



Food Matters Initiative:

Food Rescue Convening Project

Final Report

November 30, 2023



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NRDC/City of Madison Food Matters Initiative

Food Rescue Convening Project Summary

In March, 2023 NRDC contracted with Rooted WI, Inc. to complete the following project as described in the grant letter:

As part of the Food Matters regional initiative, NRDC is partnering with the City of Madison to implement program and policy solutions to reduce food waste. Recipient will allocate the funds to its fiscally sponsored Wisconsin Food Systems, Inc., **to convene members of the food rescue space in the City of Madison area to facilitate better cooperation and coordination among food rescue stakeholders.** Funding can be used for administrative and staff time as needed for implementation of the project. Wisconsin Food Systems, Inc. will provide a summary of the findings and recommendations for the City of Madison to NRDC and the City of Madison, in the best format determined by the City of Madison. Funds will be spent by and final deliverables will be submitted no later than December 31, 2023.

On October 11, 2023, Wisconsin Food Systems, Inc. (WFS) and FEED Kitchens (FEED) held a successful convening of food rescue organizations at the Warner Park Community Recreation Center. Rebecca Kemble of WFS and Chris Brockel of FEED spent the summer before the convening interviewing people from organizations involved in food rescue activities.

At the end of June, the Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin (CAC) Board of Directors decided to reduce what they saw as duplicative efforts and to transition food gleaning work to other agencies. CAC had housed the longest-running food rescue and gleaning operation in Dane County, dating back to the 1970s. They have played a pivotal role in the emergency food system, supplying dozens of community food pantries with both commodity foods and fresh foods gleaned from local supermarkets, convenience stores and restaurants.

CAC's decision was made as Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern Wisconsin has been expanding operations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when they received robust support from CARES Act and ARPA funds. While many local food pantries partner with Second Harvest and have benefitted from this expansion, other smaller community-based pantries depend on CAC and will be affected by this change. The convening provided an excellent opportunity for these issues to be discussed.

Another theme that emerged from the interview process included the positive effect of CARES and ARPA related program support to poor and working families measured by the precipitous drop in demand for emergency food, and the sharp and continued increase in demand for emergency food and other services when those supports ended.

It was also noted that when pantry facilities were closed to visitors and food was distributed in pre-packaged boxes, the burden of managing food waste shifted from the pantries to the individual families, since pantries were able to distribute all of the food they had gleaned, but not every family chose to eat everything that was in the box.

Every organization interviewed raised the concern that, while grocery stores were receiving tax advantages for donating food that would otherwise go into the landfill to the food bank and food pantries, the pantries were saddled with the responsibility and costs of disposing of spoiled food. Composting services are far more expensive in both money and staff time than throwing food in a dumpster bound for the landfill, so most organizations have not been able to compost.

The October 11 convening was based on the issues raised in these interviews. There was great participation from all of the major area food pantries and the regional food bank, as well as other gleaning organizations: CAC, Second Harvest Food Bank, The River, Badger Prairie Needs Network, Way Forward, St. Vinnie's, Neighborhood House Community Center, Sustain Dane, Little John's, Healthy Food for All, Northside Planning Council, as well as representation from the City, County and University of Wisconsin.

Bryan Johnson, the City of Madison Recycling Coordinator, offered words of welcome and offered to support whatever communication needs this group has, including sharing information over the City website.

CAC announced that they are transitioning away from gleaning activities. They discussed transferring their gleaning routes to other organizations, offering their volunteers opportunities to maintain their relationships to the pantries they have been delivering to by reorganizing their work under the auspices of the organizations that take over the routes.

Sujata Gautam from Dane County Waste & Renewables was very excited to be part of this convening, and gave a brief presentation on County plans to build a Sustainability Campus that will include a large composting facility, and possibly a digester facility due to be operational in 2026.

Breakout groups discussed and came up with a number of ideas including:

- How to reduce the cost of dealing with waste from donors - Blanket donation fee? Could that go to the pantries?
- Changing packaging laws
- Changing food donation laws
- End of week issues - challenge of moving food over the weekend
- Need a massive spreadsheet of all gleaning routes
- Central hub & associated challenges (hard for pantries to go to), maybe better to build on the infrastructure we have and address whatever gaps are there. Delivery would be good
- Need more storage, staff and clean rooms for processing
- Friday donation issues how to keep it over the weekend
- Need a more streamlined communication process
- Delays in delivery causing limited shelf life in the pantries
- Timing on Second Harvest produce - it sits there for 10 days before it gets distributed.

At the end of the convening, three main needs were identified by the group:

1. An easily accessible, centralized storage and/or processing facility to preserve more food before it spoils
2. Digital data infrastructure to optimize logistics and information about available food
3. Financial and logistical support for composting food waste that is generated by grocery stores who donate food, but ultimately paid for by non-profit pantries

In a follow-up survey to participants, all respondents said that they would compost food waste if they received financial support for the costs. They also mentioned that staff education would be an important part of any composting project.

We will follow up with regular, likely quarterly, calls, as well as communication on a listserv. Both the City and County will be important partners moving forward as the group advocates for the three items listed above.

Finally, REAP Food Group, in partnership with the Madison Food Policy Council and Dane County Food Council, has been awarded a USDA Regional Food System Partnership grant to conduct a regional food plan in 2024-2025. The work done for this convening will be a foundational building block and will be extended through that planning process.

Email Invitation

Greetings!

We are writing to invite you to a convening of people and organizations working in the food rescue space in the City of Madison area:

Wednesday, October 11, 2023
9am - 1pm
Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr, Madison

The event is intended to facilitate better cooperation and coordination among food rescue stakeholders, and will include a lunch provided by Healthy Food for All.

