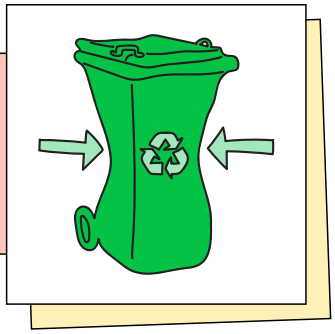
C40 TOWARDS ZERO WASTE ACCELERATOR



How cities are moving towards more circular, sustainable and zero waste communities.

SIGNATORY CITIES

Auckland, Boston, Copenhagen, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Milan, Montréal, New York City, Paris, Philadelphia, Portland, Rotterdam, San Francisco, Stockholm, Sydney, Tel Aviv-Yafo, Tokyo, Toronto, Vancouver, Washington, D.C.

COMMITMENTS

1. **Reduce the municipal solid waste generation per capita by at least 15% by 2030 compared to 2015.**
2. **Reduce the amount of municipal solid waste disposed to landfill and incineration by at least 50% by 2030 compared to 2015; and**
3. **Increase the diversion rate away from landfill and incineration to at least 70% by 2030.**

SUMMARY

The waste we generate contributes significantly to the climate crisis. Food loss and waste alone account for 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, while plastics generate 3.4% of global emissions – a number that will only continue to grow, as the amount of plastics being produced is expected to triple by 2060. Moving towards zero waste not only keeps valuable resources out of landfill, it makes circularity a part of our everyday lives and reduces our collective carbon footprint.

The **C40 Towards Zero Waste Accelerator** was launched in 2018 with a group of ambitious cities that chose to take the action needed to make their communities more circular, sustainable and ultimately zero waste. Today, **21 global signatory cities** are leading the way by getting food waste out of the waste stream, making reuse and repair a part of their local economies, and tackling challenging sectors and materials.

Signatory cities have come a long way since committing to the Accelerator. The majority of signatory cities are on track to meet their goal to reduce their waste generation by 15% by 2030. Disposal rates are generally tracking steady downward declines. More and more cities are taking action on the circular economy to reduce waste by fostering repair and reuse initiatives as a means of keeping goods and materials in circulation for as long as possible. From **Sydney's** Circular Economy Statement, to **Tokyo's** demonstration projects for the sustainable use of plastics, and **San Francisco's** successful efforts to convert over 100 businesses to reusables through the city's Commercial Reuse Program, cities are making circularity a part of their local economies. But more work will be needed to help meet the interrelated challenges of climate and resiliency that cities face. ReLondon's work on circular neighbourhoods, for instance, has been piloting real world, on the ground solutions for circularity in **London's** boroughs on everything from food, textiles, electronics, and plastics and packaging waste.

Action on food waste is one of the most impactful climate solutions to reduce methane and its impact on climate breakdown. Across the Accelerator, signatory cities are diverting an average of 30% of their food and organic waste from disposal. Cities such as **Auckland**, **New York**, **Rotterdam**, **Melbourne**, **Los Angeles**, **Montréal**, **Sydney** and **Washington, D.C.** continue to roll out and scale up their food waste collection systems, while **Milan's** innovative Food Waste Hubs go even further by tackling prevention and food insecurity through food recovery as well. These actions by signatory cities have a powerful impact, given that methane contributes 87 times more to global heating than carbon dioxide.

Cities are striving to embrace circularity and truly make waste a resource that is integrated back into the economy. While these changes may take time, they will ultimately have the greatest impact on how we live, consume, use and reuse our goods and materials from our current, take, make and waste society.

IMPACT

76%

of signatory cities are on track to reduce their municipal solid waste generation per capita by at least 15% by 2030 compared to 2015

100%

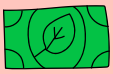
of signatory cities have taken action to restrict single use/non-recyclable materials

86%

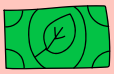
of signatory cities have food and organic waste collection systems in place to keep food waste out of landfills

8

signatory cities are currently diverting 50% or more of their waste.



