

## WASTE PREVENTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: INTERNATIONAL PANEL ON INNOVATIVE REUSE, RECYCLING AND GARBAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

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Date: September 8, 2023

Department: Waste Prevention and Environmental Services

Meeting Date: September 26, 2023

Prepared by: Carly Tabert, Executive Assistant, WPES

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Presenters: Marta McGuire, Metro Waste Prevention and Environmental Services Director; Anna Bergström, Eco-entrepreneur & co-founder of ReTuna reuse mall, Eskilstuna, Sweden; Julie Dickinson, Principal Advisor, Auckland Council, Auckland, New Zealand; Andrew Doi, Environmental Planner, Metro Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Suzanne Jones, Executive Director, Eco-Cycle, Boulder County, Colorado, USA

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Length: 120 minutes

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### ISSUE STATEMENT

As part of the development of the Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan, Metro and the Center for Sustainable Infrastructure has convened an international panel of experts on innovative reuse, recycling and garbage infrastructure and systems. Panelists will share their experiences with Metro Council in the areas of facility planning and managing systems to support waste reduction, climate pollution reduction, and workforce development.

This is an opportunity to consider how the information from the panel could help advance the values and outcomes of the Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan project, and in particular, the alternative scenarios for investing in facilities to fill facility gaps in the region's reuse, recycling and garbage system.

### ACTION REQUESTED

No formal action is requested by Metro Council. This is an informational presentation to hear from and discuss with panelists about their experiences building innovative sustainable materials management infrastructure and systems.

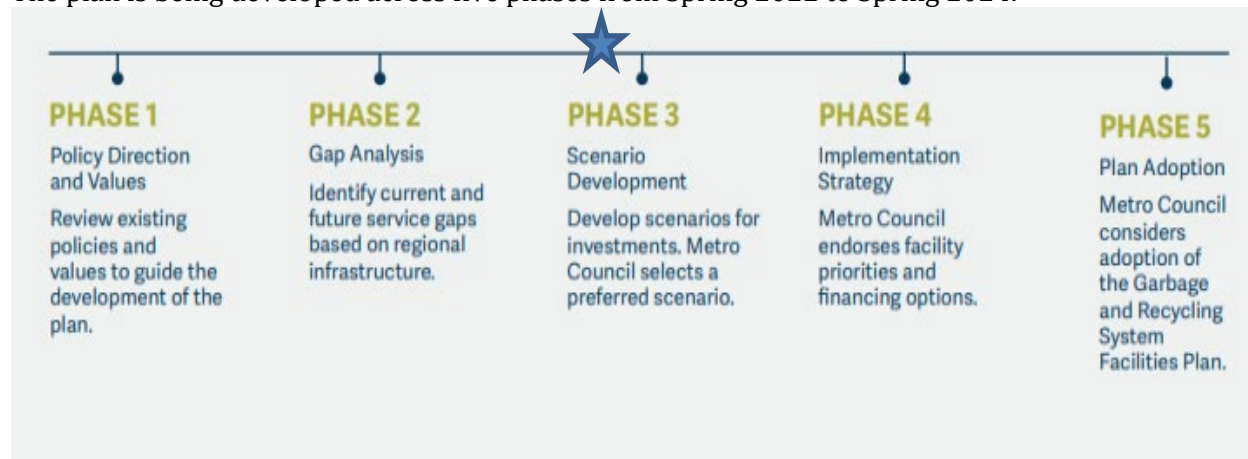
#### *Questions to consider:*

1. What can be learned from other governments, jurisdictions and organizations that are moving from building and operating facilities that process waste going to landfill to increasing recovery of materials for reuse, recycling and composting?
2. How have these organizations minimized environmental and human health impacts to facility customers, workers and host communities?
3. How have these organizations financed their facilities and infrastructure? Has their revenue model changed to support material recovery, and if so, how?

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Metro's [2030 Regional Waste Plan](#) set a vision that centers racial equity to reduce waste, protect health and the environment and provide excellent services for everyone. Creating a [Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan](#) will help implement that vision by identifying the places where people lack services and setting a strategy to invest in modernizing the region's reuse, recycling and garbage infrastructure. The plan will focus on facilities such as transfer stations and reuse and recycling centers that play a key role in managing the things we all throw away. Future investments may include building new facilities, adding new services to existing facilities, and identifying other alternatives.

The plan is being developed across five phases from Spring 2022 to Spring 2024.



The project's first phase focused on reviewing existing policies and defining values and outcomes to guide the plan's development. The values and outcomes were presented to Metro Council [on May 31, 2022](#). Phase two identified facility gaps in the regional reuse, recycling and garbage system. The project is currently in phase three, developing proposed scenarios for infrastructure investments to address facility gaps. Four scenarios have been developed and are being commented on by elected officials, local governments, reuse, recycling and garbage industry representatives and community members.

## INTERNATIONAL PANEL

To provide an opportunity for Metro Council and project stakeholders to learn from jurisdictions and organizations with innovative solid waste facilities and the policies and programs that go along with them, Metro partnered with the Center for Sustainable Infrastructure in Olympia, Washington to bring four panelists from Colorado, British Columbia, Sweden and New Zealand. The panelists will discuss successes and challenges in improving their solid waste systems at the September 26 Metro Council work session where Councilors will have an opportunity to ask in-depth questions. The panelists will also share their experiences with project stakeholders at a Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan Symposium on September 27, which will be followed by an interactive workshop to review and provide input on the draft scenarios proposed for addressing facility gaps in the region's reuse, recycling and garbage system.

