

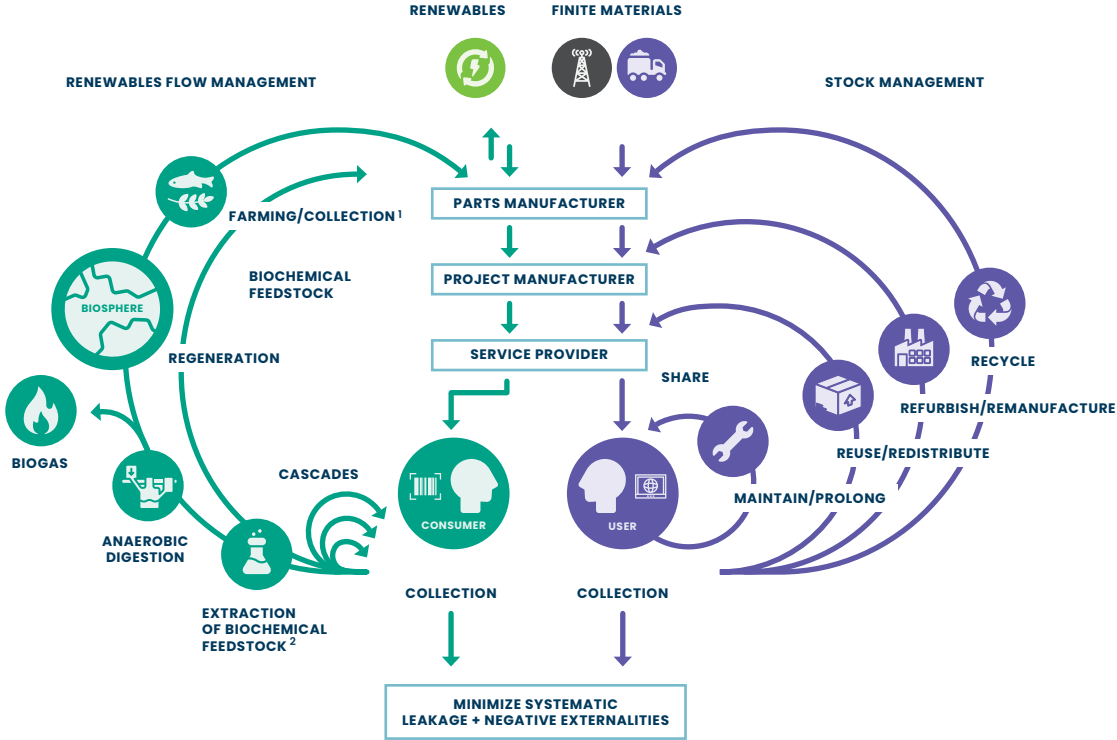
KEEP it CLEAN!

DRAINS ARE

# Zero Waste

Many products and materials are only used once before they end up in a landfill. A circular economy aims to change this system by keeping materials and products in use, and services in use as long as possible. By recovering raw materials from products after they are used and turning them into something new, a circular economy produces zero waste.

A circular economy reduces climate pollution, protects the environment and provides economic resilience. It also supports environmental justice by reducing the negative environmental and health impacts of landfills and incinerators, which are disproportionately located near low-income communities and communities of color nationwide.



1 Hunting and fishing  
2 Can take both post-harvest + post-consumer waste as input

**SOURCE**  
Drawing based on:  
Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Circular Economy Systems Diagram (2019)  
Braungart & McDonough, Cradle to Cradle (C2C)



The City of Madison is working with partners across our region to help grow a circular economy. We support recycling, invest in business and research, and have programs to end food waste. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 30 to 40% of food is wasted in the United States. The WDNR estimates that food makes up 20.5% of Wisconsin’s landfills, making it the largest part of our waste stream. Food and other organic material decompose in landfills and create methane –a greenhouse gas [28 times more effective than carbon dioxide](#) at trapping heat in the atmosphere. Check out the City’s [Food Scraps Recycling resource](#) for tips and tools you can use to help reduce food waste.



## Food Scraps Drop-Off

You can participate in the circular economy by dropping off your food scraps at three farmers markets throughout the farmers market season. The program is free and open to the public for all households in Madison. Visit [Sustain Dane’s website](#) to learn more about what types of food can be dropped off for composting, how much food waste has been collected so far, and how you can volunteer.



Recycling is another way to keep materials out of the landfill, reduce consumption of raw materials, and help our environment. However, more than 18% of the material collected by the City of Madison Streets Division in green recycling bins was trash in 2023. Misplaced trash makes the recycling process slower and more expensive. It can also damage the recycling equipment. There are two great resources to help Madisonians make the most of our local recycling system and avoid trash accidentally ending up in recycling.

- 1) The City's Streets Division's [Recyclopedia](#) is a guide for recycling, composting, and responsibly managing other materials. It also has all the Streets Division rules and guidelines.
- 2) Sustain Dane and Latino Academy of Workforce Development, in partnership with the City, offer the [Recycle Better](#) program in both English and Spanish. The program can teach how to best use our recycling system and give you tools to teach your family, neighbors, friends, and coworkers how to improve recycling and community sustainability.

The City of Madison is also partnering with Dane County to create the [Yahara Hills Sustainability Campus](#) to help advance a circular economy for our community. The Sustainability Campus will serve as a hub for reuse, repair, and recycling businesses and support new waste management technologies. It will also be home to research on how to reduce the impact of waste on our environment.

The following goals and actions aim to build a local circular economy. This means that things get used as much as possible so that Madison sends less trash to the landfill.

## Zero Waste | Goals & Actions

<p><b>GOAL 16</b></p>	<p><b>Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill from the Madison community 50% by 2030 and 90% by 2040 from a 2021 baseline in partnership with Dane County.</b></p>
<p><b>METRICS</b></p>	<p>Annual tonnage of waste going to the landfill broken out by type</p>
<p><b>ACTION 16.1</b></p>	<p>Develop and implement a comprehensive, community-wide Zero Waste Plan by 2026 that includes strategies for reducing all waste streams going to the landfill and regular progress reporting.</p>
<p><b>ACTION 16.2</b></p>	<p>Collaborate with Dane County on the planning, design, and implementation of the new Yahara Hills Sustainability Campus that will divert waste and create local circular economies by attracting businesses that will support reuse, repair, and recycling; by utilizing new waste management technologies; and by supporting research and education.</p>
<p><b>ACTION 16.3</b></p>	<p>Continue to collaborate with Dane County and other partners to expand access to and participation in composting and other food waste reduction initiatives to reduce food waste going to the landfill.</p>
<p><b>ACTION 16.4</b></p>	<p>Reduce, with the goal of eliminating, single-use plastics at Olbrich Botanical Garden as alternatives become available, such as using rice-hull pots for plant reproduction.</p>



## Rain Gardens

A rain garden is a planting of native shrubs, perennials, and flowers in a shallow depression or built on a natural slope. It is designed to capture rainwater that flows from roofs, driveways, patios, or lawns in order to reduce runoff and prevent flooding. The City's Engineering Division has set a goal of having [1,000 rain gardens in Madison](#), and provides information and grants to help Madisonians build their own rain gardens. The [Stormwater Terrace Program](#) also works with homeowners to build rain gardens in the terrace (the green space between the sidewalk and the road) when there is work being done on their street.

