Event Recycling and Best Practices Guide

DECEMBER 2021

Zero Waste Nashville

Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

ZERO WASTE

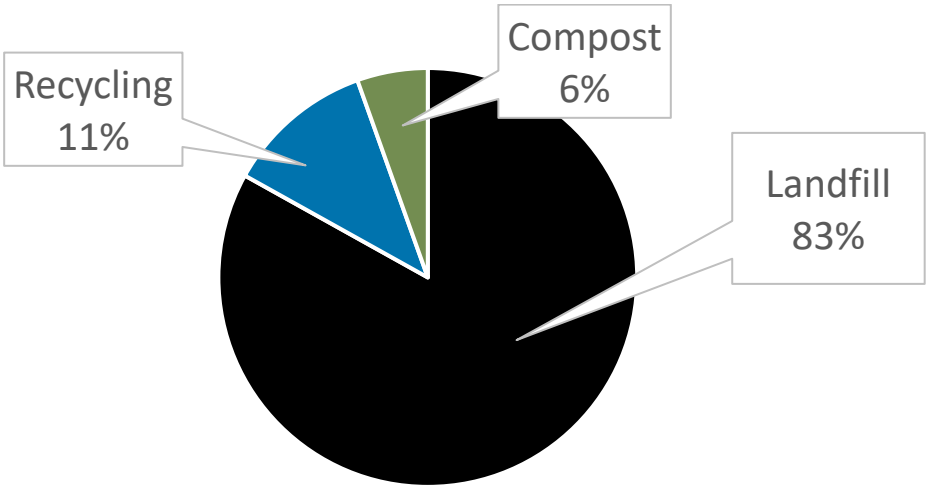
METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE & DAVIDSON COUNTY

About This Guide

In Nashville and Davidson County, we are known across the country for our concerts, festivals, and other events. But we are behind when it comes to recycling. Over 80% of our waste is sent to a landfill and only 11% is recycled.

Figure 1: Management of 2020 Total Waste in Davidson County

Disposal Method	Quantity (Tons)
Landfill	1,427,517
Recycling	196,820
Compost	93,750



We know we can do better. Over the next 30 years, our goal is to reduce the waste we send to landfills by 90%. A great place to start is at events. To do this, **all events receiving a Special Event Permit or Parade Permit from Metro Government are required to provide recycling for patrons** and is encouraged to further reduce waste and integrate sustainable choices throughout the event planning.

This resource was designed with event organizers in mind to help you through this process. Our step-by-step guide will help make planning your recycling program and low waste event easier than ever. In this guide you'll find:

- Introduction to the Waste Pyramid
- How to Include 'Reduce' and 'Reuse' Before 'Recycle'
- How to Set Up Event Recycling

Introduction

We can significantly reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill through **RETHINKING, REFUSING, REDUCING, REUSING, and RECYCLING/COMPOSTING.** The waste hierarchy provides strategies for how you can reduce waste at your events. As you move up the pyramid, each strategy gets does more to conserve our natural resources, prevent pollution, and protect our environment.

Figure 2: Zero Waste Hierarchy for Events

1. **RETHINK** potential purchases for your event to find less wasteful or more sustainable options.
2. **REFUSE** unnecessary single use packaging and polystyrene foam products like hot coffee cups.
3. **REDUCE** the amount of material given away during your event the ends up as waste and litter.
4. **REUSE** when you can, such as reusing signs from past events and providing refill stations.
5. **COMPOST** any leftover wasted food, soiled paper products, and BPI compostable serviceware. **RECYCLE** materials that you can no longer use and are accepted by a local recycler.
6. **LANDFILL** should only be considered if there is not a higher and better use for the waste material.

Consider 'Reduce' and 'Reuse' before 'Recycle'

Reducing and reusing waste is better than recycling or composting and can easily be incorporated into your event.

Reduce

Reduce refers to minimizing excess material given or purchased for an event. These are some thoughts that go into reducing waste at an event:

- **Reduce giveaways** – Giveaways often create excess waste at your event, so only offer a limited amount. Additionally, make them items that are useable at your event and at home like souvenir cups and utensils, so attendees don't toss them.

