



October 6, 2026

STEPS Organics

Final Presentation

Marty Pool, Sustainability
Manager

STEPS Project Team
(RRS & Eco-Cycle)

Strategic Plan goals:

Organizational Stewardship



Mission (Why we exist)

"We provide outstanding services and experiences for the entire community."

Vision (What we want to be)

"A multigenerational community which is authentic, diverse, engaged, thriving, and environmentally responsible."

Values (What we believe)

Teamwork | Dependability | Professionalism | Service

Respect | Innovation | Well-Being

Update on organic waste management ordinance research, community engagement, and technical assistance from the C3 STEPS program.





Durango Organic Waste Ordinance Analysis

STEPS Final Presentation to Durango
City Council

October 6, 2026



STEPS
Strategic Technical
Expertise for the
Public Sector



Agenda

1. Background
2. Project overview and timeline
3. Policy options assessed
4. Findings & Recommendations and Next Steps

Strategic Technical Expertise for the Public Sector



Colorado Circular Communities (C3) is a statewide program that provides financial and technical assistance to enhance circularity across the state, and helps communities achieve their waste diversion and aversion goals.

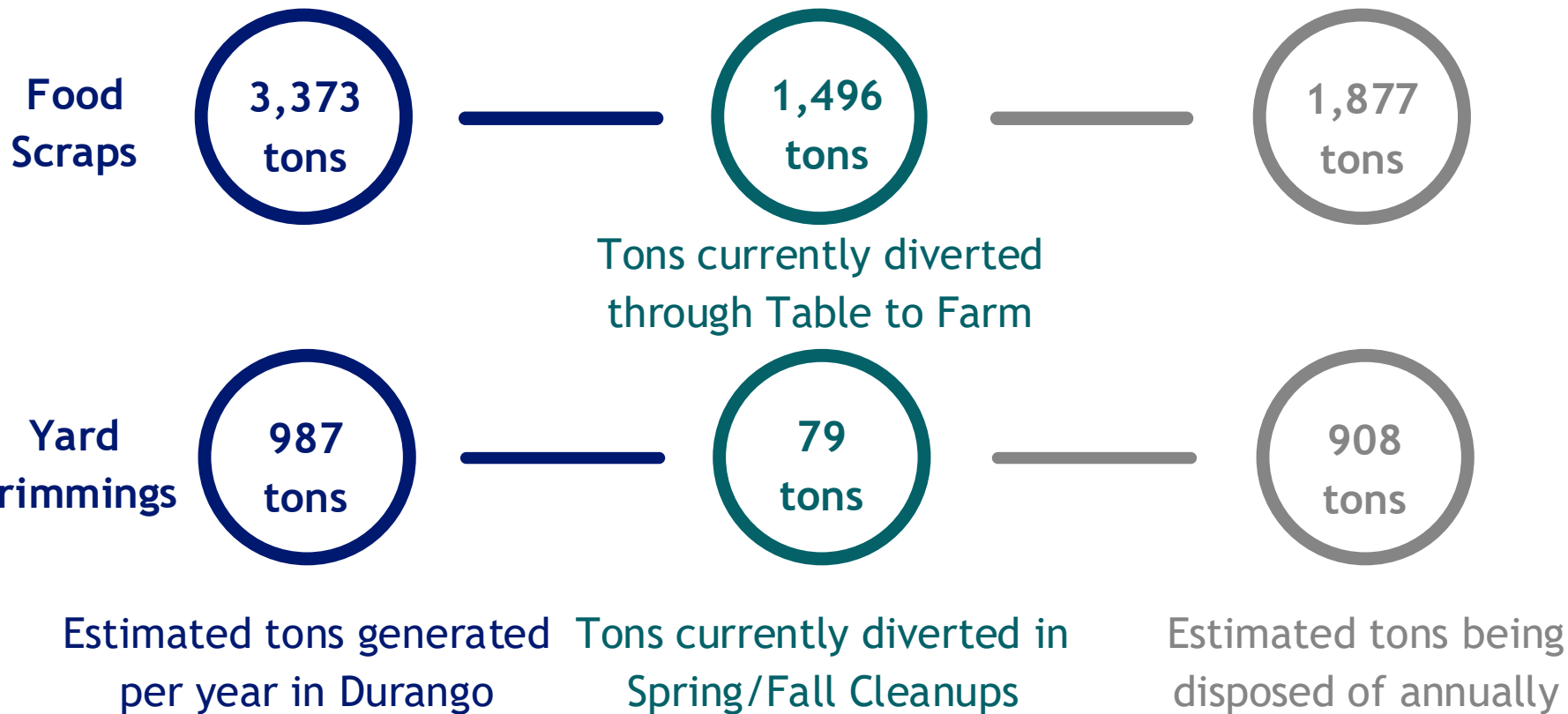


Durango was selected to receive no-cost consulting from C3's Strategic Technical Expertise for the Public Sector (STEPS) program.



Resource Recycling Systems (RRS) and Eco-Cycle are working with Durango on policy recommendations for increasing organics diversion.

Current Organics Diversion in Durango



Community Engagement Activities

- Stakeholder Interviews (12)
- Resident and Business Input
 - Focus Group
 - Survey
- Summary of engagement activities presented to Council at June 2, 2026 Study Session



Last updated: 04 May, 2026

Composting Service Options

The City is researching and seeking feedback on improvements or expansions for managing food waste and yard trimmings disposal to reduce waste going to the landfill.

