

Denver Waste No More Implementation Task Force – Meeting #1

March 9, 2023 – Wellington Webb Municipal Building
Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI)

Meeting in Brief

The 26-member Task Force met for the first time to clarify its purpose and scope to help the City implement the voter-passed Waste No More (WNM) Ordinance. The group was welcomed by Grace Rink, the Director of Denver’s Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency (CASR), and CBI facilitator Ryan Golten. The Task Force reviewed its draft charter, guiding principles, meeting schedule, and key topics to address in developing its recommendations. The Task Force will meet more or less monthly through September. The next meeting on April 6 will identify key infrastructure, market and other challenges and ways in which adjustments to the ways in which the ordinance is implemented may be able to account for, adjust to, and/or influence those constraints.

Click [here](#) for the Task Force Charter and membership, future meeting announcements, and other materials.

Clarifying Task Force Charge, Guiding Principles & Key Topics to Address

The Task Force is charged with clarifying the requirements of the Waste No More (WNM) ordinance to ensure it can be implemented and enforced as intended; defining the City’s enforcement process, to ensure the terms of the ordinance are enforceable; and adjusting the implementation timelines as needed to successfully implement the ordinance. The Task Force will produce recommendations that staff will craft into ordinance language and accompanying rules and regulations to present to City Council for approval later this year.

Grace Rink discussed the charge, ordinance provisions, and relevant background in more detail. Facilitator Ryan Golten discussed draft principles to guide the process, as informed by CBI’s interviews with Task Force members this past month. The full Task Force presentation is available [here](#). Task Force members met in small groups to discuss and refine a list of Guiding Principles and key topics for the Task Force to address in developing its recommendations.

Guiding Principles

Task Force members emphasized the following points regarding the **principles** that need to ground this Task Force effort:

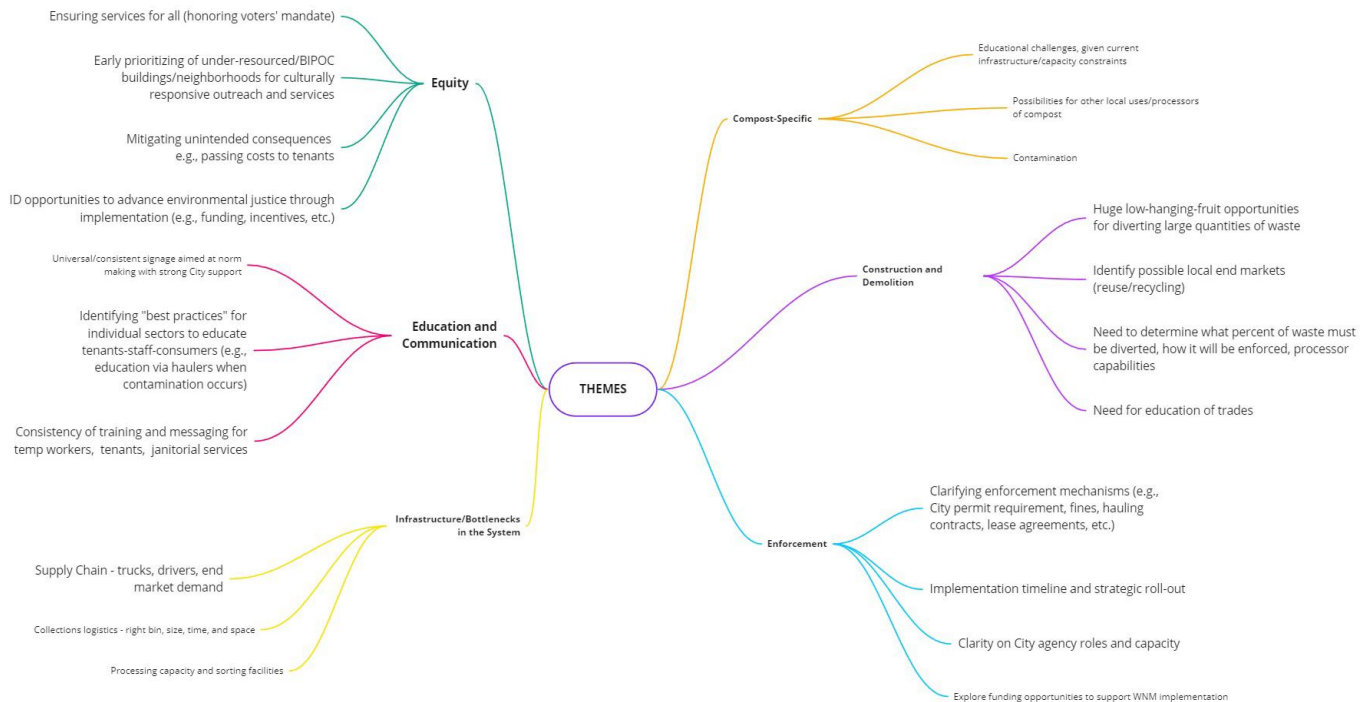
- **Sustainable** – in terms of the impact on the environment and climate, Denver and stakeholder strategies, withstanding over time, utilize pre-existing solutions, allow for flexibility with future improvements, and cost-effectiveness.
- **Achievable** – implementation and enforcement tools should be meaningful and not overly punitive.
- **Relevant** – in terms of education and outreach to consumers, stakeholders, and cross-sectoral messaging, coordination of regional and statewide approaches, *economic impact*
- **Equitable** – centering the experiences and needs of real people and human lives, improve their overall well-being, prioritization of under-resourced buildings and BIPOC neighborhoods