The convening is part of the Natural Resources Defense Council and City of Madison's *Food Matters regional initiative*, designed to implement program and policy solutions to reduce food waste.

Over the past several months we have spoken with many individuals and organizations working in this space in an attempt to understand the current dynamics and flow of rescued food and food waste. Many changes are in motion, and there couldn't be a better time for us to come together to identify gaps in the system and collectively develop action plans for moving forward in a collaborative way.

We hope that you're able to join us to share your experiences, observations and ideas! Please [register here](#), and feel free to contact either one of us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Kemble
Wisconsin Food Systems, Inc.
rikemble@wifoodsystems.org

Chris Brockel
Northside Planning Council/FEED Kitchens
manager@feedkitchens.org



Registered Participants

(with color-coded breakout groups)

Andrew Hirst	CACSCW
Bryan Johnson	City of Madison
Chris Brockel	NPC/Healthy Food for All
Chris Kane	St. Vincent de Paul
Dan Streit	Slipstream
Dave Heide	Little John's Kitchens
Delaney Gobster	UW Madison- Nelson Institute
Francesca Frisque	Goodman Community Center
Francesca Hong	Assembly Rep
Frankie Pobar Lay	Healthy Food for All
Fritz Kruger	Gleaner
Helen Osborn-Senatus	The River Food Pantry
Jacob Markofski	Northside Planning Council
Jess Guffey Calkins	UW-Madison Extension Dane County
Jo Rabbach	Second Harvest Foodbank of S WI
Joe Mingle	Healthy Food for All
Joel Girard	Little John's Kitchens
Laura Gundlach	Neighborhood House Community Center
Lindsey Karls	Community Action Coalition of SC WI
Lori Peppard	Second Harvest Foodbank of S WI
Meghan Mietchen	CACSCW
Meghan Sohns	WayForward Resources
Melanie Askay	Dane County - Energy & Climate Change
Nicholas Heckman	Public Health Madison & Dane County
Rebecca Kemble	Wisconsin Food Systems, Inc.
Reece Harding	Student
Sam Worden	Sustain Dane
Sujata Gautam	Dane County Waste & Renewables
Taylor Drogemuller	Neighborhood House Community Center
Tracy Burton	Badger Prairie Needs Network
Will Russell	Little John's Kitchens

Agenda

Madison Area Food Rescue Convening

Warner Park Community Recreation Center
Wednesday, October 11, 2023

9:00 - 9:35	Welcome & Intros
9:35 - 10:00	Presentation of issues that arose in the course of interviews
10:00 - 10:20	Gleaning logistics - full group discussion
10:20 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 11:15	Food waste initiatives & issues <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upcoming Dane County initiatives• Small group discussions<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ What is the source of waste: directly from donors? Lack of adequate storage? Lack of demand for the product?◦ What are the time, capacity and financial costs of handling waste?◦ What policy or material support would be helpful?
11:15 - 11:30	Small group report-backs
11:30 - 12:00	Wrap up and next steps
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch and conversation

Thanks to Healthy Food For All and FEED Kitchens for the food and refreshments!



FOOD RESCUE CONVENING Run-of-Show, October 11, 2023

TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	NOTETAKER	TECH
9:00 - 9:15	Arrive, get coffee & settle			
9:15 - 9:40	Welcome & intros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris welcomes Bryan & Maddie welcome & discuss City/NRDC Food Waste Initiative Rebecca facilitates intros - name, org, what is your favorite comfort food? 	RK		Zoom if Maddie is joining virtually
9:40 - 10:00	Teeing up the issues - describe the issues that arose during interviews & reg form feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall coordination: Where are the system-wide conversations happening since the demise of the Dane County Food Pantry Network? Storage needs Transportation 	CB/RK	RK	
10:00 - 10:20	Gleaning logistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAC discusses state of gleaning routes Full group: optimizing system 	CB	RK	Put up spreadsheet or map
10:20 - 10:30	BREAK			
10:30 - 11:15	Food waste <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dane County initiatives - Gautam Small groups - each group has at least one Dane County, one gleaner and one pantry representative. Facilitated discussion and brainstorming of solutions based on prompts 	RK/groups choose a facilitator	RK/groups choose a notetaker	
11:15 - 11:30	Small group report-back	CB	RK	
11:30 - 12:00	Wrap up and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is interested in a food waste/recovery-specific quarterly meeting? 	CB/RK	RK	
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch and conversation	FEED & HFFA		

