

STRATEGIC PRIORITY TITLE: Increase Focus on Waste Prevention

Branch/Division: Solid Waste LOB/Planning & Program Management (PPM) Division

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Priority/Action Type:

- 2018-2023 Existing Action Plan with **continued** funding for 2021-2026
- 2018-2023 Existing Action Plan with **increased** funding for 2021-2026
- New Priority requiring new funding (*building on existing funding*)
- Priority with existing funding

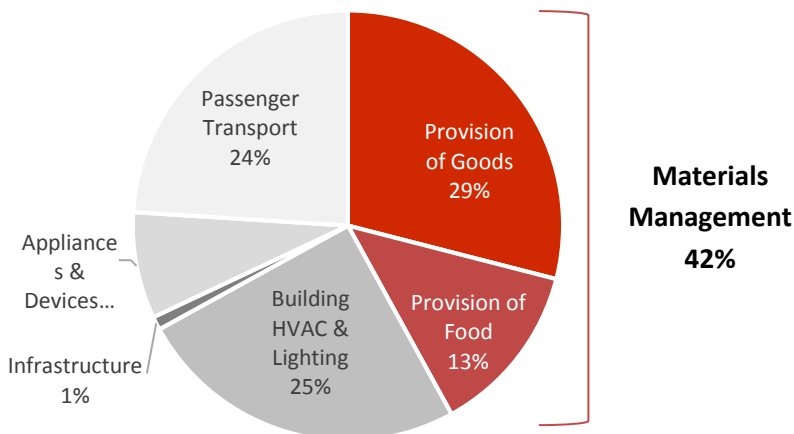
Summary of the priority or issue.

- *What is the issue or problem and why is it important? What data do we have that indicates this an important problem or issue to address? Use charts, graphs, and tables.*

SPU is an internationally recognized leader in recycling and composting, having worked for decades to build a strong diversion ethic for recyclables and organics in Seattle. As work continues to maintain and grow that ethic and associated behaviors, SPU is looking to a similar leadership role with significant benefits by building a comparable ethic of waste prevention in Seattle. Examples of waste prevention actions residents and businesses can take include buying and using less; designing products to last longer; reducing packaging; buying used; repairing; reusing; and sharing, donating, or re-selling items so others can use them.

Waste prevention (WP) is widely recognized as the cornerstone to addressing waste and its impacts, yet there have been relatively few resources invested in cohesive planning and programs by Seattle or other governments. There is an urgent need for Seattle to lead on WP. WP as a key strategy for SPU is particularly important as we face challenges with changing recycling markets and issues around the proliferation of single-use plastics. It's also the most effective way for us to combat climate change within the materials management field.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Systems-Based Inventory**



The EPA estimates about 42% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions (2,935 MMTCO₂E) are caused by making, transporting, and disposing of materials. Most emissions occur long before disposal of a product. The real opportunity for SPU to make an impact on climate change in the materials management field is through prioritizing WP efforts.

Source: *Opportunities to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Materials & Land Management Practices*. U.S. EPA.

In addition to climate change impacts, WP also benefits SPU customers through the following:

- **Environmental and Health Benefits:** Prevention is the most impactful approach for reducing negative environmental and health consequences resulting from materials management. Preventing waste helps us:
 - Conserve natural resources such as water, land, energy, and fuel;
 - Reduce marine debris and litter;
 - Reduce water and air pollution; and,
 - Reduce exposure to toxic chemicals.
- **Utility Costs and Savings:** Preventing waste helps reduce overall generation and the need to manage residuals and garbage. This can help reduce solid waste (i.e., garbage, recycling, and compost) transportation and end-of-life management costs since it results in less material to process.
- **Affordability:** Implementing WP behaviors can help SPU customers save money by buying less, buying used, repairing items, and sharing resources within the community.
- **Leveraging Partnerships:** Leveraging community, non-profit, and business partnerships is one of SPU's key strategies employed for WP. This is a key strategy for achieving success since SPU does not manage WP infrastructure the way we do for end-of-life management. Partnerships are also a critical component of continuing SPU's community-centered approach that informs not only what but how we execute our work.
- **Markets:** Preventing waste, enhancing recycling and compost markets, and increasing product stewardship programs can help mitigate the effects of changing recycling markets.
- **Resiliency:** As WP strategies are adopted by consumers, businesses, and their supply chains, some of the results can include greater communication, tighter material management, and stronger community cohesion. These impacts and others could also result in greater resiliency for Seattle as a whole.

In the current amendment of Seattle's Solid Waste Plan, SPU has highlighted WP as a key priority. Currently, SPU does not have WP goals or metrics as we do for recycling and composting. We also do not have a strategic approach to determine how to prioritize our resources within WP. To really make progress on preventing waste in Seattle and becoming a national leader, SPU needs staff and non-labor resources allocated to the development of a WP strategic plan, including metrics to be used for on-going plan oversight and measurement. We also need sufficient staff and non-labor resources to implement the strategic plan recommendations and ensure SPU effectively engages community stakeholders and maximize partnership opportunities.

Part 2. Targeted Commitments and Performance Measures (next 3-6 years).