Good, Green Jobs



Portland's deconstruction requirements have fostered the development of a small deconstruction cluster, creating between 30 and 40 new good green jobs in this sector. This is out of a total of approximately 2,600 jobs the city has created in the waste sector.

ReLondon, **London**'s strategic body to improve waste and resource management across the city's 33 boroughs, has delivered a successful business support programme to catalyse London's circular economy. The programme has enabled a diverse community of nearly 200 businesses to access £630,000 in grants and 1,200 hours of expert advice to explore, pilot and scale circular economy business models. This has helped divert at least 11,500kg of waste from traditional waste streams through reuse or other strategies, while supporting the creation or safeguarding of 630 green jobs.

21 cities

have saved over an estimated

110 million tonnes

of waste from going to disposal over the

8 years

the Accelerator has been in place

TURNING COMMITMENT INTO ACTION

Commitment 1: Reduce municipal solid waste generation per capita by at least 15% by 2030 compared to 2015

Los Angeles City Council approved the Comprehensive Plastics Reduction Strategy in October 2024, which outlines an ambitious roadmap for meeting source reduction targets and key policy proposals.

The city also launched the Reusable Foodware Program, which provides small grants to help dine-in food establishments transition away from single-use foodware by providing funding to purchase reusable foodware (e.g. cups, plates, bowls, etc). The programme successfully transitioned 120 food service establishments from disposable to reusable foodware for their dine-in operations.

Vancouver's Circular Food Innovation Lab has helped identify causes of food waste along business supply chains and test prototype solutions. Run in partnership with Emily Carr University and participants from Vancouver's food sector, findings from the project will help to inform the development of future city policy for reducing wasted edible food. The project also brings Indigenous representatives, food recovery organisations and food businesses together to co-create a roadmap and education materials to advance an equitable circular economy of food.

Commitment 2: Reduce the amount of municipal solid waste disposed to landfill and incineration by at least 50% by 2030 compared to 2015

New York implemented mandatory curbside composting for all residents in October 2024. While the city has been providing curbside collection of organics for over a decade, this marks the first time every household in all five boroughs has been served. This effort is part of a broader set of New York City Department of Sanitation composting services, which also includes 24/7 smart composting bins, and school-based collection to support composting education for the next generation.

Rotterdam has been actively expanding its collection of food waste from multi-unit dwellings and has added another 5,000 households to the 22,000 multi-unit dwellings that already have access to food waste collection. The city has also successfully increased the amount of glass packaging diverted, with a campaign which resulted in an increase of 30% diversion in neighbourhoods. This campaign will run in more neighbourhoods and the city will also introduce a campaign on the separate collection of paper and cardboard as well.

Commitment 3: Increase the diversion rate away from landfill and incineration to at least 70% by 2030

Copenhagen launched a new plan for waste 'Ressource- og Affaldsstrategi' (RAS30) on 1 January 2025, with an increased focus on waste from commercial business and construction. Key areas of the plan include strengthening the sorting practices of residents and collaboration with waste managers and housing associations on construction waste and improving the sorting practices of companies.

Melbourne's High-Rise Residential Food Organic Garden Organic (FOGO) dehydrator programme has expanded, now operating in ten residential and mixed-use buildings, up from five residential buildings in 2023. The expansion aims to thoroughly test the feasibility of separating organic materials between residential and commercial occupants within the same building. To date, the programme has successfully diverted 49 tonnes of organic material.

Melbourne's Food Organics Butler Service has also significantly increased its diversion of food waste from the commercial sector. To date, 311.5 tonnes of organics have been diverted through this service, and underscores the service's critical role in the city's commercial organic waste strategy.

INSPIRATION

Toronto looked to **Portland's** Rip City Reuse programme at the Moda Centre to see how reuse at large event venues can work in practice, and in particular, how to choose durable, high-quality reuseables, provide clear communication to users, collection options and staff training. Toronto has used Portland's insights to apply the city's own Single-Use and Takeaway Items Bylaw to larger event venues for reusable cups and containers.