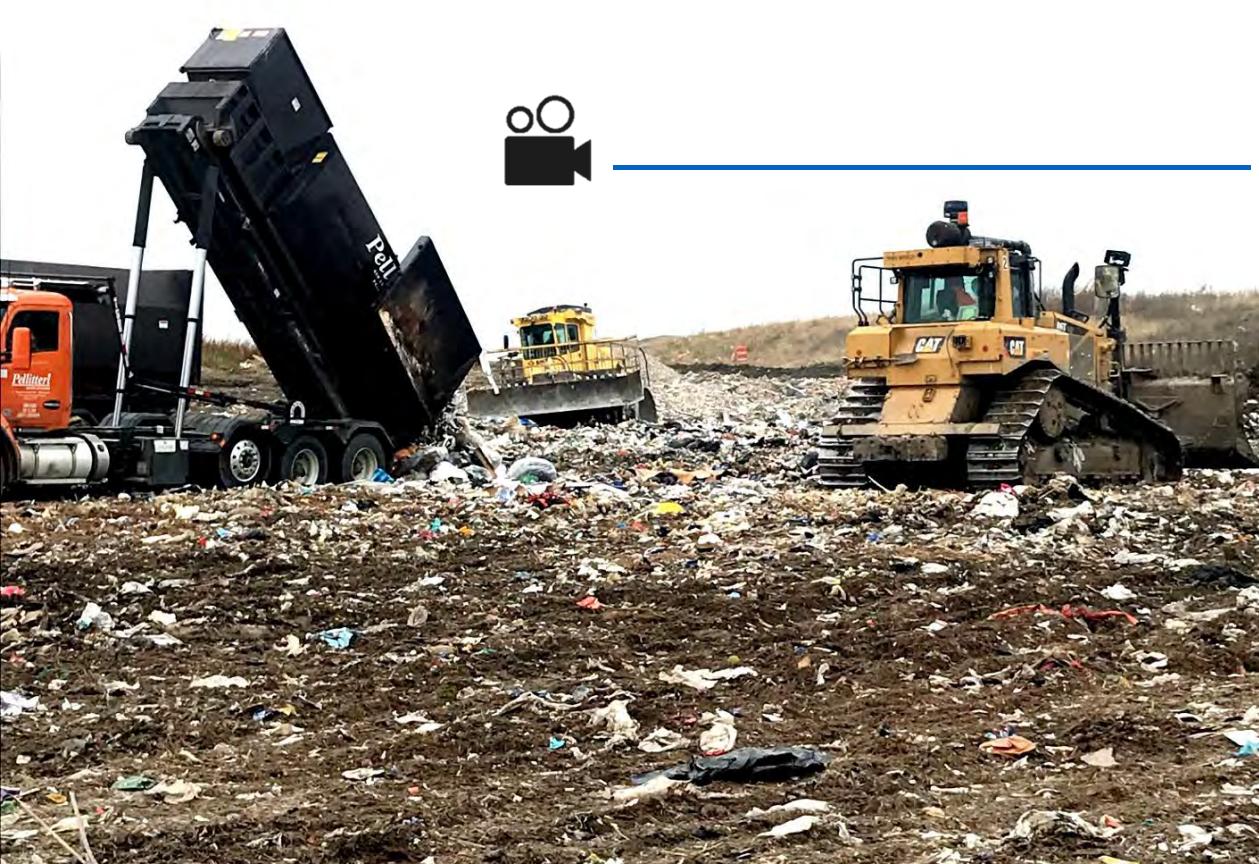


Dane County Presentation Slide Deck



DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE & RENEWABLES

Providing environmentally-sound and sustainable waste management and renewable energy solutions for
current Dane County residents and future generations.



DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE & RENEWABLES

- 1 Active Landfill & Closed Landfills
- 2 Landfill Gas Facilities
- C&D Recycling Facility
- Clean Sweep
- Various Recycling Programs
 - Logs, Tires, Shingle, Bikes
- Community Outreach & Education

About us

Providing environmentally-sound and sustainable waste management and renewable energy solutions for current Dane County residents and future generations.



PRODUCED RENEWABLE NATURAL GAS EQUIVALENT TO

**+2,600,000
GALLONS OF GASOLINE IN 2022**



DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE & RENEWABLES



A view of RNG Plant from Native Prairie Cover on Landfill

**71,500
TONS** OF CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION MATERIAL PROCESSED FOR RECYCLING IN 2022



**100
ACRES**
OF NATIVE PRAIRIE PLANTED
FOR DEPARTMENT PROJECTS

**+ 10,000
VISITORS** TO THE DANE COUNTY TRASH LAB SINCE 2021

TRASHLAB
RETHINK. PROTECT. REDESIGN.

LOOK AHEAD

2023

Planning for Phase 10 Cell 3

Permitting Continues

Planning for Campus Kicks off

2026

Compost program kicks off

2029

Rodefeld Landfill is at maximum capacity.



OLD PARADIGM

- Waste is a liability
- Minimal business activities
- Zero energy generation
- No cultural or social significance, a place to avoid

