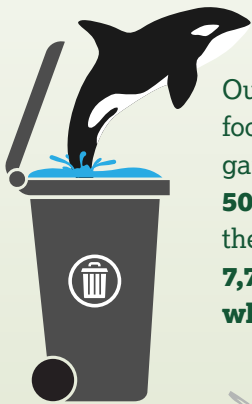


# Food Waste Reduction

A Priority of Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)

## Why is Reducing Food Waste Important?

Reducing food waste is likely the greatest opportunity to reduce the **climate** and **social impacts** of our waste



Our annual food waste in the garbage weighs **50,000 tons**, the same as **7,750 orca whales**

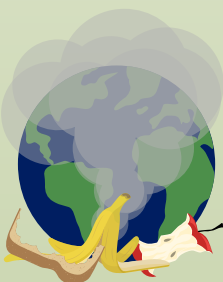
**20%** of our garbage is food waste<sup>1</sup>



On average, wasted food costs individual households **\$3,000 per year**<sup>2</sup>



Food waste drains valuable water, land and energy resources, and is a significant contributor to climate change

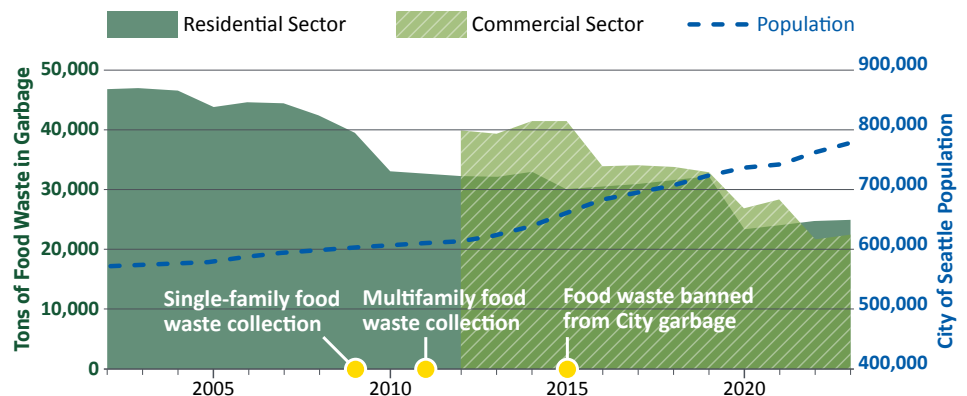


## Seattle's Progress and Commitment to Reducing Food Waste

Food waste in the garbage has been significantly reduced over the past 21 years, even while population grew, due to universal access to composting and a 2015 ban on food waste in the garbage. **Disposed food waste** (measured in tons) **has decreased by 47% in residences since 2002** and **44% in businesses since 2012**.

**Food waste** is uneaten or unused food lost at any stage from production to distribution to consumption. Food waste can be edible food, spoiled food, and unusable food scraps like peels, pits, and bones.

### Estimated Tons of Food Waste in Garbage, 2002-2023



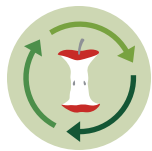
We are making progress, but there is still work to be done. Residents still put about twice as much food in the garbage as they put in the food and yard waste bin. In both the residential and commercial sectors, over two-thirds of the food waste in the garbage consists of items that were originally edible, including spoiled and packaged foods that could have been prevented from becoming food waste.

SPU sees significant opportunities for both prevention and diversion of food waste. We will address food waste through actions in:

[Seattle's 2022 Solid Waste Plan Update: Moving Upstream to Zero Waste](#)

[Seattle Public Utilities Strategic Business Plan](#)

[Seattle Food Action Plan \(2024 Update\)](#)



# Food Waste Reduction

## A Future with Less Food Waste

SPU led actions in the [Seattle Food Action Plan](#)

### Increase Public Awareness about Food Waste Prevention

SPU is building upon the Love Food Stop Waste campaign to raise consumer awareness about the environmental, financial and social impacts of food waste and encourage behavior change.



### Partner with Food Businesses to Prevent Food Waste

SPU is partnering with large food businesses to track food waste, take actions to reduce overproduction, over purchasing, and other practices that prevent waste and share results to increase participation.

### Strengthen Cross-Sector Food Rescue

SPU is working with hunger relief organizations and food businesses to design, test, and adopt innovative changes that reduce waste while increasing the rescue and redistribution of high-quality, nutritious food to people in need.



### Compost Inedible Food

SPU is increasing composting of inedible food by targeting customers who have the largest volumes of food going to the garbage and uncovering barriers to behavior change to increase diversion.



### Reduce Single-Use Food Service Packaging & Plastics

SPU is reducing single-use food service ware across City of Seattle food programs and with private businesses by helping to facilitate the use of reusable items where possible.



### Reduce Climate Pollution Associated with the Local Food System

SPU is working with other City departments and key partners to identify and develop high-impact strategies for local government to reduce GHG emissions from food production and consumption.



### Track State and Federal Legislation and Funding Opportunities

SPU continues to support a coordinated City response to legislative issues and funding opportunities that advance Food Action Plan priorities related to food waste reduction.



## Key Food Waste Reduction Metric



**Annual Tons of Food Waste in the Garbage** (Residents + Businesses)

SPU conducts waste composition studies every 4–5 years to measure the total amount of food waste disposed by residents and businesses. This **key metric** will help measure progress towards Seattle's goals to reduce food waste and associated GHG emissions. The data will help identify the greatest opportunities to reduce the environmental and **social impacts** of food waste.

## Climate Impacts



**GLOBAL:** At least **20% of the world's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** comes from the production, transport, and disposal of food that ultimately ends up as waste (**IPCC**).

**NATIONAL:** In landfills, wasted food breaks down relatively quickly, generating methane — a powerful GHG — before landfill gas collection systems are in place. **Wasted food causes 58% of methane emissions from landfills.** Keeping food out of landfills helps tackle climate change (**EPA**).

## Social Impacts



**GLOBAL:** Food waste results in close to \$1 trillion in worldwide economic losses every year. Experts estimate that more than half of those losses occur at the consumer level. (**UNEP**)

**NATIONAL:** The equivalent of 120 billion meals each year are wasted, while 1 in 7 Americans are food insecure. Uneaten food that goes to waste nationally contains enough calories to feed more than 150 million people. (**ReFED**)



**Seattle  
Public  
Utilities**