



Zero Waste Questions & Answers

What is “Zero Waste”?

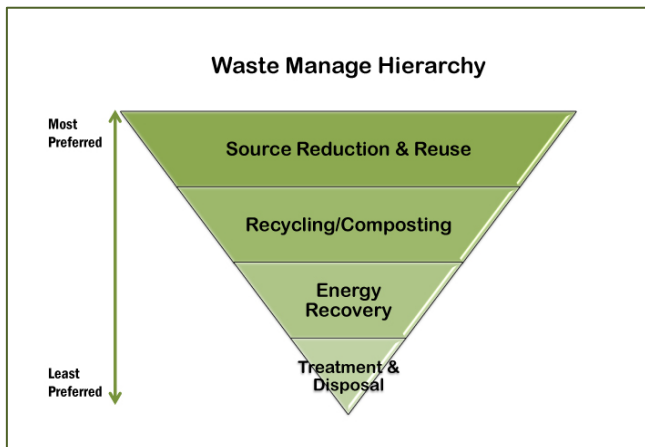
“Zero waste is the city’s goal to minimize the final disposal of waste materials as completely and rapidly as possible. This reduction will be achieved using a combination of environmentally sound strategies with an emphasis on education, on source reduction and reuse, and on recycling and composting.” (Oberlin Zero Waste Plan, December 2013)

The Zero Waste Plan (ZWP) acts as a point of reference to expand our understanding of waste as a misplaced resource and aims to eliminate waste rather than manage it.

What does that *really* mean to me?

A new and different way of thinking about waste. The 3’Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) remain important components of responsible waste management. The ZWP takes it to the next level by embracing a ‘closed-loop system’ approach to items we purchase, how we use them and the management of by-products. The entire ZWP can be viewed on the City’s website under *Public Works/Refuse & Recycling*.

The *Waste Management Hierarchy* diagram illustrates the City’s Zero Waste philosophy. Source Reduction and Reuse are the highest priorities, followed by Recycling and Composting. These four actions together can significantly reduce the amount of trash produced on a daily basis.



“Zero Waste maximizes recycling, minimizes waste, reduces consumption and ensures that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled back into nature or the marketplace.” – Grassroots Recycling Network website

Where did this plan come from?

The City and its Resource Conservation and Recovery Commission (RCRC) in partnership with the Lorain County Solid Waste Management District, their consultants GT Environmental and Oberlin College worked together in creating the City’s ZWP. Our ZWP is a *Climate Action Plan* strategy to reduce *greenhouse gas* emissions related to waste management activities.

Where are we now?

- In 2013 GMD staff collected and transported 3,524.55 tons of refuse, down from 3,997 tons in 2008, a **12% decrease!**
- During that same 5 year period recycling and composting **increased by nearly 30%** from 994 tons in 2008 to 1,289 tons in 2013.

What can I do right now to get started?

Start at the top: **Source Reduction and Reuse.**

The following reduction programs and tips will get you started:



Stop junk mail – according to the EPA, Americans as a whole receive close to five million tons of junk mail every year. Reducing junk mail gets clutter out of your mailbox, frees up your time and helps the environment.

Begin by:

- **Immediately** contact the sender and ask to be removed from their mailing list when you receive a credit card offer, company catalogue, newsletter or coupon-booklet that you did not request.
- **Create** an online account at CatalogueChoice.org to opt out of catalogues, credit card offers, coupons and circulars – free of charge.
- **Visit** StopJunkMail.org to download a Stop Junk Mail Kit.

Another option to reduce mail is to contact your bank, credit card company, internet service provider, utility provider, etc. to inquire about paperless billing and email notifications.

Recycle for Sight – prescription and reading glasses, sunglasses, plastic or metal frames and children’s glasses can be reused by dropping them off at the Lions Club International - *Recycle for Sight* donation box located at the Cleveland Clinic – Optometry office; 309 W Lorain Street during regular business hours.

Minimize packaging – purchase products with the least amount of packaging. Buy items in bulk or in concentrated form (like laundry detergent).

Pass on your magazines – once read pass them on to offices, hospitals or other waiting rooms for others to read.

Plastic Pots – when purchasing trees, shrubs or flowers, check with the nursery to see if they accept their planting containers back for reuse.

Purchase reusable items (and use them) – Replace disposable items with reusable items. Many products today are designed to be used over and over again, such as water bottles, shopping bags, cloth napkins, handkerchiefs, plastic or glass containers with lids and rechargeable batteries.

Repair before you replace – Try to repair before you consider replacement of items in your home, including lawn mowers, vacuum cleaners and appliances. Donate items you can’t repair to vocational schools, local organizations or repair shops.

Reusable Filters – purchase reusable filters to replace disposable ones (i.e. coffee, furnace, air conditioner).

Avoid using paper towels – For cleaning chores around the house and yard, use cut-up, old cotton clothing, towels, sponges, newspaper or leftover material (from that skirt you made last year), rather than disposable, one time use products.



Here’s a **website resource** offering “*More Ideas, Less Waste*”

<http://earth911.com>

Have an idea to share? What are some of the ways that you are successfully reducing or reusing items at home or work? Drop me a line at lsprosty@cityofoberlin.com or give me a call at 935-0096.

Be sure to come by the **Oberlin Depot** (240 S. Main St.) on **Saturday, July 12th from 9am-1pm**, for the City’s *first ever FreeCycle Kitchen Event*, in partnership with **Oberlin Community Services**. Donations of

new or gently used and clean kitchen items and working small kitchen appliances can be dropped off on Friday, July 11th at the Oberlin Depot during the hours of 10am-3pm. Contact Lori at 935-0096 or Alan at 774-6579 with questions or if you would like to volunteer.

Zero Waste Oberlin: Converting Wastes to Resources