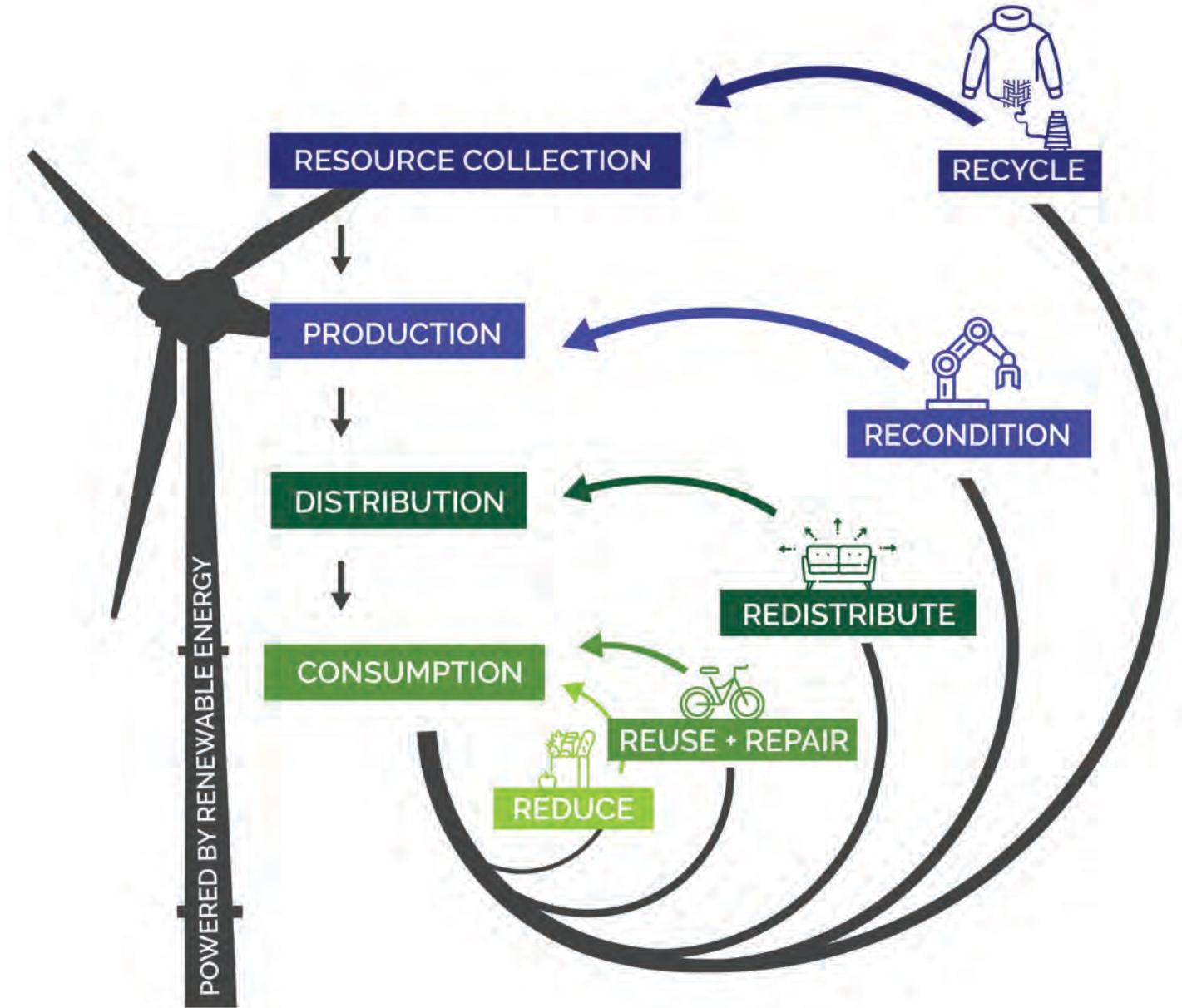
THE VISION

- Waste is a resource
- Innovative social hubs and business activity
- Landfill gas to energy projects and other renewable energies
- Well planned space with recreation before, during and after landfilling

