

# REFRAMING THE WASTE CONVERSATION

JULIA LINARES | COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



# COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



## DEPARTMENTAL FUNCTIONS:

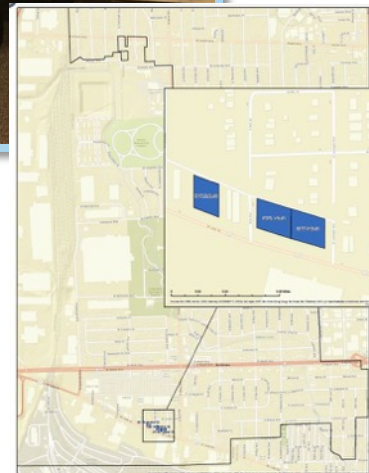
- Permits and inspections of:
  - Solid waste facilities
  - Fuel-burning equipment
  - Asbestos and demolition sites
  - Open burning
  - Hazardous chemicals
- Air monitoring
- Sustainability initiatives
  - Waste diversion
  - Energy





# AT COOK COUNTY

- Have worked on projects related to almost every function of the department
- Regulatory Side
  - Created policy guides, webpage content, and tutorial videos to teach citizens about our ordinances/requirements
  - Attended administrative hearings regarding environmental violations
  - Evaluated effectiveness of online reporting software and devised recommendations for improvements
  - Developed maps to more effectively engage with municipalities and stakeholders
- Sustainability
  - Assisted in energy audits of County facilities
  - Produce and provide resources for residents on issues such as energy efficiency, waste disposal, and food waste
  - Attended in-person outreach events



# LESSONS LEARNED FROM OUTREACH EVENTS:

- Residents love recycling.
- Residents love telling you about how great they are at recycling.



## REFRAMING THE WASTE CONVERSATION: METHODS

- Connect residents with their waste stream
- Emphasize other aspects of the waste hierarchy: reduction & reuse



# WHERE DOES MY WASTE GO?



- <https://maps.cookcountyil.gov/solidwaste/>



# REDUCE: SINGLE-USE ITEMS



When you use single-use items, do you ever stop to think where they go?

## STOP 1: BUY & DISCARD

Most single-use items cannot be recycled, like plastic bags, coffee cups, plastic utensils, and straws. Even though some are plastic, none can be recycled in curbside recycling programs. After you use the item once, you throw it away, but then... where does it go?



## STOP 2: CURBSIDE PICKUP

The single-use item will live in your garbage bin until your trash is picked up by haulers.

In Cook County, the average resident throws away 8.2 lbs of garbage every day.<sup>1</sup>



## STOP 3: TRANSFER STATION

Haulers from throughout a region bring the collected waste to a central location—a transfer station. There, waste is accumulated and stocked into larger vehicles for the next step on its journey.

In Suburban Cook County, there are 19 transfer stations.

## STOP 4: LANDFILL

From the transfer station, the waste is brought to a landfill. Cook County exports 100% of our waste to sites beyond our border. It may end up in other parts of Illinois, or even in Indiana.

The waste in landfills generates the 3rd largest source of human-related methane in the U.S., contributing to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in a more persistent and potent manner than carbon dioxide.<sup>1</sup>



By taking our pledge and using a reusable item, you have the potential to **divert waste** from landfills and **reduce GHG emissions**.

<sup>1</sup> Cook County Solid Waste Management Plan 2018  
<sup>2</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, Basic Information about Landfill Gases



# Did you know...



Oceans aren't the only bodies of water teeming with plastics. Our own Lake Michigan receives over **11 million pounds of plastic per year.**<sup>1</sup>





## OTHER METHODS USED:

- Framed new Green Guide Library so reduction, reuse, and recycling are all expressed (if possible)
- Created new waste outreach materials framed around reduction, reuse, and recycling





**COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**HOUSEHOLD**  
**HAZARDOUS WASTE**

**May include:**

- acids
- fertilizers
- fire extinguishers
- kerosene
- oil-based paint
- motor oil
- fungicides
- paint stripper
- varnish





**REDUCE**

**Consider ways to reduce HHW in your home.**

Hazardous Waste Source Reduction around the Home	
Drain Cleaner	Use a plunger or plumber's snake.
Glass Cleaner	Mix one tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice in one quart of water. Spray on and use newspaper to dry.
Furniture Polish	Mix one teaspoon of lemon juice in one pint of mineral or vegetable oil and wipe furniture.
Rug Deodorizer	Liberaly sprinkle carpets with baking soda. Wait at least 15 minutes and vacuum. Repeat if necessary.
Silver Polish	Boil two to three inches of water in a shallow pan with one teaspoon of salt, one teaspoon of baking soda and a sheet of aluminum foil. Totally submerge silver and boil for two to three more minutes. Wipe away tarnish and repeat if necessary.
Mothballs	Use cedar chips, lavender flowers, rosemary, mints or white peppercorns.

**Source: U.S. EPA**

**PROPERLY DISPOSE**

Permanent Collection Sites:

All locations below are available to Illinois residents. We suggest calling

## TAKEAWAY RESOURCES:

- Reuse campaign (*coming soon*)
  - Find the launch on our Twitter (@CookEnviro)
- Green Guide Library (*coming soon*)
  - Will be announced on Twitter (@CookEnviro) and launched on our website: [www.cookcountyil.gov/environment](http://www.cookcountyil.gov/environment)
- Solid Waste StoryMap
  - Available at <https://maps.cookcountyil.gov/solidwaste/>
- Environmental Resources of all type
  - Available on our blog at <http://blog.cookcountyil.gov/sustainability/>

# THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

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**Greenest  
Region  
Corps**

**COLLABORATING FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