- **Strategic messaging** – needs to start with **kids**, so they can be ambassadors to their families, and so parents can show up at work knowing what to do; education needs to focus on the ‘**why**,’ so people are bought into Waste No More by understanding the need for and importance of it; messaging must reach those on the ‘front lines’ of waste diversion, from consumers and business owners to processors and haulers, noting that **drivers** are especially important for educating those from whom they collect waste.
- **Prioritizing labor force** – as part of prioritizing the economic impact of Waste No More, we need to ensure we have the workers (e.g., janitors, drivers, sorters) to implement Waste No More, and that they have good jobs that enable them to be agents of climate justice and solutions.
- **Triple bottom line** – in thinking about ‘sustainability,’ we need to ensure Waste No More works economically for businesses; benefits people, workers and the community; and benefits the planet.

Key Issues + Topics

Ryan presented the list of issues from CBI’s ‘onboarding’ interviews that Task Force members identified as important to address in the implementation process. The Task Force broke into four small groups to further discuss key topics, including any that needed clarification or were missing from the list.

CBI shared the themes below from their onboarding interviews with Task Force members. These are also included in the Task Force meeting presentation.



Task Force members highlighted the topics below as either missing from the list above or particularly important to clarify and/or emphasize as part of implementing the WNM ordinance.

Strategic Implementation

A number of Task Force members highlighted the phased, four-year roll-out in the ordinance as currently written (starting with the biggest buildings and food trucks, among others) and suggested there may be other ways to phase in the ordinance to ensure the greatest level of successful waste diversion, in the short term and long term. Task Force members agreed to consider potential ideas beginning in April,

when the group discusses current market and infrastructure challenges and whether/how the ordinance can adjust for or accommodate those challenges. Preliminary ideas included the possibility of phasing according to:

- *Amount* (e.g., weight/tonnage) of waste produced – **to maximize early impacts**
- Business *capacity/ability* to absorb costs, with small businesses and non-profit event producers cited as an example of those with limited capacity – **to minimize inequitable consequences**
- Low-hanging fruit such as large buildings that are already recycling and composting – **to build early momentum for WNM**
- Pilot projects – **to test concepts/feasibility, address potential challenges and develop support**
- *Types* of materials (for example, having composting come last when the regional and local processing situation is further clarified and has greater capacity, and the public can be thoroughly educated about what/how to compost) – **to address and mitigate for current market or infrastructure realities**

Equity

- In phased implementation, consider **ability to comply** of the different regulated industries
- For phasing and support, consider economic impact/expenses for **small businesses** and **non-profits**
- Running zero waste **events** are expensive if often run by non-profits; needs to be economically viable
- Ensure **accessibility** for recycling/compost systems and educational materials (physical and language)
- Consider impacts of **air pollution** on disproportionately impacted neighborhoods, especially since most of the recycling is being hauled to neighborhoods like Globeville and Elryia-Swansea
- Mitigate passing costs onto **renters/tenants** and understand there are differing motivations between owners and renters, in terms of complying with the ordinance.
- Ensure that the labor need created by the ordinance is attractive to individuals seeking employment and a viable employment option that we can offer with integrity (pays a living wage, offers benefits, opportunities to bargain, full time job that doesn't require a second job, etc.)