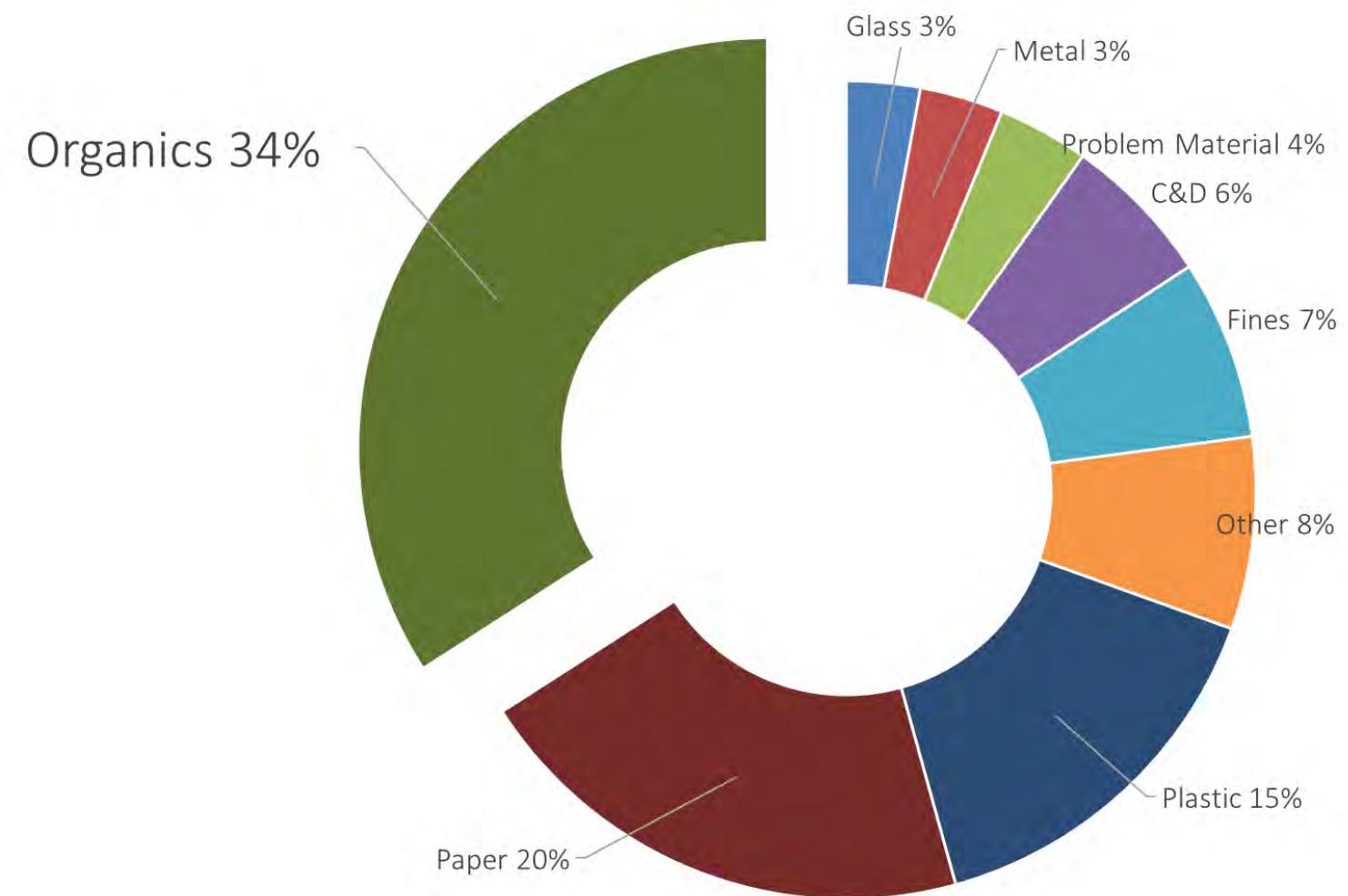


CIRCULAR ECONOMIES

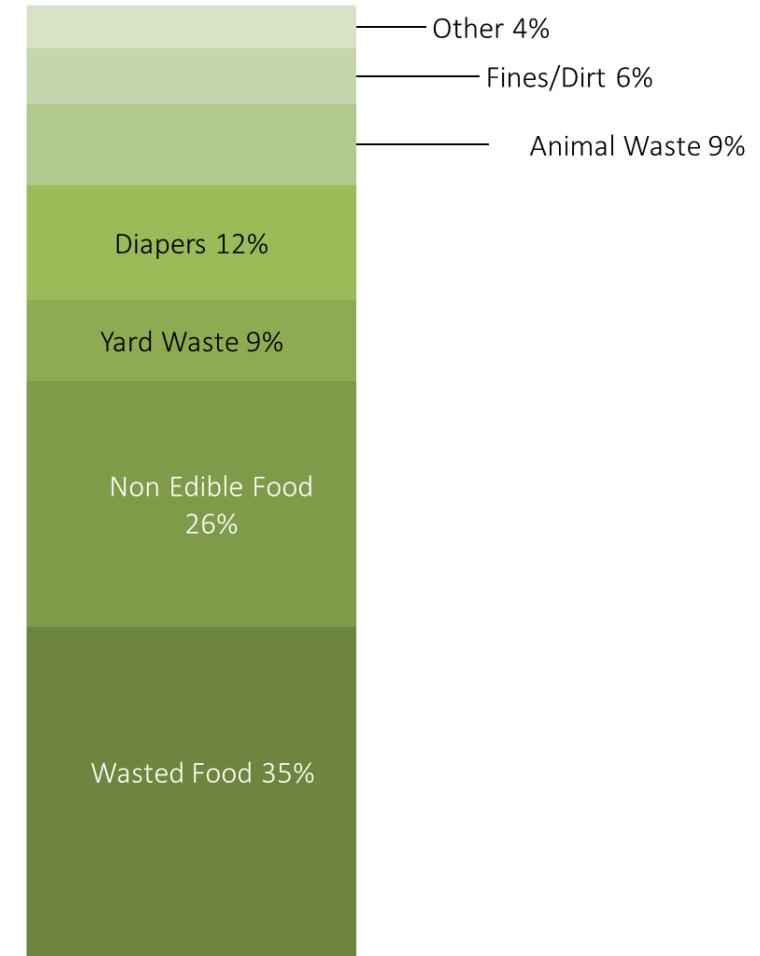
- Not just about recycling
- Educating communities about the impacts of our choices
- Repairing and building things to last and be repaired
- Using recycled materials to create markets
- Engineering materials and items to be recycled



DANE COUNTY WASTE COMPOSITION



ORGANIC FRACTION



Data from [2020 WDNR Waste Sort](#)



GAS TO ENERGY AND/OR ANAEROBIC DIGESTION

Dane County is already a leader in renewable natural gas technology and plans to continue investing in renewables at the future site.