London's work on circular neighbourhoods such as the ReLondon initiative 'Heston in the Loop', has been a valuable learning resource for **Tel Aviv-Yafo.** The city co-hosted a joint session with ReLondon in 2024 on Reuse and Repair as part of the city's month-long 'No Need' (to buy) November campaign. The 'No Need' November campaign marked its fourth year with a notable increase in public participation and the establishment of new city partnerships. Five new NGOs and municipalities also joined the campaign after being provided with guidance on how to organise events and a city-wide campaign.

COLLABORATION

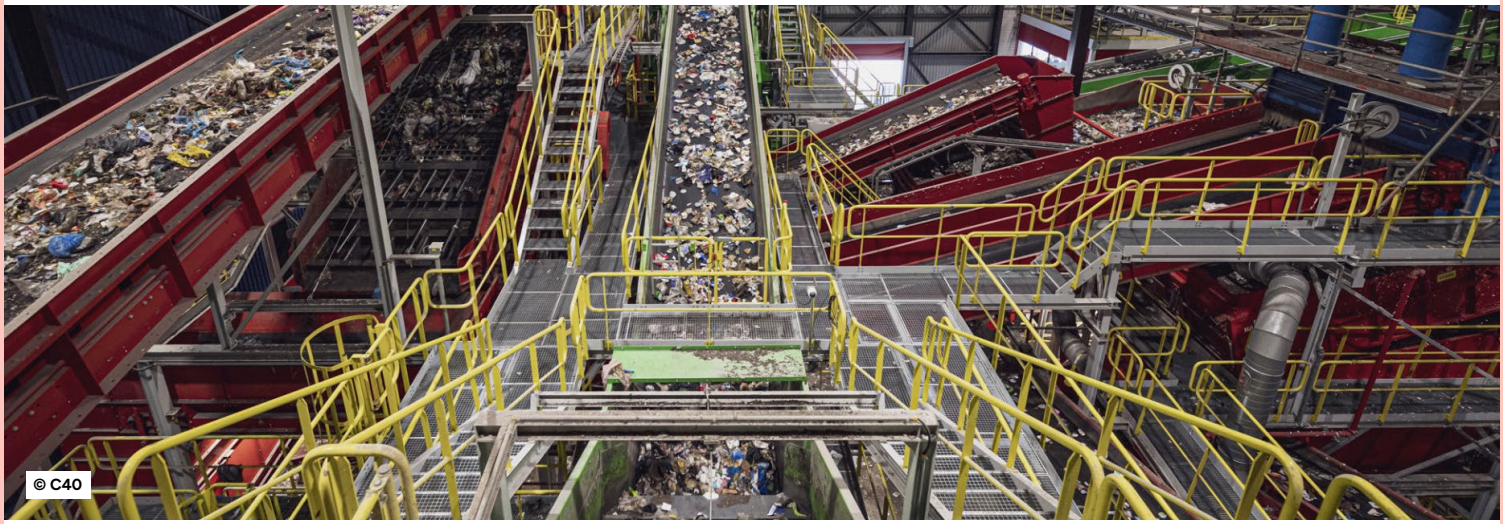
Portland held a deconstruction training workshop with Portland Youthbuilders, a local deconstruction contractor, and a non-profit housing developer, Sabin Community Development Corporation, in July 2025. Students received training and gained exposure to the field of deconstruction and salvage materials sales. This training is a great example of bringing multiple partners together for shared goals of affordable housing, good green job training, and construction and demolitions debris reduction.

Washington, D.C.'s Department of Energy and the Environment donation and reuse programme partnered with local universities to support move-out donation and reuse drives, helping to divert 80,000 pounds of material from landfill. District universities collected items from their spring move-out that were then redistributed in the fall for their incoming students, with priority given to first-generation students.