- *What are we doing, or will we do to address the priority problem or issue?*
- *What are the short- and long-term metrics for measuring progress? How will you measure whether the action has been successful?*

SPU proposes the following activities for 2021-26 to put us on a path towards becoming a leader on WP and building a WP ethic in Seattle:

2021-22:

- Complete a well-formulated WP strategic plan that clearly defines WP goals, metrics, priorities, and approaches. The WP strategic plan, developed with significant community involvement, will become the guiding document on how SPU prioritizes resources for WP moving forward.
- Continue and minimally expand existing WP programs that already have momentum and partnerships in place.

2023-26:

- Implement recommendations identified in the WP strategic plan. This may include a combination of sunsetting existing programs, expanding existing programs, and implementing new programs.
- Conduct on-going plan oversight and measurement to monitor progress towards achieving our WP goals.

Part 3. Baseline Activities and Anticipated Rate Impact

- *Short description of activities already in the baseline, incremental work.*
- *What is the anticipated additional rate impact of what we're planning on doing (if any)?*

2020 Baseline: SPU has allocated approximately 3.0 FTE and \$677,000 to implement the following WP programs.

- Food Rescue
- Commercial Food WP
- Residential Food WP
- Waste-Free Communities Matching Grant
- Sustainable Yard and Home Education Program
- Local Market Development
- Product Stewardship and Other Policy Initiatives
- Internal Sustainable Purchasing
- WP Strategic Plan and Metrics – initial work to prepare for 2021-22 planning process

2021-22: SPU is proposing additional staff and O&M funding to develop the new WP strategic plan and minimally expand existing WP programs. **2021-22 increases can be absorbed within the existing rate path.**

- Additional **1.0 FTE** to serve as a WP Lead to manage the strategic plan and metrics development process. The position will continue for 2023-26 to lead on-going strategic plan oversight, implementation, and measurement. This will not impact rates since SPU will reallocate a vacant pocket already funded within the PPM Division.
- Additional **\$159,000 annually** (2021 and 2022) to fund the WP strategic plan development work, including stakeholder engagement and measurement pilots.
- Additional **\$61,000** in 2021 and **\$90,000** in 2022 to expand existing WP program efforts listed in the 2020 Baseline description.

2023-26: SPU cannot fully predict 2023-26 staff and funding needs until the WP strategic plan is completed. Our intent is to use existing resources more efficiently based on strategic plan recommendations. SPU anticipates additional funding will be necessary to fully fund the recommendations; however, we anticipate we will be able to accomplish this without a rate impact given the overall solid waste budget. The following table shows an **example** of potential funding increases above the 2020 baseline. We are also projecting the need for an additional 0.5 FTE to help implement strategic plan recommendations. *2023-26 estimates are not official proposals at this time and would be subject to future review and evaluation.*

Program/Project	2020 Baseline	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
WP Strategic Plan and Metrics (plan development and on-going oversight and measurement)	\$41,050	+158,950	+158,950	+158,950 [^]	+158,950 [^]	+158,950 [^]	+\$158,950 [^]
Expand Existing and/or Implement New WP Programs	\$636,192	+61,382	+90,382	+489,010 [^]	+793,010 [^]	+727,010 [^]	+\$631,010 [^]
TOTAL	\$677,242	+220,332	+249,332	+647,960[^]	+951,960[^]	+885,960[^]	+\$789,960[^]

+ indicates increase above the 2020 Baseline [^]Estimates and not official proposals at this time

Part 4. Alternatives Considered & Race and Social Justice Considerations

- *What alternatives were considered in addition to what is being recommended (if any)? How would these alternatives impact service levels?*
- *Identify possible race and social justice implications of work to address this priority. Will this impact service equity?*

Alternatives

Continuing the approach without investing in a WP strategic plan and on-going measurement would significantly impede SPU's ability to implement effective WP programs that help achieve materials management goals.

In the short-term (2021-22), SPU has considered two existing WP programs that would be the most likely candidates for reallocating resources to the WP strategic plan and metrics work.

- **Waste-Free Community Matching Grants:** 0.45 FTE and \$120,000 non-labor for 2021 and \$140,000 for 2022. Since 2018, SPU has been providing matching grants to fund community-initiated and led WP projects. We would not be able to redirect all funds and staff time from this program since projects awarded in 2020 may continue work through 2021. SPU prefers to keep this program running in 2021-22 if feasible to continue the momentum we have begun building with communities of color and immigrant, refugee, and low-income communities in Seattle. This program is described in more detail at www.seattle.gov/utilities/wastefreegrants
- **Residential Food WP (Love Food, Stop Waste):** 0.45 FTE and \$95,000 annually for 2021 and 2022. SPU provides information and resources to help residents save money and help the environment by reducing preventable food waste. The challenge with putting a hold on this program is that the Seattle has joined other West Coast partners in committing to a regional goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. Residential food WP is one of the strategies intended to help us reach that goal. More information on this program is available at www.seattle.gov/utilities/stopfoodwaste

Once the WP strategic plan is completed, SPU will be better able to assess the potential to redirect resources in 2023-26 based on priorities identified in the strategic plan.

Race and social justice implications

All current WP programs have a strong emphasis on increasing equity and affordability. This emphasis will continue as part of the strategic plan and metrics development process. SPU will complete a Racial Equity Toolkit on the process itself to ensure equitable engagement and outcomes. Part of this will include identifying external stakeholders who can help inform the strategic plan and metrics to ensure they reflect community priorities for people of color, immigrants, refugees, low-income, and other priority communities. We will also include the SWLOB BET and the SWLOB Environmental Justice and Service Equity Division Liaison in the stakeholder engagement process.