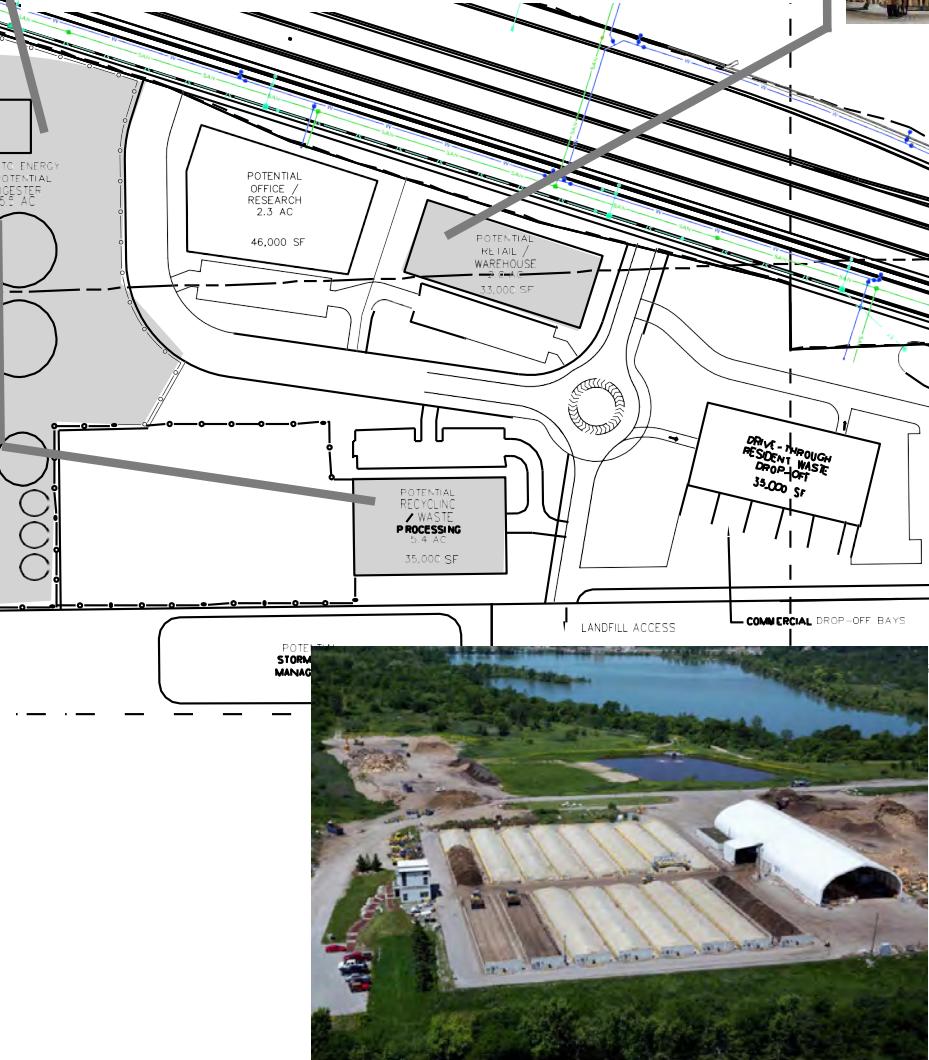
POTENTIAL RETAIL

Co-location of a reuse store or mall would provide business owners with access to free or low cost materials. Photo to the right is of Retuna Recycling Mall in Sweden.



POTENTIAL MATTRESS RECYCLING FACILITY

Mattress recycling has been identified as a feasible and realistic business opportunity at the Sustainability Campus. Image courtesy of <https://www.climateaction.org/>



COMPOSTING

The campus will include a composting operation and Dane County will work closely with surrounding communities to develop a program that can accept food waste. Image to the left is of a covered composting facility in Penticton, British Columbia, Canada.



DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE & RENEWABLES

Business Park Concept Plan
Dane County Department of Waste & Renewables
Dane County Sustainability Campus
City of Madison, WI



WASTE EDUCATION CENTER

Site to be designed with education and community access as a core principle.

