

# Zero Waste Fact Sheet

(modified from Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives)

## Reduces reliance on plastics

- Local food production reduces the need for plastic packaging.
  - This results in less litter, healthier food, and frontline communities don't have to endure as much pollution caused by making single use plastics from fossil fuels. (See the *Want to Know More?* section on the [Plastics 101 page](#) to learn more about Frontline communities and Zero Waste.)

## Climate change mitigation

- Compost programs reduce methane emissions from decomposing organic waste in landfills.
- Decomposing organic waste in landfills emits methane, a GHG 84-87 times<sup>1</sup> more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>. 12% of global methane contribution is estimated to come from landfills.<sup>2</sup>
- Using compost enhances the soil's ability to sequester carbon, or act as a "sponge" that soaks up carbon in the atmosphere.
- Food waste prevention and composting are a necessary climate action for cities.
- Food waste prevention can reduce emissions by 70.53 gigatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e over the next 30 years.<sup>3</sup>
- Studies show that soils will be able to sequester more than 10% of anthropogenic emissions in 25 years.<sup>4</sup>

## City benefits

- Waste diversion creates more jobs -- local and green jobs!
- Composting holds a higher job creation potential than landfilling and incineration<sup>5</sup>.
- Reducing and diverting waste from incinerators and landfills lowers the costs of waste disposal for cities.
  - The national average landfill tipping fee is \$55.36 per ton<sup>6</sup>
  - Cities can also save landfill space and transportation-related costs.
- Zero waste, including composting, reduces dependence on the extraction and importation of raw materials, like fertilizers, compost, landscaping material, which are often dominated by transnational corporations.

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<sup>1</sup> Comparison based on a 20-year timescale.

<https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/understanding-global-warming-potentials>

<sup>2</sup> Add a source

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.drawdown.org/solutions-summary-by-rank>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/soils-2015/docs/Fact\\_sheets/En\\_IYS\\_CiCng\\_Print.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/soils-2015/docs/Fact_sheets/En_IYS_CiCng_Print.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Local Self Reliance. (2002). *Recycling Means Business*.

<https://ilsr.org/recycling-means-business/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://erefdn.org/product/analysis-msw-landfill-tipping-fees-2/>

### Health benefits

- Communities and workers exposed to toxins from plastic production facilities, landfills, and incinerators face heightened risks for respiratory and heart diseases, cancers, immune system damage, and more. Zero-waste systems greatly reduce these risks.
- Phasing out incinerators allows cities to save on health-related costs:
  - The emissions from the trash incinerator in South Baltimore cause Maryland and its neighboring states \$55 million a year in health care expenses.<sup>7</sup>
- Less plastic production, and use, associated with zero-waste food systems is healthier for consumers and people that live near oil extraction and plastic production facilities

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<sup>7</sup> CBF (2017). Written Report of George D. Thurston Regarding the Public Health Impacts of Air Emissions from the Wheelabrator facility.  
<https://www.cbf.org/news-media/newsroom/2017/maryland/cbf-study-baltimore-incinerator-causes-55-million-in-health-problems-per-year.html>