

# Zero Waste

## EVENT PLANNING GUIDE



Planning a zero waste event is a **commendable** and **achievable** goal. Use this guide to support your waste-reduction efforts and to link with resources in Oxford County.



# The path towards zero waste

Everything we consume, from the food we eat to the cars we drive to the houses we live in, is produced from the earth's limited supply of resources. These items nourish us, and support us, and sustain our modern-day existence. But, our human footprint extends beyond the simple buying and consuming of things. **The final impact occurs when we dispose of these items.**

According to Statistics Canada, the average person in Ontario generates nearly a tonne of waste every year, and only 25 per cent of that waste is recycled. Last year, in Oxford County, 33,000 vehicles delivered 45,000 tonnes of garbage to the waste management facility in Salford, with an additional 17,000 tonnes of recycling. At this rate of disposal, our landfill would reach maximum capacity in less than 50 years.

In 2015, zero waste was identified as a target of the Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan. The following year, Oxford County released a Draft Zero Waste Plan, which aims to reduce the amount of waste produced in, and exported out of, Oxford by maximizing recovery efforts and extending the lifespan of the County's landfill site to the year 2100.

On the path to waste reduction, our choices are simple. Every item we discard will get us closer to - or further away from - our zero waste goals. By choosing to use our limited resources sustainably, we support future generations, reduce our impact on the environment and help build resilient communities.

This guide was designed to help you move towards zero waste at your next event. Whether it's a large public gathering or an intimate group of friends or colleagues, the tips and suggestions in this guide challenge the current state of functioning and suggest small but high-impact changes to help you minimize waste, maximize recycling and rethink the status quo.

# This guide is for you if:

- ✔ You want to reduce your ecological footprint by reducing waste
- ✔ You know that large events often send numerous bags of unnecessary waste to the landfill
- ✔ You want your next event to be good for the community – and the environment
- ✔ You support the Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan and Oxford County's Zero Waste Plan.

## What is zero waste?

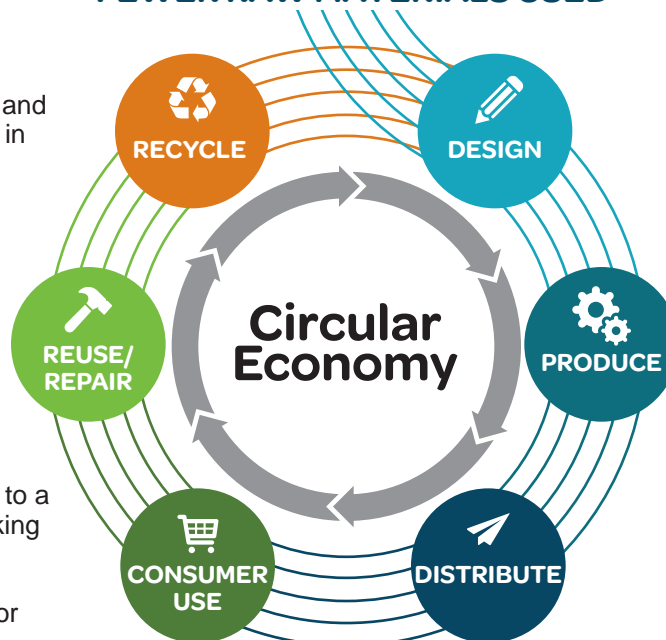
Zero waste is a philosophy that strives to achieve a closed-loop system, sometimes described as circular economy, for all products, food, and other goods. The goal is to keep all items in a continuous cycle of use – whether that be through composting, recycling, or reusing – and avoiding excess packaging, throw-away utensils, and anything else that ends up in a landfill.



**ZERO WASTE STRIVES FOR A CLOSED-LOOP SYSTEM**

### FEWER RAW MATERIALS USED

- Improved, cost-efficient collection and treatment systems will lead to fewer and fewer materials ending up in a landfill.
- Producers are fully responsible for recovering materials from their products and packaging throughout their lifecycle.
- There are many ways consumers can contribute to a circular economy, like making greener buying choices, sharing assets (e.g., cars, tools) and repairing them or offering them to others for reuse and refurbishment.