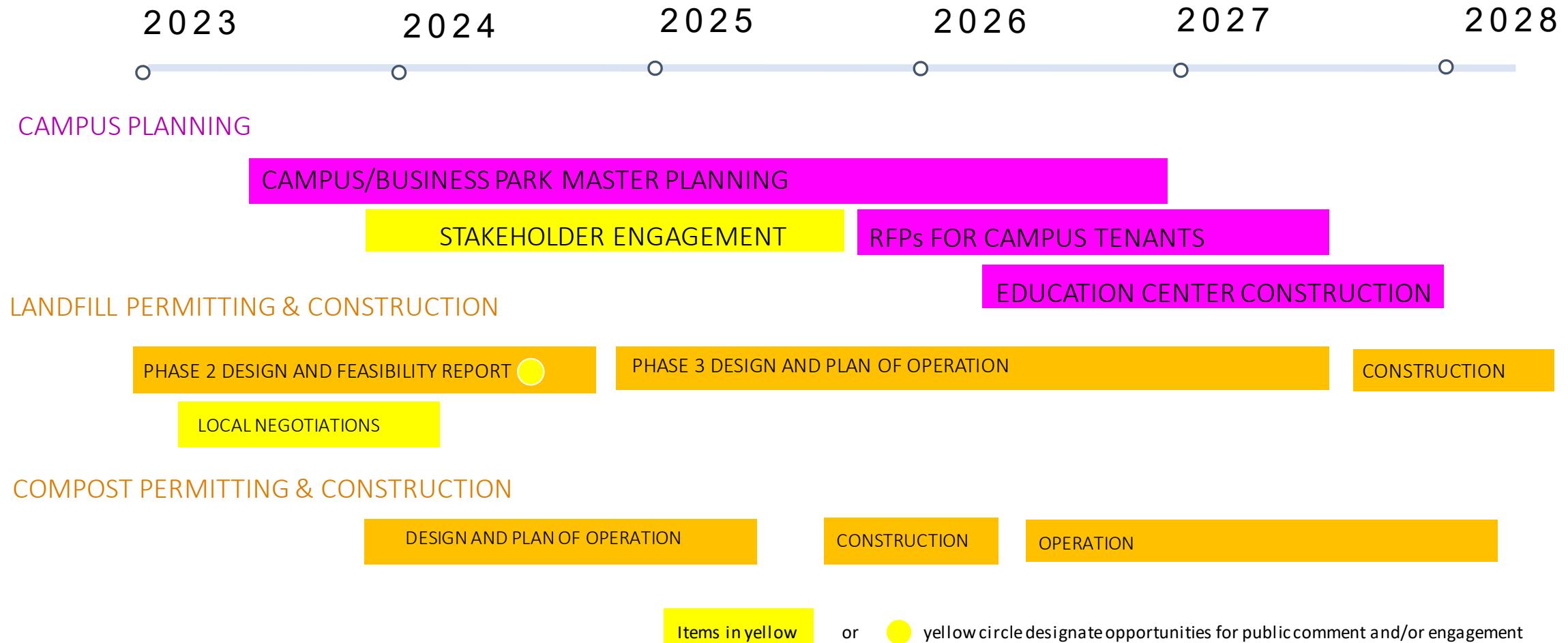
ORGANICS & FOOD WASTE



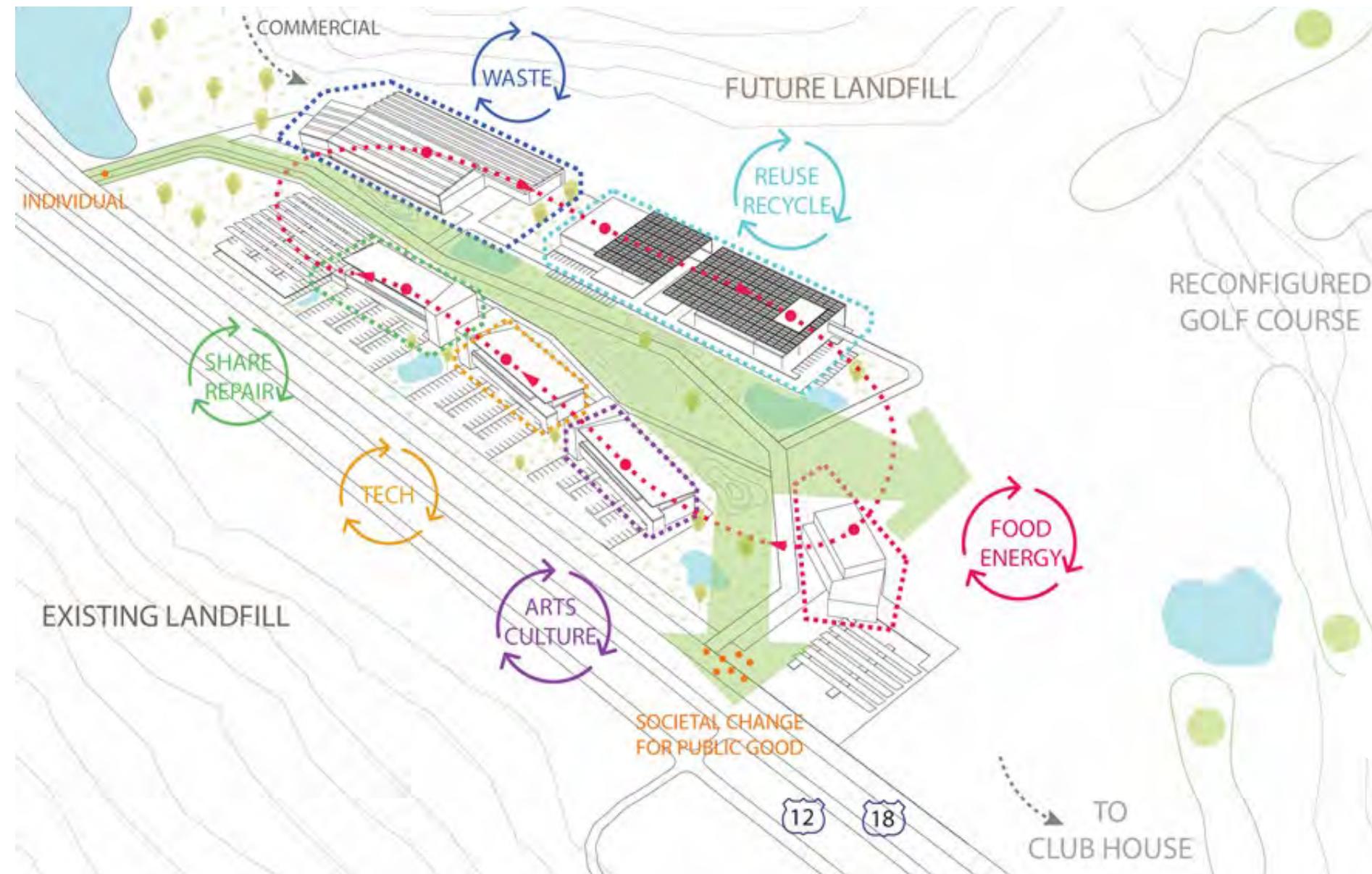
- Estimate 30% of the waste that is landfilled could be composted
- Composting organic material reduces GHG emissions and generates a marketable soil amendment
- Campus will include composting operation and W&R will work closely with surrounding communities to develop a program that can accept food waste
- Site will save space for a digester and composting program will allow County to assess feasibility of a digester

Photo from JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL ARCHIVES

PROJECT TIMELINE



SUSTAINABILITY CAMPUS | Campus Vision & Goals



Visit Project Website For:



- Upcoming Project Events & Public Meetings
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Maps, Figures, Timelines and other Documents Pertaining to the Proposed Project
- See The Latest Project Press Releases
- Submitting Feedback

Web: <https://landfill.countyofdane.com/projects/WasteandRenewableProjects/Sustainability-Campus>

Email: waste.renewables@countyofdane.com



DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE & RENEWABLES

2022 Organics Management Grant

Background:

Administered by the Dane County Department of Waste & Renewables, the Organics Management Grant seeks to provide funding for community composting projects that help reduce the amount of organics (food scraps, yard waste) being sent to landfills. Projects that support food waste reduction or creative reuse were considered under this grant.





Over \$8,100 in grant funding was awarded in 2022 to projects that collectively diverted over 13,970 pounds of food waste



DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE & RENEWABLES

2022 Organics Management Grant

Awardee	Project Funded
Dane County Farmers Market	Launching Food Scraps Collection At Farmers Market
Sustain Dane	Lengthening Food Scraps Collection At Farmers Market
City of Sun Prairie	Compost Pile Monitoring Equipment + Facility Permitting Fee
Madison Childrens Musuem	Food Recovery & Composting with Little John's; launch of Lunch Box Café
McFarland High School Eco Club	Building Classroom Vermicomposting System at McFarland Highschool



Project Description:

Sustain Dane aims to make food scrap collection more accessible to community members and help Dane County meet their goals of diverting food waste from the landfill with innovative community-based solutions. Sustain Dane diverted food waste from the landfill by coordinating education, food scrap collection, and food scrap hauling to Neighborhood Food Solutions (NFS), an urban farm working in soil regeneration, during farmers markets event at the Eastside Farmers' Market or South Madison Farmers' Market.

WE WANT YOUR FOOD SCRAPS!

Food Scraps Collection Wednesday Market Pilot Program

September 7, 14, 21, & 28, 2022
8:30am - 1pm
200 block of MLK Jr. Blvd

Visit dcfm.org for more info!