Education & Communication

- Ensure **haulers** are well educated about the reasons for the ordinance and its enforcement provisions
- More information/education coming from the **haulers** through tours and contamination messaging
- Clarify **definitions** in ordinance (e.g., 'readily recyclable' materials)
- Explain '**end markets**' in WNM messaging
- Explain **life cycle analysis** at zero waste events (e.g., costs and impacts)
- Distinguish recycled vs. composted vs. reused – explain the different **meanings** and how each works
- Have education available on the **City's website** to increase accessibility
- Share **success** stories
- Focus on the **WHY** in order to help people with the HOW
- Identify key educational **stakeholders** early in designing implementation (kids, haulers, etc.)
- This is a **culture** shift: need to make communications fun, accessible, and easy to understand!
- Highlight **impacts** of WNM on the state and other regions
- Address **misinformation** and issue of 'faulty gatekeepers'
- Address training inconsistencies among the workforce through train the trainer education
- Education for consumers on how to reduce waste before it goes to compost or recycle

- Create educational resources that acknowledge different incentives and reasoning for renters, owners, and property managers
- **Identify funding** source for education campaigns

Infrastructure/Bottlenecks in the System

- Realistic view of **private** and **regional** infrastructure challenges
- Consider **decentralizing** our compost infrastructure and other types of facilities/processing
- **Hours** of operations (e.g., festival and special events not aligned with collection times)
- Differing hauler **categories** (glass, vegetable oil, plastic)
- Proper system **measurements/metrics** (weight calibration of haulers, exact measurements of waste)
- Bake in **funding** for infrastructure – to expand existing technologies; take inventory of what we already have; implement new technologies
- Regional **alignment** and **cross-sector** collaboration
- **Electrification** of trucks
- Where can we “fast-track” permits or other approvals for compliant operators?
- Ensure there is a trained/interested/available labor force ready to meet the needs for each phase
- Don’t over-complicate regulations - “simplify for success”
- Clarification on **what should be compostable or recyclable vs. reusable**
- Identify **operational efficiencies** to minimize impact

Compost-Specific

- Identify **best practices** for collection (all generators)
- Calibrate implementation based on what organic materials can **currently be collected** and processed
- Calibrate implementation on **what actually works** for compostables
- Addressing **labeling** confusion
- Identify **new ways** to divert and reduce food waste (e.g., surplus food donations for people, livestock) and to encourage folks to reduce food waste as a first step rather than defaulting to composting

Construction and Demolition (C&D)

- Need to **define** terms in ordinance
- Need **support** for haulers and construction projects on how to comply with WNM
- Need to address how to reduce the amount of C+D material that makes up landfills (30-40%)

Enforcement

- Identify and address **conflicts** with existing regulations (e.g., trucks noise, compostable service ware)
- Incorporate monetary **fin**es
- Need proper **metrics** that define compliance (e.g., contract terms may not equal true compliance)
- **Simplify compliance** as much as possible for all parties
- Address illegal **dumping** where possible
- Enhance compliance methods across **private** haulers to complement the city’s efforts
- Enforcement tools, processes, and penalties should be meaningful enough to incentivize compliance among a range of operators (from the eager to the reluctant), but not overly punitive, especially to smaller operators or those trying their best

Parking Lot/Bike Rack (*the Task Force may decide to include some of these topics as part of its recommendations to the City for future actions to support WNM implementation*)

- Approaching state **legislature** with issues that don't necessarily fit into our ordinance/rules and regs and inform statewide/regional discussions at the legislature and DRCOG (for example, land use restraints like "where will items go when we run out of capacity in Denver?")
- Regulate **supply chain**
- Conduct/compile **research** on what's working, relevant considerations, big picture of waste diversion and make sure existing city-funded research is being utilized to its maximum potential
- Maximize **operational efficiencies**
- Implement relevant **land use** regulations, considering impacts on marginalized communities
- Effective **public** receptacles and signage, to ensure long-term success of WNM
- **Technology** solutions
- **Access** and access control - to reduce contamination risks
- Worker **safety** - recommendations for future action
- Clarify **workplace** compliance, expansion and expectations

Reviewing Task Force Charter & How the Task Force Will Do Its Work

Ryan walked through the proposed Task Force Charter (see pages 29-36 of the meeting presentation), which included the following topics: *roles/expectations of Task Force members, City staff, and the facilitator; consensus decision-making; a proposed Agenda Design group; and proposed workgroups.* Grace shared the proposed schedule and anticipated meeting topics.