- Products and packaging are designed to last longer, using sustainable materials that can be easily recycled at end-of-life.
- Businesses collaborate and coordinate across sectors to reduce greenhouse gas production and fossil fuel use.
- Retailers offer products that can be easily reused and refurbished, offer end-of-life take back or maintenance and repair services, and support producers in providing education and awareness to consumers.



# Before the Event

## Why hold a zero waste event?

Holding a zero waste event is a simple way to demonstrate your commitment to the community! By hosting a zero waste event, you are providing a valuable service to your participants, and you are reducing the dependence on landfills. Products made of Styrofoam and non-recyclable plastics will sit in a landfill for hundreds of years, so why not avoid them altogether and strive for something more ecologically responsible?

### BY HOSTING A ZERO WASTE EVENT, YOU CAN:

- Reduce your community's carbon footprint – meaning less greenhouse gas emissions and fewer pollutants released into the environment
- Educate your community on the benefits of a zero waste lifestyle
- Reduce the amount of trash being sent to landfills – meaning fewer landfills overall
- Support the small business community
- Support local farmers and their families
- Demonstrate your organization's commitment to sustainability in a thought-provoking, efficient way

### 1 SET A GOAL

- Identify why zero-waste practices matter to you and the organization
- Set a goal for the maximum number of garbage bags sent to the landfill
- Seek support from grassroots and non-profit groups that promote sustainable practices

### 2 CHOOSE A VENUE

- Look for a location that allows for convenient use of alternative transportation
- Give preference to a location with a comprehensive recycling program
- Consider a LEEDs Certified or eco-conscious building that reduces water use, invests in energy conservation, harnesses renewable energy, etc.

### 3 IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SOURCES OF WASTE

- Make a list of waste materials you are likely to encounter during the event
- Consider which materials may be brought in and reused (tableware, signs, etc.)
- Research waste disposal options in your area, and identify local recycling standards
- Consider using electronic invitations and save-the-date promotions
- Instead of printing programs, consider posting central display boards or signs.
- Ensure necessary printing is on recycled paper and provide well-marked bins for recycling



The average person in Ontario generates nearly a tonne of waste every year and only 25 per cent is recycled.



#### 4 ENGAGE VENDORS

- Inform vendors about the event's zero-waste requirements, and draft a vendor agreement to support this outcome
- Provide a list of acceptable and unacceptable products for the event
- Include vendors in the planning process – they may have resources that you are unaware of

#### 5 CREATE A ZERO WASTE PLAN FOR THE EVENT

- Use a venue map to highlight locations for collection bins and signage
- Identify local vendors [see page 10] that rent recycle bins, dish ware, cutlery, linens and other reusable items
- Make arrangements for collection of compost and recycling after the event
- Define a location to store full bags of material during the event and – if needed – afterwards
- Draft a schedule for the event and assign staff/volunteers to assist with waste management

#### 6 EDUCATE STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

- Share your zero waste plan and highlight the benefits of going zero waste
- Provide a detailed event schedule
- Provide a map of all anticipated garbage disposal locations, food services, washrooms, etc.

#### 7 BUY SMART

- Don't over-order food and other perishables
- Use dispensers rather than individual packages for condiments
- Opt for high-quality, reusable materials over cheaper, disposable options
- Support local suppliers and work with caterers to serve locally grown food
- Avoid non-recyclable goods. [see the list on page 6]
- Ask yourself: Will this be thrown out afterwards? Will the event be successful without this item? Are there more suitable options?

