

Solid Waste

Solid waste removal is one of the City's most important regulatory responsibilities and core services. In 2009, the time of the original 2009 EAP 2030, the City's recycling was 28.7 percent. The recycling rate has been above 48 percent since 2011, well above the state minimum requirement of 25 percent and above state average rate of 43 percent. Solid waste processing contributes 2% of the City-wide GHG emissions. The calculations include the impact of the waste-to-energy plant (COVANTA) that generates electricity from trash instead of a landfill.

In recent years, the global recycling market has experienced tremendous pressures due to a series of recycling policies implemented by China, the largest importer of scrap materials. To consider how Alexandria should adapt to these pressures, staff in 2017 began an extensive public engagement process including the Environmental Policy Commission to understand and incorporate our customers' needs, values and priorities.

In July 2017, staff also retained an independent consultant to conduct a third-party evaluation of the City's current waste management programs and provide recommendations for future long-term management strategies. The memorandums were completed in July 2018 with a series of recommendations for the City to evaluate. Utilizing the input from stakeholders and the third-party consultant, the City developed action items to update the solid waste chapter of the Environmental Action Plan and the City's 20-year strategic plan for solid waste, WasteSmart.

[The WasteSmart Strategic Plan](#) was developed and adopted by City Council in January 2019 and covers a comprehensive roadmap to recover resources. Key action items identified in the WasteSmart Strategic Plan were also aligned with action items in this EAP to address the reduction of greenhouse gases and reducing waste.

The actions in the EAP 2040 and the [WasteSmart Strategic Plan](#) address significant changes for managing solid waste going forward. Implementation of the EAP 2040 action 5.1.1 include new options for glass only bins at the four City recycling drop-off centers and in partnership with a neighboring jurisdiction to turn glass into gravel and sand. This reduces emissions and costs from processing glass in the mixed recycling stream, provides a local use for glass, and can replace some of the non-local resource needs for gravel and sand.