- **Minimize paper use** – Utilize electronic invitations and QR codes to advertise for your event rather than printing flyers. There are several free apps that can be used as well!

- **Limit prepackaged goods** – Bulk dispensing containers for condiments and sauce can be refilled, which helps stop single-use packets from ending up in a landfill. The same goes for water: utilize a water station instead of bottles.

- **Make straws by request** – If you are serving drinks that may benefit from straws, offer straws by request only. This limits the amount of single-use waste at your event and helps save you money!

HAVING A SMALL EVENT? TRY THESE ADDITIONAL TIPS

- **Require registration**
  Having an attendee headcount makes it easier to estimate the amount of food needed at your event. This will help save you money and reduce wasted food by only purchasing enough for those attending.

- **Create Refill Stations**
  Provide water jugs or fountains for guests and staff to refill a bottle rather than offering single-use plastic bottles.

- **Serve Finger Foods**
  Serving foods that don't need utensils or plates are great ways to reduce the amount of waste generated as well as the amount of serviceware you need to purchase!

Reuse

Reuse means using an item more than once. Can certain materials have additional purposes beyond their first use? Is there value in a product after it has been used a first time? These are things to consider for your event. Reuse is a better choice than sending items to a landfill.

A few ways you can reuse at an event:

- **Leave dates off items** – Will your event be a recurring one? If so, avoid costing yourself the money to buy a new banner by omitting the date. This way, your banner can be used each time your event is held!

- **Laminate signs for next time** – Laminated signs are easy to clean and are protected from everyday wear and tear. This means you can use them more than once!

- **Have reusable giveaways** – Instead of serving beverages in single use cups, have souvenir cups that allow attendees to refill and reuse!