#### 8 PROMOTE YOUR ZERO WASTE EVENT

- Advertise and promote the occasion as a zero waste event
- Share your goals with stakeholders
- Send a press release that highlights the zero-waste aspect of your event, encouraging patrons to bring their own cups, utensils, etc.
- Consider organizing a raffle, where every attendee that brings their own dishes will be entered into a prize-winning draw



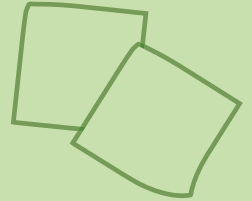
# 5

## Products to avoid at your next event

Avoid

### Laminated materials and heavily-dyed paper

These items are generally not accepted by recycling centres, so opt for reusable or recyclable items.



5+ years to decompose



### Balloons

**Latex balloons** will decompose after 5 years, but are riddled with harmful chemicals that can leach into the soil.

**Mylar balloons** (helium-filled and shiny) will take even longer to decompose.

Instead try decorating with reusable kites, garden spinners, and local flowers - or rent decorations from a party supply store.

75 years to decompose

### Food Wrappers

Food wrappers, like chip bags, can take up to 75 years to decompose. Skip the individually-wrapped portions and buy in bulk instead!



100 years to decompose



### Polypropylene Items

Items like drinking straws and water bottle lids can easily be avoided by opting for reusable containers.



500 years to decompose

### Styrofoam plates, cups and containers

Whenever possible, opt for reusable dishware at your event. If this isn't possible, choose compostable products over throw-away items. It may cost more, but will dramatically reduce your clean-up costs, and your impact on the environment, in the end.



### Common Roadblocks

Zero waste events aren't for everybody, so be prepared to encounter some unenthusiastic guests who may not understand your waste separation system, or why you are doing things this way. Have a few simple statements prepared for staff and volunteers to explain why this is important and why everyone should participate.

# During the Event

## 1 INFORM PARTICIPANTS ABOUT YOUR ZERO WASTE GOAL

- Throughout the event, remind guests about your zero waste goal and encourage them to use the appropriate recycling stations
- Provide clear signs, so guests know where to properly dispose of waste
- Place more recycling and compost bins than trash bins around the event
- Label each bin clearly with examples of what goes into each one



## 2 ASSIGN STAFF FOR GARBAGE SEPARATION AND MONITORING

- Provide gloves and volunteer tags to those sorting waste
- Check bins regularly for contamination and correct if necessary
- Be ready to make changes if needed
- Talk to vendors and exhibitors to find out what will be disposed of at the event
- Set up a station where guests can wash or rinse their reusable dishes



## Tips for managing waste during the event

### FOOD WASTE

Composting is crucial when hosting a zero waste event. Items that will eventually decompose in a compost bin will not do the same in the landfill due to the lack of enzymes and bacteria. You can start a compost program at your home, apartment building, or office, or see the list of resources on page 11 to find out how to dispose of compost locally.

To make the whole process easier, look for trash bags that are compostable, so you can line your compost bins to make clean-up a breeze!

Oxford County sells two types of composters: a traditional above ground composter with a 311-litre capacity or an underground composter called the Green Cone, which can digest up to 1kg of food waste every 1-2 days.

### BEVERAGE WASTE

- Eliminate the need for straws, or choose paper straws instead
- Provide a water station with pitchers or jugs of tap water instead of bottled water
- If serving alcohol, approach a local craft brewer to learn about their keg program. If using other containers ensure they are recycled appropriately, or take advantage of The Beer Store's deposit return program.

### WASHROOM WASTE

- Include a separate bin in the washrooms for used paper towels. These paper products can be added to your compost pile
- If possible, purchase 100 per cent post-consumer waste paper towels, processed chlorine-free
- Some items, like diapers and feminine hygiene products, cannot be recycled or composted. Include separate, clearly marked garbage bins for these items

# The anatomy of a waste sorting station

## RECYCLING

### PAPER/FIBRES

- Boxboard (tissue, food boxes & pop cases)
- Cardboard boxes (flattened)
- Cardboard packaging
- Drink/coffee takeout trays (molded paper)
- Envelopes
- Flyers
- Glossy posters/paper
- Magazines, catalogues & telephone books
- Newspapers
- Paper
- Paper bags
- Pizza boxes (no food residue)



