plan

NOV 2015

20-year City Growth Policy adopted with goal for Missoula to become a Zero Waste community

FEB 2016

Home ReSource convenes "The Fate of the Plate," a community discussion about how to reduce food waste and increase composting in Missoula

NOV 2015

Twice-monthly single-stream recycling offered to residents

DEC 2015

City aims to release Zero Waste Plan



SETTING A NEW GOAL: ZERO BY FIFTY

Soon after Zero Waste Month, Climate Smart Missoula released the Community Climate Smart Action Plan. The plan was endorsed by the mayor and lays out clear action steps, including the creation of a Zero Waste resolution.

Working with a Zero Waste champion on the Missoula City Council, Zero Waste Missoula drafted a Zero Waste resolution that was adopted by the council in February 2016—the first Zero Waste resolution in the state of Montana. The policy commits the City to creating a Zero Waste plan to achieve 90% waste reduction by 2050, with interim goals of 30% by 2025 and 60% by 2040.

To draft the plan, City staff and staff from Home ReSource partnered to form the ZERO by FIFTY leadership team, supported by a Zero Waste Advisory Committee. The process started with several community "listening" sessions to gather comments from local stakeholders and community members. Another key component will be a baseline waste study to understand how much waste the community is producing and its composition. The final Zero Waste Action Plan is expected by December 2017.

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY: THE ZERO WASTE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM



The Zero Waste Ambassadors Program (ZWAP) was started in 2016 by the local non-profit Home ReSource to educate students about Zero Waste.

ZWAP brings a classroom presentation and interactive field trip to local 5th graders. The goal is for students to think critically about where materials come from and go, and feel empowered to make choices to reduce waste. Home ReSource plans to expand the program to all 5th grade classes soon.

NEXT STEPS

A few months following its Zero Waste resolution, Missoula received a boost to its Zero Waste efforts: Republic Services expanded its curbside recycling to twice-monthly, single-stream collection (without glass) for an extra \$12 per month. Two local businesses also offer curbside service to residents and businesses for a similar fee, Garden City Recycling and i.e. recycling, which offers a curbside source-separated collection service that includes glass bottles and jars.

Additionally, the City recently purchased a biosolids composting facility. The City is in the process of upgrading the facility and has started a food scraps drop-off pilot program which it hopes to scale up to a more robust community-wide food waste composting option. Meanwhile Zero Waste Missoula has shifted toward working with the Missoula County Public Schools district to find and implement waste reduction opportunities and expand Zero Waste education programs.

With a lot of momentum behind its grassroots citizens group, a dedicated non-profit leading the charge and a great partnership with City staff, the Zero Waste efforts in Missoula are quickly becoming a model for other communities in the West and beyond.

Follow their efforts and cheer them on at www.missoulaclimate.org/zero-waste.html.



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