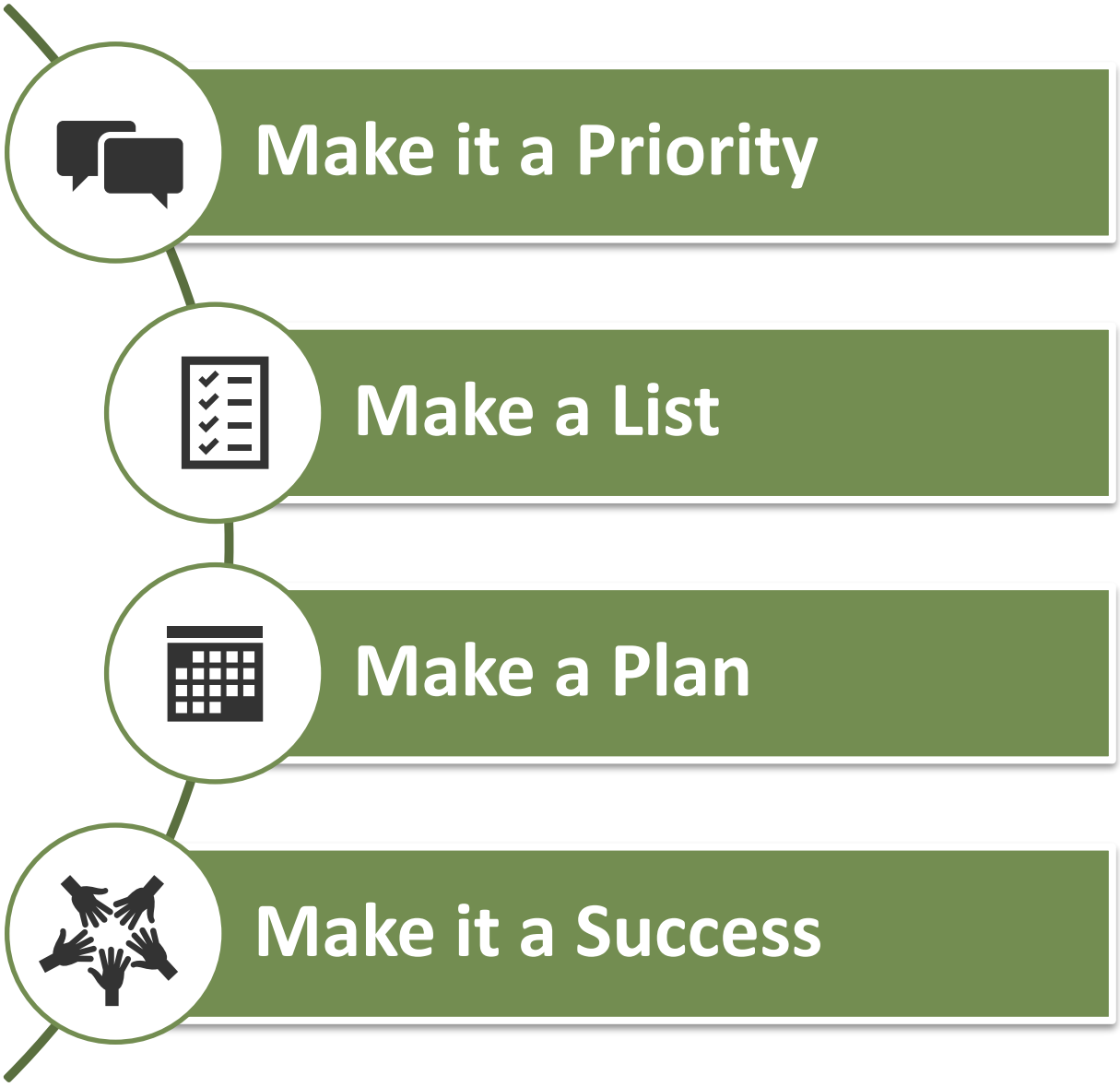
HAVING A SMALL EVENT? TRY THESE ADDITIONAL TIPS

- **Encourage Reusables** – When guests register for your event, encourage them to bring their own reusable utensils and bottles. This will save you money on purchasing and will help limit the waste generated at your event!

- **Collect and Reuse Nametags** – Rather than offering single-use sticker name badges, use paper nametags in a protective pouch. At the end of the event, collect the nametags, recycle the paper, and save the pouches for your next event.

How to Set Up Event Recycling and Composting

Recycling and composting both refer to ways we can make something new out of old products or food scraps. Nashville offers several options for recycling and composting, and Metro Waste Services will provide free recycling and composting bins for your event through our container reservation program. The following pages provide a 4-Step guide on how you can create a successful recycling or composting program for your event.



Step 1: Make it a Priority

Managing waste at any event is impacted by decision making throughout the planning, execution, and cleanup phases. It's important to prioritize your commitment to recycling early on and communicate it with everyone involved.

SELECT A TEAM LEAD

Your recycling program requires a strong team leader. This could be a staff member or volunteer who will be responsible for:

- Communicating recycling rules with staff members, vendors, and attendees
- Printing and installing recycling and composting signage as needed

INVOLVE VENDORS

Make sure your vendors are involved in your recycling program. For a sample zero waste food vendor contract, see **Appendix A**.

- Add language in vendor contracts that requires recycling and/or material separation (i.e., glass bottles, cardboard, etc.).
- Require food vendors to use only compostable serviceware, such as cups, plates, and cutlery.
- For non-food vendors, require recyclable or compostable materials. No single-use items should be allowed at your event.
- Make sure they understand it is their responsibility to ensure every member of their staff at the event participates.

DISCUSS AND ENCOURAGE RECYCLING WITH YOUR TEAM

Make sure your staff and crew members know that recycling is an important part of their job.

- Educate every person that works at the venue about the recycling program.
- Include managing waste and recycling in your training program.
- Offer reusable beverage containers in employee spaces to demonstrate your commitment to reducing your waste.

TALK ABOUT IT OFTEN

Talk about recycling at every event planning meeting and during the event with attendees. Reminders are important.