### CONTAINERS

- Aerosol containers (empty)
- Aluminum foil and trays
- Bakery trays (Plastic #6)
- Clear & coloured glass
- Coffee cup lids
- Coffee cups (excluding Woodstock)
- Drink & soup boxes
- Metal & aluminum containers
- Milk & juice cartons
- Plastic bottles (pop, water, juice)
- Plastic clamshell packaging



- Plastic cookie trays
- Plastic food containers (tubs & lids)
- Plastic grocery & shopping bags (stuff, tie & bundle)
- Plastic lunch bags & plastic wrap
- Spiral wound/cardboard cans (hot chocolate, coffee, crescent rolls)
- Styrofoam food containers
- Yogurt containers (Plastic #5)



## ORGANICS

- Coffee filters
- Coffee grounds
- Crushed egg shells
- Food scraps (raw or cooked)
- Fruit (including peels)
- Tea bags
- Vegetables (including peels)



### GREEN CONE ONLY

- All bones
- Bread
- Dairy products
- Meat, fish & poultry
- Small amounts of pet waste

## LANDFILL

- Bandages, first aid materials
- Bubble wrap
- Bulky Styrofoam
- Carbon paper
- Coffee cups (Woodstock only)
- Compostable plastic cutlery and takeout containers
- Food waste (if compost is not available)
- Laminated material
- Notebooks & agendas (cover is garbage, recycle the paper inside)
- Pens, markers, highlighters
- Pet waste
- Photographs
- Plastic cutlery
- Stickers/labels
- Straws
- Waxed paper



This page outlines sorting for Oxford County. Recycling options may vary by municipality. Check with your waste management team before your event to find out what can be recycled.