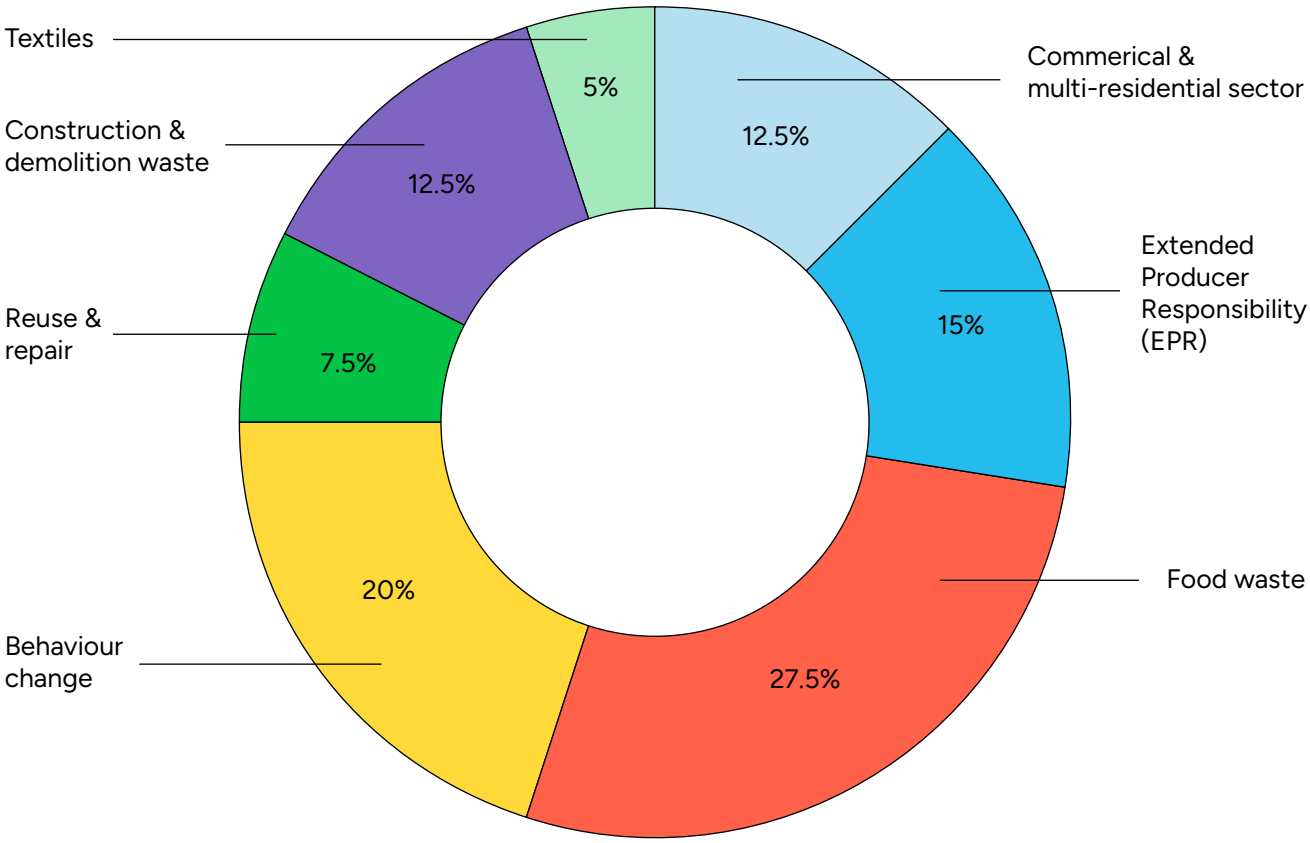
EQUITY AND INCLUSION

In the past year, the Mayor's Office of Food Justice in **Boston** advanced efforts to connect food-insecure residents with fresh, healthy recovered food by completing a Food Recovery Assessment and funding infrastructure to store and distribute perishable recovered and donated food. Grants supported over a dozen organisations, including food pantries, food recovery groups, and a collaborative food access hub. Over the next one to two years, the city will prioritise and implement recommendations from the assessment and help develop the hub, with a focus on roles the city can play in unlocking more recovered food from the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors.