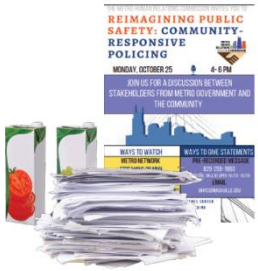
- Encourage recycling and composting from the stage.
- Make sure to thank and encourage attendees who are recycling correctly.
- Advertise your recycling program on your website and/or social media

Step 2: Make a List of Recyclable and Compostable Materials

To determine the number of waste containers, the appropriate haulers, and the best collection methods for your event, determine what types of waste you will have and what can be recycled or composted. Be sure to check with vendors to see what types of materials they will be using as well!

RECYCLABLE MATERIALS

The following materials can be recycled in Nashville. Please note, depending on your waste collection plan (See Step 3) these materials may need to be separated.



Paper and Cartons

Plastic Bottles, Jars, and Jugs

Food and Drink Cans

Glass bottles and cardboard can be recycled in Nashville as well, but we recommend keeping them separate during waste collection. Many vendors will require glass to be collected separately from other recycling, and cardboard can cause recycling containers to fill quickly.

Glass Bottles and Jars

Cardboard

COMPOSTABLE MATERIALS

Wasted food, food-soiled paper, and BPI certified compostable plates, cups, and utensils can be composted in Nashville.

Food and Food Scraps

Food-soiled cardboard and paper

BPI Compostable Serviceware

Step 3: Make A Plan

All successful programs start with a plan. Knowing how many people you expect, how much waste you may create, and what to do with that waste are key concepts to keep in mind while organizing your low waste event.

DETERMINE THE TYPE AND AMOUNT OF WASTE CONTAINERS NEEDED FOR YOUR EVENT

To determine the number of bins needed, we recommend using this chart as a guide:

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES	LANDFILL CONTAINERS	RECYCLING CONTAINERS	COMPOST CONTAINERS
LESS THAN 1,000	10	10	10
1,000-5,000	20	20	20
5,000-10,000	30	30	30
10,000-20,000	40	40	40
GREATER THAN 20,000	60	60	60

CREATE WASTE STATIONS

Keep containers together to ensure attendees use the correct container. For each trash bin, have one bin of every other waste option you will have at your event by its side. This could include recycling bins, compost bins, or glass recycling bins.

Remember to designate special areas for recyclable materials that can't go in bins like cardboard.

HIRE RECYCLING, COMPOST, AND LANDFILL HAULERS

Schedule pick up or drop off with an event recycling, compost, and waste collection provider. See **Appendix B** for a confirmed list of Event Recycling, Compost, and Landfill Haulers in Metro Nashville and Davidson County.

Metro Container Reservation Program

Event Recycling/Composting Containers are reserved on a first-come-first served basis and requests should be made at least one week in advance of the requested pickup day. Metro Waste Services will supply recycling and compost bins but will not collect your waste the day of the event.

PICKUP AND RETURN POLICY

The person reserving the event containers is responsible for arranging to pick up and return the containers between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday at the NDOT warehouse located at 750 S. 5th Street. A $50 replacement fee will be charged for each missing event container.

DISPOSAL POLICY

If you are having a small event with fewer than 500 attendees, recyclables collected from your event can be dropped off at one of Metro's Convenience Centers. Please only collect paper, plastic bottles and containers, metal cans and aluminum cans in the event recycling containers. Although your recycling container will come with a bag, all recyclables must be emptied from bags prior to disposal and must be separated and placed in the designated bins.

Food waste must be taken to a compost facility or picked up by a company that provides food waste collection. Food waste cannot be taken to Metro Convenience Centers for composting. The event organizer is responsible for ensuring any food waste collected is sent to a compost facility. Compost containers will not come with compostable bags and you are responsible for supplying the container with a proper BPI certified compostable bag.