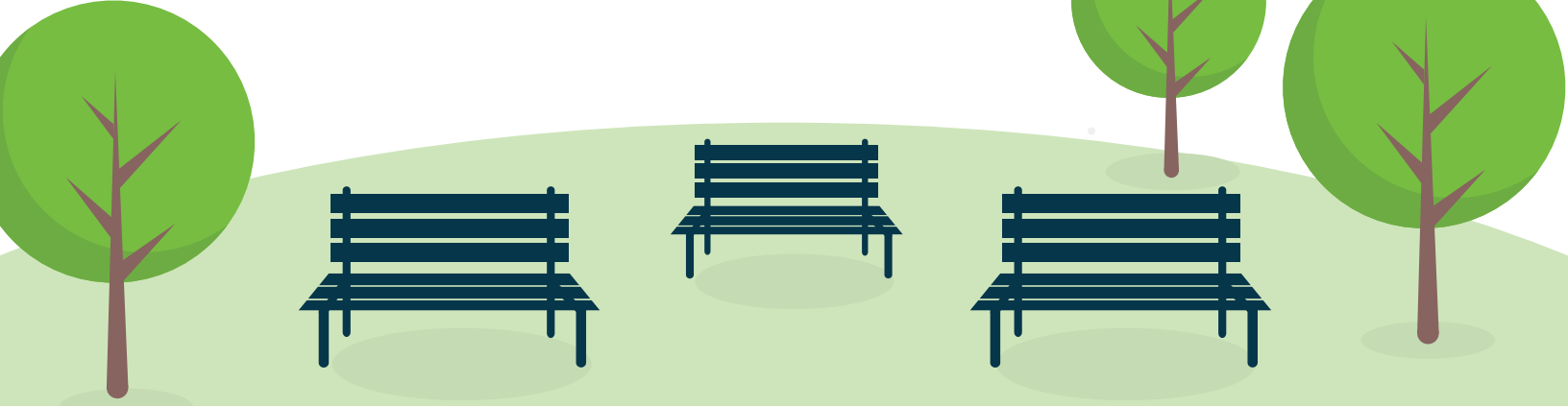






# After the Event

- Ensure containers are collected and disposed of through the appropriate channels
- Donate extras: food banks and shelters are likely to accept anything unused
- Review the number of attendees to estimate how much waste was diverted from the landfill (assuming the average event-goer will produce 1 kilogram of landfill waste per day)
- Hold a debrief meeting with all stakeholders and extract lessons learned
- Audit your success. [See page 10] Did you reach your goal? Was there one particular item that caused setbacks? How did the zero-waste practices resonate with the attendees?
- Celebrate your success
- Recognize your vendors, staff, and volunteers for their efforts
- Commit to zero waste for your next event





## Sustainability

### Things to consider to keep your event green

- Buy local and seasonal. Local farmers may consider selling their products at a wholesale price if you contact them and buy in bulk.
- Reduce the paper trail. If you are sending out physical invitations, make sure they are recyclable or biodegradable (and indicate this clearly, which will also help to set the tone for your event). Consider digital invitations to reduce costs.
- Encourage carpooling. Find out where your guests are coming from and arrange carpool groups.
- Offer premium parking for electric vehicles.
- Provide special parking for cyclists so they can lock up their bikes in a visible location. Or, go even further and consider offering a bike valet!
- Reconsider the take-home/thank you gift. Many of these will end up in the landfill, so if you must give gifts, consider local food products, seeds or beeswax candles.
- On electronic invitations, include an “I’m coming” button to track numbers.
- Offset your carbon emissions. Consider the environmental impact of annual travel, energy consumption, etc. and host a tree-planting event on a yearly basis.

# Local resources

RESOURCE	SERVICE	DESCRIPTION
Bins	<b>Oxford County Waste Management Facility</b> 384060 Salford Rd, Salford, ON N0J 1W0 ☎ 519-539-9800   1-800-755-0394 ✉ <a href="mailto:customerservice@oxfordcounty.ca">customerservice@oxfordcounty.ca</a>	Oxford County offers a lending program for large-scale recycling and waste bins (carts).  Note: if recyclables are contaminated and need to be landfilled a disposal/tipping fee will be applied.
	<b>Transition to Less Waste</b> ☎ 519-537-0599	Transition to Less Waste offers a lending program for plastic reusable dishware and cups, metal cutlery, and water coolers. Portable dishwashing stations and instruction on dishwashing procedure is also available.  Note: If dishes are returned dirty a donation to cover cleaning costs will be incurred.
	<b>Party Plus Tent &amp; Event Rentals</b> (Operated out of Record Works) 399 Dundas St., Woodstock, ON N4S 1B8 🌐 <a href="http://www.stthomascanvasandawning.com">www.stthomascanvasandawning.com</a>	Operating out of Record Works in Woodstock, Party Plus Tent & Event Rentals provides tent and party rentals, including glassware, cutlery, dishware, bar accessories and linens.
	<b>All Celebrations</b> Ingersoll, ON ☎ 226-2284199 <a href="http://www.allcelebrations.ca">www.allcelebrations.ca</a>	All Celebrations in Ingersoll offers party rental services, including glassware, dishware, cutlery, serving items, linens, centerpieces and accessories.
 <b>TIP:</b> churches and legions will often loan dishes in exchange for a donation. Banquet halls and community centres generally offer dishes and dish-washing facilities.		
Disposal solutions	<b>Oxford County Waste Management Facility</b> 384060 Salford Rd, Salford, ON N0J 1W0 🌐 <a href="http://www.wasteline.ca">www.wasteline.ca</a>	Oxford County's Waste Management Facility (landfill) is a one-stop shop for residents and businesses in Oxford County to dispose of their garbage, recycling and special waste.
	<b>Woodstock Recycling Depot</b> 63 Clarke St. S., Woodstock, ON 🌐 <a href="http://www.cityofwoodstock.ca">www.cityofwoodstock.ca</a>	The recycling depot, located at the end of Clarke Street, offers two bins for containers and 3 bins for fibre material. Please drop off only acceptable materials; no dumping and no hazardous waste.
	<b>Backyard composting</b>	Purchase a backyard composter or green cone at the Oxford County Administration Building in Woodstock, the Waste Management Facility in Salford, or at the City of Woodstock Public Works department on James Street.
	 <b>TIP:</b> consider donating your food scraps to animals. With proper and safe handling, a local farmer may be interested in partnering to accept food scraps from your event.	