The **New York City** Department of Sanitation worked closely with City Council and advocates to develop its Waste Equity Law, which cut permitted capacity at private waste transfer stations in four historically overburdened neighbourhoods, which have long experienced disproportionate impacts from private carting operations such as truck traffic, noise, and emissions. The law aims to advance environmental justice and ensure no district would become overburdened in the future. The law eliminated 10,000 tons of private waste transfer capacity per day, reducing truck traffic in traditionally marginalised and underserved neighbourhoods while preserving capacity to expand the city's recycling and composting programmes.



CHALLENGES



While the majority of signatory cities are on track to reduce their waste generation rates on a per capita basis, they also face significant challenges when it comes to reducing the amount of waste disposed, and significantly increasing their diversion rates. While many cities have successfully diverted a large range of waste materials from their residential sectors, commercial businesses and multi-residential sectors are proving to be more difficult to service and engage. Recycling streams are also becoming more lightweight and less profitable, with an increasing amount of harder to recycle plastics replacing more valuable materials such as metals and glass.

More action on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) at the state and national level are also needed to support cities in their efforts to reduce waste. While cities are often hubs of innovation when it comes to circularity, those efforts can be even more effective when other levels of government put incentives or regulations in place to help drive more upstream change.

Cities can and must do more to divert food waste to higher end uses, as well as ensuring a resource as valuable as food is not being wasted in the first place. More effort is also needed to shift consumption, waste generation and disposal habits towards more sustainable reuse and repair behaviours, while also tackling harder to manage materials that are still ending up in the waste stream, such as construction and demolition waste and textiles.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HOW CITIES ARE STEPPING UP THEIR ACTION

There are just five years until the C40 Towards Zero Waste Accelerator 2030 commitments are to be met. Diverting more food waste from landfill is a key priority for cities, given its high climate impact and the need to preserve dwindling landfill space. This will take innovation and leadership such as actions taken by **Montréal,** which piloted a shift from weekly to bi-weekly waste collection in one of the city's 19 boroughs. After 12 months, the pilot showed an average reduction of 10% in the amount of household waste collected, and an average increase of 30% in the amount of food waste collected. These results have prompted the city to roll out the same change to collection schedules in all of their boroughs.

Shifting consumption and waste habits is also needed to move the needle on Accelerator commitments. Cities such as **Philadelphia** are meeting this challenge by developing strategies to more effectively engage residents and reduce waste. The City's Department of Sanitation, in partnership with the Office of Clean and Green Initiatives, is working with multiple city departments to release a Zero Waste 2035 Plan in 2026. **Paris** has also recently released an ambitious Waste Prevention Plan (2024-2030), with strategic priorities spanning every waste stream.

Fostering a strong culture of reuse and repair by making it more accessible and affordable is seen by many cities as a long-term solution to move towards circularity. **Sydney** is taking action to make the circular economy a reality by providing grants to support local social enterprises in textiles and electronics and help them scale up to ultimately become self-sufficient.

While signatory cities still have a way to go before achieving all of the ambitious commitments under the Accelerator, they are finding new and innovative ways to make a meaningful impact for their residents and show other cities how circularity and zero waste are real world solutions to the climate crisis.

FUTURE ACTION

In 2026, **Auckland** will be trialling a reduction in refuse collection frequency from weekly to fortnightly, as another tool to prompt behaviour change and encourage residents towards greater waste minimisation. If adopted, it is expected to increase diversion from landfill to recycling, food scraps and other alternatives.

Stockholm's mobile solutions such as the popular PopUp Re-use facility 'Popup Återbruket' and the truck-based re-use solution 'Returrundan' (like an ice cream truck for re-use and recyclables), are gaining popularity, and will be scaled up continuously along with the city's solutions for textile and hazardous waste collection.