Task Force members discussed the following:

- Many Task Force members underscored their desire to meet **in person** whenever possible. CASR will investigate possible venues and survey Task Force members to assess interest. One of the considerations is a viable venue that is accessible and ideally where meetings can be recorded and/or live-streamed. Members and staff discussed the challenges of 'hybrid' meetings, in which some attend in person and others virtually. Grace and Ryan will circle back with the Task Force with possibilities for increasing the number of in-person meetings going forward.
- If the Task Force as a whole requests **additional** meetings, those can be scheduled later in the process.
- Task Force members generally liked the idea of **work groups** to help develop options to address specific issues and/or sectors. Ryan asked members to consider what work groups might be needed, if any, other than *C&D, Education/Messaging/Signage, and Equity*. The group emphasized that equity will need to be considered throughout the Task Force process in addition to being addressed in work group discussions.
- Ean Tafoya and Luis Ponce volunteered to be part of an **Agenda Design Group** to help frame and sequence meeting topics; Ryan asked for 1-2 more volunteers (all should bring interests/skills in collaborative process and represent different sectors).

Homework & Next Steps

By **March 24**, please:

- Review/edit Task Force [Charter](#)
- Share **work group** ideas with Ryan; current possibilities include *C&D, Messaging/Signage/Education, Equity and Compost*
- Complete your [Peer Introduction slide](#) if you haven't already
- Add **resources links** to the [shared folder](#) to help inform the Task Force process (on-going)
- Respond to Grace's **email/poll** on 3/17 regarding in-person/virtual meetings, anticipated impacts to your sector from WNM, and interest/availability for facility field trips

The next Task Force meeting will be Thursday 4/6 at 2-5pm. Stay tuned for location or Zoom info.

Meeting Attendees

The meeting was attended by the following Task Force members and City staff:

City of Denver

Grace Rink, Executive Director, CASR
 Leslie Baesens, Food Waste Program Administrator, DDPHE (Denver Dept. of Public Health & Environment)
 Nina Waysdorf, Waste Diversion & Recycling Manager, DOTI
 Jessica Lally, Project Manager, DOTI
 Mary Garheart, Principal Project Manager, DOTI
 Erica Rogers, Policy Director, Excise & Licenses
 Rose Watts, Director, Office of Special Events
 Greg Thomas, Director of Environmental Quality DDPHE
 Eric Browning, Chief Building Official, Community Planning & Development
 Jill Jennings, Deputy Director, Community Planning & Development
 Anna Erickson, Project Manager, CASR

Observers

Ben, observer, CRL
 Stewart, observer
 Daniella, Waste No More volunteer
 Kourtney Ziercher, Waste No More Leadership Team

Task Force Members

Present	Last name	First name	Affiliation
X	Aghababian	Jessy	Unico Properties
X	Panzer	Peggy	Laramar Group/Apartment Association of Metro Denver
X	Shepard	Stephen	Denver Metro BOMA
X	Adinoff	Holly	Sullivan Scrap Kitchen
X	Gutierrez	Allyson	Colorado Rockies Baseball Club
X	Riggs	Sonia	Colorado Restaurant Association
X	Woodburn	Chris	Denver Public Schools
X	Furness	Andrea	Classic Events Co
X	Ortiz	Renee	Eventful Productions Inc
	Berry	Christopher	GFL Environmental
X	Galvan	Erwin	Waste Management Recycle America
X	Sander	Clinton	A1 Organics
X	Turner	Christi	Scraps Ltd
X	Chiari	Chris	Patterson Inn
	Houser	JW	Taylor Morrison/Homebuilders Association
X	Nichols	Maggie	Iron Woman Construction
X	Perks	Anna	Perks Deconstruction
	Clark	Jolon	District 7
	Hinds	Chris	District 10
X	Fussell	Vann	Compost Colorado
X	Tafoya	Ean Thomas	GreenLatinos

X	Call	Ryan J	Eco-Cycle
X	Ponce	Luis	SEIU
X	Harden	Marguerite	Resident & HOA Board Member
	Jackson	Joshua	NAACP
X	Johnson	Laurie	Circular Colorado