<b>Environmental Entertainment</b>	<b>Trash Theatre</b> ✉ <a href="mailto:trashtheatreproductions@gmail.com">trashtheatreproductions@gmail.com</a> 🌐 <a href="http://www.trashtheatre.ca">www.trashtheatre.ca</a>	Interactive and educational activities for youth.
<b>Food Donations</b>	<b>Food Secure Oxford</b> 🌐 <a href="http://www.foodsecureoxford.ca">www.foodsecureoxford.ca</a>	Download the latest listings of food banks and soup kitchens in Oxford County. Be sure to call ahead for hours of operation, and to discuss your event in advance.
<b>Parking</b>	<b>The Bicycle Valet</b> 🌐 <a href="http://www.thebicyclevalet.ca">www.thebicyclevalet.ca</a>	Download a toolkit to learn how to start your own bicycle valet service.
<b>Signs</b>	<b>Oxford County</b> 21 Reeve St., Woodstock, ON N4S 7Y3 ☎ 519-539-9800   1-800-755-0394 ✉ <a href="mailto:customerservice@oxfordcounty.ca">customerservice@oxfordcounty.ca</a>	Oxford County offers a sign lending program, which includes bin sorting signs outlining what goes where. <b>COST: Free to borrow</b>

# Audit your success!

## Did you achieve your zero waste goal?

WHAT WAS YOUR INITIAL GOAL? \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED YOUR EVENT: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF WASTE PRODUCED:

<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"># bags of recycling</div> <div style="border: 2px solid #0056b3; width: 100px; height: 40px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 5px;"></div>	+	<div style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"># bags of recycling</div> <div style="border: 2px solid #4CAF50; width: 100px; height: 40px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 5px;"></div>	÷	<div style="background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"># bags of garbage</div> <div style="border: 2px solid #333; width: 100px; height: 40px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 5px;"></div>
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**EVENT DIVERSION RATE =** \_\_\_\_\_ %

WHAT WENT WELL? \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED? \_\_\_\_\_

**SHARE YOUR SUCCESS!!**

Use the hashtag [#zerowasteoxford](https://twitter.com/zerowasteoxford) to share your waste-reduction efforts on social media.

# About

## FUTURE OXFORD

Future Oxford's Community Sustainability Plan is guiding decisions that will have a positive impact on our communities for generations to come. From protecting source water to reducing waste, the Plan puts forward a decision-making framework that aims to support and balance Oxford's unique social, environmental and economic interests. For more, visit [www.FutureOxford.ca](http://www.FutureOxford.ca)

## TRANSITION TO LESS WASTE

A grassroots organization based in Ingersoll, Transition to Less Waste is dedicated to educating communities on sustainable living practices. Through participation, education and cooperation, it aims to reduce Oxford County's ecological footprint and, as a result, protect Canada's natural resources and environment.

## TOURISM OXFORD

Tourism Oxford recognizes Oxford County's strengths are its natural environment, rich agricultural land, heritage and cultural opportunities. Tourism Oxford has therefore embraced Future Oxford's sustainability commitments to preserve the tourism appeal and assets of Oxford County.

## OXFORD COUNTY

Located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario, Oxford County represents the best of both worlds: urban communities full of life, and rural areas that are rich in natural resources. By leading a successful Waste Management program, Oxford County aims to extend the life of the local landfill through careful planning and an active diversion strategy.

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**FutureOxford**  
OUR PATH TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY



*Tourism@Oxford*  
our rural roots are showing