



Denver Candidate Waste Policy Platform - 2023

1. **Continue developing Denver into a leader in Zero Waste.** Denver's next mayor will have the opportunity to transform Denver into a leader by ensuring recent policy measures are fully and successfully implemented. Denver, as the state capital and the state's largest city, should be a sustainability leader. Key components to Denver becoming a more just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable community are recycling, composting, and reducing waste. Denver currently recycles and composts only 26% of its waste, well below the national average. In order to become a leader and reap more of the significant economic, environmental, and public health benefits of Zero Waste, Denver needs to:
 - **Implement the [Expanded Waste Services](#) ordinance recently passed by City Council that guarantees recycling and composting services at no additional charge for every home.** Instead of charging for composting, Expanded Waste Services charges residents for the amount of trash they send to the landfill. This is a fairer system where households that generate less trash, pay less. Instead of charging more for composting, it incentivizes sustainable behaviors and provides weekly recycling services. Expanded Waste Services is a proven policy that has successfully worked in leading cities that are recycling and composting as much as 72% of their discards.
 - **Implement [Ballot Initiative 306, Waste No More](#),** which passed with more than 70% of the vote. Ballot Initiative 306 follows the model adopted by other leading cities, guaranteeing Denver residents and visitors access to recycling and composting at commercial establishments—including apartment buildings, condos, businesses, restaurants, hospitals, hotels, sporting arenas, and permitted events. Given the recent changes in compost policy in the region, it may be useful to focus on recycling access first and phase in composting later with a robust education plan to ensure a low contamination rate.
2. **Prioritize Zero Waste as an important climate change solution.** [Zero Waste is one of the fastest, easiest, and most cost-effective climate change solutions.](#) If Denver diverted 70% of its discards through composting and recycling, the [resulting greenhouse gas emissions avoided would be the equivalent of taking 600,000 cars off the road.](#) Composting food scraps and yard trimmings averts landfill emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas [84 times](#) more potent than CO₂. Applying finished compost to soils

restores soil health, sequesters atmospheric carbon, reduces flooding, and increases soil water retention.

- 3. Build a circular economy in Denver.** A circular economy enables resources used in production processes and economic activities to cycle repeatedly, maintaining their highest value for as long as possible. A circular economy in Denver will reduce pollution, redesign materials to be less resource-intensive, and recapture “waste” as feedstocks to manufacture new materials and products. A circular economy will be more resilient to global economic forces, creating local supply chains and local, sustainable jobs. [Recycling, composting, and reuse systems support nine times as many jobs as landfilling.](#)
- 4. Utilize Zero Waste strategies to build a more just and equitable community.** Recycling and reducing waste are proven strategies to decrease air and water pollution, which can help improve the health of low-income neighborhoods where polluting facilities, such as landfills and oil refineries, are most commonly located.
- 5. Seize momentum.** Over the past couple of years, Denver has recognized the importance of Zero Waste in its sustainability and climate action plans. It has recently adopted significant policies that will move it forward—but only if fully and successfully implemented. In addition, the state has adopted policies that, if Denver takes full advantage, will help it achieve its goals. These policies include [HB22-1355, the Producer Responsibility Program for Recycling](#), and [HB22-1159, the Circular Economy Development Center](#), which when fully implemented will support Denver’s waste diversion efforts by reimbursing the City to provide free recycling to all Coloradans, building green businesses that use recyclable materials. Additionally, Denver can pursue state and federal funding opportunities that have recently become available, including the [Front Range Waste Diversion Enterprise Fund](#) and the [EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant Program](#).

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