Step 4: Make it a Success

STOP CONTAMINATION BEFORE IT STARTS

Contamination, or when an item is placed in the incorrect bin, can affect the entire bin. Here are some ways to make sure the right items end up in the right bins:

- Provide bilingual signs on recycling and compost containers
- Ensure recycling and compost containers are placed next to every garbage container
- Have your team leader (see Step 1) watch containers during the event to prevent them from overflowing
- Have event staff/volunteers assist attendees with proper disposal methods

SPREAD THE WORD

Your commitment to recycling and sustainability is exciting! You're helping Nashville make progress toward going Zero Waste and reducing our reliance on landfills. Take pride in your event recycling and share the word!

- Feature your recycling program on your website
- Share about your recycling program on social media
- Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable items

Appendix A: Sample Zero Waste Food Vendor Contract

Food Vendor Contract

DATE - TIME at PLACE

Company Name:	
Company Name:	
Title of Contact:	
Mailing Address:	
City/State/Zip:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Insurance: (Please provide a copy of your certificate of Insurance showing a minimum of $1 million general liability coverage. Metro Government must be listed as "Additionally Insured.")	
Space Needed: 10x10 ☐ 10x20 ☐ If "Other," please describe:	
LP Gas/Propane Tanks: Yes ☐ No ☐	
Description of Food for Sale (attach menu with prices) PLEASE CONSIDER PROVIDING HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS:	
Special Needs/Electricity NOTE: ALL BOOTHS MUST SUPPLY THEIR OWN ELECTRICITY	

Food and beverages can ONLY be served in/on paper or other biodegradable food containers (including plates, bowls, and cups). Food and beverages cannot be serviced using plastic wrap, plastic bags or any Styrofoam/polystyrene foam plates, cups, or containers. No beverages in glass bottles.

Booth Fees and Deadlines: Your completed and signed contract and fee are due by DATE
10' x 10' space $X
10' x 20' space $Y
Please contact us for rates if you need more than 10' x 20'

Clean Up Deposit: A $100 waste management & clean up deposit is required of all food vendors. Your waste management & clean up deposit will be CASHED. NAME cannot hold checks. Your deposit will be refunded to you at the end of the event if your assigned space and surrounding area has been cleaned of all waste, recycling, compostables and litter.

Health Department: All vendors must abide by the rules and regulations of the Metro Health Department. Please contact us for more information if you are not aware of these rules and regulations.

Assigned Space: Vendors are prohibited from selling, loaning, or making their booth space available to another organization or business other than the one listed on their application. Additionally, Vendors are prohibited from promoting or handing out materials for any other organization or business other than the one listed on their application. All vendor activities must be contained within your assigned space. Additionally, vendors may not sell, solicit, or distribute outside of their assigned space.

Special Needs/Electricity: VENDOR MUST SUPPLY POWER FOR THEIR BOOTHS

Booths/Tents: Vendors are responsible for providing their own booth, tent, etc. If you will be using a tent it cannot be larger than 10' x 10' unless you obtain a Tent Permit from the Fire Marshal's Office. Tents must use weighted tie downs. No Stakes allowed. All vendors must also have a fire extinguisher within their booth set up.

LP Gas/Propane Tank Inspections: Every food vendor using LP Gas/Propane tank(s) must get a permit from the Metropolitan Davidson County Fire Marshall's Office at least three days prior to the event. Permit applications are available at http://www.nashville.gov/portals/0/SiteContent/pw/docs/permits/LPG_Application.pdf or by calling 615-862-4521. The Fire Marshal will be on site to inspect your tanks prior to the start of the event.

Setup & Breakdown Rain or Shine: The Festival will take place rain or shine. The festival may be cancelled in the event of inclement weather or another emergency. There are no refunds. Vendors who sign on for this event will be held to their commitment for attendance and provision of food products for sale for the duration of the event – 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Setup for vendors will begin at 8:00 AM on April 21, 2018, and all vendors must be setup by 10:30 AM. Vendors are responsible for all supplies and for staffing their booth throughout the day. Breakdown of booths begins at 6:00 PM and must be completed by 8:00 PM.

Food Containers: Food and beverages can ONLY be served in/on paper or other biodegradable food containers (including plates, bowls, and cups). Food and beverages cannot be serviced using plastic wrap, plastic bags or any Styrofoam/polystyrene foam plates, cups, or containers.