[Learn more →](#)

Policy Options Assessed

- Requirement for residential organics collection service
- Requirement for commercial organics collection service
- Organics diversion requirement (agnostic to service type)
- Operational improvements and program expansions (multiple options)
- Status quo: opt-in with a contracted hauler
- Additional policy options:
 - Require organics diversion & reduce food scraps at City buildings
 - Buy and use local compost and mulch
 - Pay-As-You-Throw



Findings & Recommendations

Policy Options Compared (1 of 2)

Policy Options Assessed	Diversion Impact	Cost Impact to City	Cost Impact to Residents
Residential collection requirement	High	High	Medium
Commercial collection requirement	High	Medium	Low-None
Expand yard trimmings collection	Medium	Medium	Low
Create food scraps drop-off sites	Low	Medium	Low-None

Policy Options Compared (2 of 2)

Policy Options Assessed (Continued)	Diversion Impact	Cost Impact to City	Cost Impact to Residents
Offer more seasonal collection programs	Low	Medium	Low
Incentives for the private sector	Low	Medium-Low	Low-None
Pay-As-You-Throw	Medium	Medium	Low-None
Internal policies	Low	Low	None

Recommendation for Greatest Impact

Requirement for **residential curbside organics** collection, followed by a requirement for **commercial organics** collections.

- Phased roll-out
- Allow exemptions for at-home composting, self-hauling, or low-generating businesses
- Use Producer Responsibility reimbursements to offset costs
- City-operated or contracted

Support for Recommendation

- Opportunity to offset costs using Colorado's Producer Responsibility Program
- Communities with successful implementation
 - Town of Superior
 - Town of Erie
 - Longmont
 - Edgewater



Considerations for Residential Requirement

- Including yard trimmings can greatly increase diversion rates
 - Integration and or review of Spring/Fall Cleanup programs
- Adding drop-off sites is a lower priority than curbside collections
- Residents can be required to use City services (or City-contracted services), but commercial accounts must be allowed to choose their hauler
- Pay-As-You-Throw pricing should be considered to provide more options for residents

Commercial Requirement for Organics Collection



A policy that requires commercial, government, and multifamily buildings (with 8 or more units) to have organics collection service through a hauler of their choosing

Considerations for Commercial Requirement

- Estimated 1,870 tons per year of food scraps generated
- Lower cost impacts to the city and residents, but additional cost burden to businesses
- Barriers to entry and high initial/ongoing support needed
- Incentives could be offered to support businesses
- For food service, start with back of house requirements and phase in front of house

Operational Improvements:

**Lower impact, not as highly recommended,
but would lead to improvements**



Examples:

- Expand yard trimmings collection
- Create food scraps drop-off sites
- Offer expanded seasonal programs
- Incentives for the private sector
- Pay-as-you-throw

Pay-as-you-throw (PAYT)

- Volume-based pricing where residents pay based on their trash cart size, while recycling and/or compost bins have no additional cost
- Recommended to implement over time once community wide collection has been implemented
- Consider using 2027 rate study to develop preliminary findings



Operational Improvements

- More modest increases in organics diversion
- May be easier to implement (consensus not required from Council)
- Operational improvements should be paired with citywide policy change



What Council Needs to Decide Now vs. Later

Next Regular Meeting (Oct. 20):

- Present recommendation for the policy option(s)
- Council will determine which policy option(s) the City Manager and staff should or should not pursue

Later (timeline depending on options chosen):

- Detailed ordinance language and program rules
- Rate structure / fee approval
- Budget appropriations

Next Steps (Assuming Approval)

October 20:

- Resolution directing staff to proceed with recommended policy

1-6 months:

- Staff prepare program structure, ordinances, and contracting documents as needed
- Define service requirements and enforcement provisions

6-12 months:

- Ordinances brought before Council
- Request for Proposals (RFPs) issued (if needed) and awarded for organics service providers

Next Steps (Assuming Approval)

12-18 months:

- Program roll-out for residential curbside organics collection
 - Contract execution, processor agreement
 - Equipment procurement
 - Outreach and education
 - Consider phased approach

18-36 months:

- Repeat process for commercial, government, and multifamily buildings

36+ months:

- Implement Pay-As-You-Throw

Thank You!

STEPS Team:

Rachel Perlman & Joelle Friedlander (RRS)

Audrey Wheeler & Randy Moorman (Eco-Cycle)



Definitions of Terms (1 of 3)

Compost: Compost is the result of decomposing organic material, such as food scraps and yard trimmings. It is usually added to soil to improve the soil's health, structure, and fertility. There are many methods to create high quality, nutrient-dense compost.

Contamination: In waste management, contamination is any material that is improperly disposed of.

Diversion: Diversion is the practice of keeping materials out of landfills or incinerators. It is otherwise known as waste diversion. It includes activities like recycling, compost, reuse, and repair.

Definitions of Terms (2 of 3)

Food Scraps: Food scraps are any discarded material from plants or animals that was intended for human or animal consumption, typically thrown away during the preparation, cooking, handling, storing, or eating of food. This includes parts such as peels, cores, shells, and bones.

Hauler: A hauler is an individual or company that collects and transports waste materials.

Ordinance: An ordinance is a law adopted by a local government (such as a city, town, or county). It establishes rules or requirements within that jurisdiction.

Definitions of Terms (3 of 3)

Organics: Organics are materials derived from living organisms. Examples are food, yard clippings, wood, and compostable paper. Organics can be decomposed and processed to create compost.

Pay-as-you-throw: Pay-as-you-throw programs charge residents for the collection of waste based on the amount they throw away. Residents typically pay for their trash bins, and recycling and/or compost bins are free. If a resident chooses a smaller trash bin or less frequent pick-up frequency, they will pay less for the service.

Yard Trimmings: Yard trimmings are plant materials generated from yard and landscaping maintenance. They can include leaves, grass clippings, branches, and brush. They can be decomposed with other organic materials, like food scraps, to create compost.