

DURANGO CITY COUNCIL COMPOSTING TALKING POINTS: SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

- In the La Plata County region, nearly half, or about 40% of what goes to our landfills is food and other organic matter. This is a total waste – for our community, our soil, our farmers, and for our climate.
- In 2015, the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments conducted the Southwest Colorado Waste Study. This key study showed that the region buries approximately 91,000 tons/yr of waste in landfills, 37.5% of which is organic waste, and 24.4% of that is recoverable organic waste (food and yard waste) and could have been diverted.
- In July 2021, Table to Farm Compost entered into a 5-year Public Private Partnership (PPP) with the City of Durango to “implement an innovative curbside organic waste collection program.” The PPP states that “it is anticipated that residential participation in a city-wide curbside compost collection program will initially be on a voluntary basis, with the potential to scale up to mandatory participation for all residents within three years.”
 - **This partnership expired in August 2026 with the goals of this agreement not met.**
- The City of Durango has committed to **sustainability goals**¹ and **greenhouse gas emission**² goals. Composting will make great strides in achieving those goals as well as the adoption of the **Destination Management Master Plan** (DMMP) that has a strong emphasis on sustainability management of tourism and visitation.
- Composting of wildfire mitigation, a strong focus of Table to Farm, also helps to implement the Sustainability Plan’s Natural Systems and Ecology goals.
- The City has requested approximately \$2 million in reimbursement for their recycling program through the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program which is guiding the structure and funding of statewide recycling services. This funding can be used to offset the cost of expanding recycling services to include organics, both food scraps and yard waste.
- With the Bondad Landfill nearing its capacity, the financial case to increase composting is compelling.
 - As of March 2025, Bondad's current capacity is about 68% full, and it expects to reach full capacity in about seven years.
 - Each landfill cell costs \$2.5 million to build.
 - Since Bondad is privately owned and operated, expansion and/or construction costs would be realized in the city’s waste collection fees.
 - If we divert 30-40% of waste by composting organic matter, that extends the life of the landfill for about 8 more years and saves about \$3M.
 - Bondad Landfill emitted 126,397 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in 2024 according to statistics posted by Climate Trace. 100% of the emissions from a landfill are from organic matter. Meanwhile, Table to Farm Compost has diverted 9,547 metric tons of carbon dioxide since its inception in 2017.

¹ <https://www.durangoco.gov/1614/Sustainability-Plan>

² <https://www.durangoco.gov/1316/Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions>

COMPOSTING IMPACTS!

- Diverting food scraps and organic matter such as yard waste from the landfill reduces methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and turns these resources into a soil amendment for use in backyard gardening, farming, and much more.
- In instituting an organics-free landfill practice, the City of Durango would be joining other cities/counties across the state of Colorado, including Aspen, Denver and Boulder, in a growing trend to meaningfully reduce atmospheric pollution.
- Project Drawdown and many other climate change initiatives call out composting as one of the most important, effective, and easy ways to reduce impacts on the planet and increase sustainability.
- With a composting facility just 5 miles outside the city limits, recycling food scraps and yard waste no longer entails costly transportation expenses which benefits La Plata County's budget. And, the roundtrip transport to the landfill is 40 miles, making it more cost-effective to move organic matter to the compost-facility.
- It takes 3 to 4 months for the microorganisms in compost to break down food scraps and create a nutrient-rich soil amendment. Compare that to the 25 years it takes for a head of lettuce to break down in the landfill, all the while emitting methane, an atmospheric pollutant that contributes significantly to catastrophic climate disasters.
- Compost's nickname is "Black Gold" for its high nutritional value when added to soil and plants. Not to mention, compost acts as a carbon sink, meaning it captures carbon from the atmosphere and safely stores it in the ground, helping to fight climate change.
- Applying compost to soil increases organic matter and the overall health of soil, including its water holding capacity.
- According to the NRCS, increasing soil organic matter by just 1% increases the water holding capacity of soil up to 20,000 more gallons of water per acre.