Waste, Recycling & Cleanup: Waste and recycling containers and collection vehicles will be available onsite free of charge. It is your responsibility to take all of your waste and recyclables to the appropriate location before, during and after the event. Each vendor is also responsible for cleaning up the area around their booth after the event and placing any waste, recycling, compostables or litter in the appropriate containers.

Ice: An Ice Truck will be on site during the event. Ice by the bag will be available for purchase to all vendors at the rate of $5 per 20lb bag.

Send completed & signed application with vendor fee check and waste management & clean up deposit check payable to:

Street, City, TN, Zip

For questions or comments contact:
NAME 555-555-5555 name@email.com
NAME 555-555-5555 name@email.com

By signing this form, I (the undersigned) agree to indemnify and hold harmless the EVENT NAME, its organizing committee, sponsors, and the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, its officers, agents and employees from any claims, damages, costs and attorney fees for injuries or damages arising, in part or in whole, from the negligent or intentional acts or omission of our organization/ business/ and our officers, employees and/or agents in connection with our participation in the EVENT NAME

By signing this form, I (the undersigned) and all participants in my organization/business at the EVENT NAME acknowledge that we have read, understand, and agree to abide by guidelines in this application.

By signing this form, I the undersigned) agree that I will serve food in/on paper or other bio-degradable food containers (including plates, bowls, and cups). I will not use plastic wrap, plastic bags or any Styrofoam/polystyrene foam plates, cups, or containers.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B: Event Recycling, Compost, and Landfill Haulers

Cardboard/Paper	Type of Service	Contact Information	Details
EarthSavers	Pick-up only	615-481-9640	www.earthsavers.org/business-recycling/
Greif/Caraustar Recycling	Pick-up only	615-793-4580	www.caraustarrecyclingtn.com/
Metro Waste Services*	Drop-off only		www.nashville.gov/departments/water/waste-and-recycling/recycling/recycling-drop-sites
The Compost Company	Pick-up/Drop-off	615-380-1090	www.compostcompany.com/
Compostable Materials and Wasted Food	**Type of Service**	**Contact Information**	**Details**
Compost Nashville	Pick-up only	615-398-0209	www.compostnashville.org/signup/business/
The Compost Company	Pick-up/Drop-off	615-380-1090	www.compostcompany.com/
Glass Recycling	**Type of Service**	**Contact Information**	**Details**
EarthSavers	Pick-up only	615-481-9640	www.earthsavers.org/business-recycling/
Just Glass	Pick-up only	615-669-4163	www.justiceindustries.org/glass
Metro Waste Services*	Drop-off only		www.nashville.gov/departments/water/waste-and-recycling/recycling/convenience-centers
RecycleNash	Pick-up only	615-905-6274	www.recyclenash.com/
Recycling Dudes	Pick-up only	615-307-0011	www.recyclingdudes.com/index.html
Mixed Recycling (Comingled Paper, Plastic, and Metal)	**Type of Service**	**Contact Information**	**Details**
EarthSavers	Pick-up only	615-481-9640	www.earthsavers.org/business-recycling/
GFL Environmental	Pick-up only	615-350-5901	www.gflenv.com/
Republic Services	Pick-up only	615-782-5500	www.republicservices.com
Waste Connections	Pick-up only	815-478-7274	www.wasteconnections.com
Waste	**Type of Service**	**Contact Information**	**Details**
EarthSavers	Pick-up only	615-481-9640	www.earthsavers.org/business-recycling/
GFL Environmental	Pick-up only	615-350-5901	www.gflenv.com/
Republic Services	Pick-up only	615-782-5500	www.republicservices.com
Waste Connections	Pick-up only	815-478-7274	www.wasteconnections.com
Waste Management	Pick-up/Drop Off	615-860-3531	www.wm.com/

This document may not include all companies which provide collection services. For additions or corrections email ZeroWaste@Nashville.gov

*Metro Waste Services' Convenience Centers are for small events only. Most events will need to work with a private company.