Food Scraps Collection Wednesday Market Pilot Program

About the program

In an effort to reduce food waste, the Dane County Farmers' Market has partnered with Green Box Compost to provide a food scraps collection pilot program at our Wednesday Market. This program is made possible with funding from Dane County Department of Waste and Renewables 2022 Organic Waste Management Grant.



DANE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WASTE & RENEWABLES
2022 Organic Waste Management Grant

Pilot Program Collection Dates & Times:
Wednesdays, September 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2022
8:30am - 1pm
Located on the 200 block of MLK Jr. Blvd

How can I participate?

Visitors can drop off their food scraps for **FREE** at our Wednesday Market during the month of September. Look for the Green Box tent and signage near the Information Booth! Only residential food waste will be accepted.

How should I store my food scraps?

Any container can be used to hold your food scraps. Remember to remove any produce stickers, twist ties, or rubber bands.

Visit dcfm.org for updates and more information.



Project Description:

The Dane County Farmers' Market (DCFM), in partnership with Green Box Compost, piloted a food scraps collection program at their Wednesday Market during the month of September. Visitors were able to drop off their food scraps for free at the Green Box Compost tent between 8:30am and 1pm during 4 different collection dates: September 7, 14, 21, and 28, 2022.



Project Description:

The McFarland High School Eco Club built worm bins to compost classroom food waste, and plans to grow their program to develop a wider composting program at McFarland High School to compost food waste.



Project Description:

Madison Children's Museum launched a new innovative food services project and cafe, called Little John's Lunchbox. In collaboration with LJKR, MCM makes local, healthy, high-quality food accessible to 200,000 children, family, and caretaker visitors per year through a pay-what-you-can cafe inside the museum. Everyone is welcome to eat, regardless of their means in this eat-what-you-need, pay-what-you-can model. Visitors participate in a new kind of cafe experience that gives them agency to choose from a variety of fully prepared pre-packaged foods. All of the fresh ingredients are sourced by Little John's from local grocery stores—keeping excess food from entering the Dane County landfill.



CITY OF
SUN PRAIRIE
Wisconsin

Project Description:

The City of Sun Prairie is establishing an equitable, city-wide composting program for all residents disposing of yard waste in Sun Prairie. Yard waste materials will be received at the Recycling Center and transported by Public Works trucks and equipment to the local Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP), where it will be composted via windrows. Grant funding was used for the project to procure equipment for the compost piles being built at the WWTP.

QUESTIONS?

Sujata Gautam (she/her)
Sustainability Engagement Coordinator
Cell: 608-206-6952
Dane County Department of Waste & Renewables

Follow-up email

RK

From: **Rebecca Kemble** rikemble@wifoodsystems.org
Subject: Food Rescue convening follow-up
Date: October 20, 2023 at 1:58 PM
To: FEED Manager manager@feedkitchens.org
Bcc:

Happy Friday!

Thanks to all of you who attended and participated in the meeting at Warner Park Community Recreation Center last week. Our discussions have generated a lot of ideas. **Please fill in this [short survey](#)** that includes questions about future communication preferences so we can begin to build on some of the proposals raised during our time together.

I'm attaching the slides that Sujata Gautam from Dane County Waste and Renewables shared with us, plus some links based on that presentation:

- [Sustainability Campus](#)
- [Organics Management Grant](#)
- [Tours](#)

Delaney Gobster has also asked me to share some mapping and data resources from the [Wisconsin Food Access](#) project with the group, noting that they are living pages under construction and **not yet ready for public distribution**:

- Compilation of [Campus & Community Resources](#) for food assistance and food recovery
 - Directories and spatial information, these are the original sources that are used for data in the database and food access locator below
 - Also includes example apps and food recovery platforms other cities have used
- ESRI [Database](#) here is a living resource hub where I've begun consolidating the spatial data from the resources I've accumulated
- The [Food Access Locator](#) here was a Geography 575 pilot project
 - Open-source platform to create a more user-friendly experience with the database's information
 - The end goal was to develop a survey that would standardize the data collection across points and collect public input on the capacity of food assistance programs in terms of food service and their abilities to accept gleaned items. In addition to surveying producers about their practices and interest in participating in food recovery and gleaning programs.
 - We did pilot a more specific [campus survey](#) for a UW-Madison tailored map, but came back to the need for a permanent public resource and person accountable for updating local information

Once we have the survey answers Chris and/or I will get back to the group with some next steps.

Have a great weekend!

Rebecca Kemble
[Wisconsin Food Systems, Inc.](#)

Project Expenses

Date	Payee	Amount	Purpose
4/19/2023	Rooted	\$ 500.00	Fiscal sponsor fee
4/20/2023	Northside Planning Council	\$ 3,500.00	Consulting fees - interviews with stakeholders
8/5/2023	Madison City Treasurer	\$ 110.00	WPCRC facility rental
10/10/2023	Office Depot	\$ 54.09	Convening materials
10/11/2023	Madison City Treasurer	\$ 75.00	WPCRC equipment rental
10/18/2023	Northside Planning Council	\$ 175.00	Convening breakfast
10/25/2023	Rebecca Kemble	\$ 5,600.00	Consulting fees - interviews, organizing, reporting
TOTAL		\$ 10,014.09	

Rooted WI Inc

Statement of Activity by Class

January 1 - November 28, 2023

	NRDC - FOOD RESCUE	TOTAL
Revenue		
4100 Grants and Foundations	10,000.00	\$10,000.00
Total Revenue	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
GROSS PROFIT	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
Expenditures		
6555 Other Expenses		\$0.00
6900 Subcontracts	9,500.00	\$9,500.00
Total 6555 Other Expenses	9,500.00	\$9,500.00
Total Expenditures	\$9,500.00	\$9,500.00
NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$500.00	\$500.00
NET REVENUE	\$500.00	\$500.00