The four panelists are:



**Anna Bergström**  
*Eco-entrepreneur*  
Sweden

Anna Bergström is an “ecopreneur” who played an important role in co-founding [ReTuna Återbruksgalleria](#) (ReTuna Reuse Mall) in Eskilstuna, Sweden. Her passion for sustainability and circular economy led her to create this innovative concept, where discarded items are given a new lease on life. With her determination and leadership, Anna successfully turned ReTuna into a thriving hub for recycling, upcycling and conscious consumption. Her contributions have not only made a positive impact on the local community but also inspired others globally to embrace eco-friendly practices.

***About ReTuna Återbruksgalleria***

The ReTuna concept is a simple model that makes it possible to reduce and reuse waste, but can also create conditions for sustainable innovations and businesses. At ReTuna, Eskilstuna municipality has established a reuse and recycling park; a reuse and recycling center combined with a shopping mall. One area of the reuse and recycling center provides space for the public to sort their waste into containers for recycling and the other area is dedicated to receiving waste that can be reused or upcycled. In the shopping mall, 14 different stores have been established which are run by private entrepreneurs. Eskilstuna municipality is letting the entrepreneurs take care of the collected waste, in return for making it into a variety of products offered for sale at their stores. In this way, the municipality creates conditions for more sustainable businesses and reduces the costs of handling waste, while the entrepreneurs get the opportunity to create profitable and sustainable businesses by making money from the municipal residents' waste. The model can easily be implemented anywhere there is waste and is far too brilliant to exist only in Eskilstuna.



**Julie Dickinson**  
*Principal Advisor*  
**Auckland Council**  
Auckland, New Zealand

Julie Dickinson is Principal Advisor for Auckland Council's Waste Solutions Department, where she has worked for the past 12 years. She started at an exciting time for Auckland local government, shortly after the amalgamation of the eight former district, city and regional councils into one unitary council serving 1.7 million residents. She was involved in developing Auckland's first and second waste plans which guided the integration and standardization of the former council services, as well as the introduction of new initiatives to drive the zero waste by 2040 vision.

Julie provides strategic oversight of policies and programs and has played a key role in establishing the [Resource Recovery Network](#), a regional network of locally-operated facilities that enable reuse, repair, recycling and education, while creating local jobs and training opportunities in the process. The project draws on Julie's previous experience working in environmental and community development organizations, and her role in New Zealand's early zero waste movement.

### About Auckland Council

Auckland's amalgamation has brought opportunities to look at things differently and to address issues generated by geographical, ethnic and socio-economic diversity, lack of council control of the waste stream (under 20%) and, up until recently, weak national legislation. While Auckland has a long way to go, a number of initiatives are beginning to shift the dial towards its zero waste by 2040 vision. These include:

- Introduction of a curbside food scraps collection program for all urban households in 2023.
- A move towards a standardized regional, rates-funded refuse (garbage) collection with an option for residents to request a smaller bin at less cost. Potentially two-weekly collection in future.
- Establishing the Resource Recovery Network; a [regional network of locally operated facilities](#) that enables reuse, repair, recycling and education .
- Redeveloping council's only large transfer station as a [Resource Recovery Park](#)
- An annual, booked [inorganic \(bulky waste\) collection service](#) that diverts reusable and recyclable materials away from landfill, redistributing them to charities and the Resource Recovery Network.
- A contestable grant scheme that supports waste minimization initiatives and is open to residents, charities, businesses and schools.
- Contracts with community partners (including Māori and Pasifika groups) to provide education and support for new council service roll-outs.



### Andrew Doi

*Environmental Planner*

**Metro Vancouver**

British Columbia, Canada

Andrew Doi is an Environmental Planner at Metro Vancouver, who specializes in Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs and policy. Andrew holds a Master's degree in Resource and Environmental Management from Simon Fraser University and is a Registered Professional Planner. Andrew began working at Metro Vancouver in 2001, and he has been focusing on EPR programs for over 15 years.

### ***About Metro Vancouver***

Metro Vancouver has a North American leading recycling rate of 65% – roughly twice the Canadian average – and continues to strive towards zero waste, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and a circular economy. [Metro Vancouver](#) is responsible for waste reduction, recycling planning, and the operation of a series of solid waste facilities in the region that provide reliable and resilient waste and recycling services that benefit and are available to all residents and businesses in the region. Our focus is on planning for less waste, improving reuse and recycling systems, and managing and disposing of the remaining waste in an environmentally responsible manner, guided by our commitment to environmental stewardship and cost effective and accessible waste management services. The following key features demonstrate Metro Vancouver’s leadership and innovation in efforts to reduce waste and improve recycling and reuse.

- Metro Vancouver collaborates with extended producer responsibility programs to divert products to reuse, recycling and/or safe disposal. In 2021, approximately 34% of material recycled in the region (excluding organics and construction and demolition waste) was attributed to products in extended producer responsibility programs. Many of these obligated products are collected at [regional recycling and waste centers](#), providing residents and businesses one-stop-drop convenience for managing their discards.
- The disposal ban program, applied at regional solid waste facilities, encourages diversion of recyclable materials from the waste stream by applying a surcharge on certain recyclable or potentially hazardous materials if they are found in garbage loads.
- Behavior change campaigns encourage actions that support Metro Vancouver’s commitment to zero waste via single-use item reduction, food scraps recycling, clothing waste reduction, and holiday waste reduction.
- The [National Zero Waste Council](#), an initiative of Metro Vancouver, is leading Canada’s transition to a circular economy by bringing together governments, businesses and non-governmental organizations to advance a waste prevention agenda that maximizes economic opportunities for the benefit of all Canadians.



**Suzanne Jones**

*Executive Director*

**Eco-Cycle**

Boulder, Colorado

Suzanne “Zan” Jones has over 30 years of experience and expertise in environmental and climate policy in the non-profit and government sectors. She is in her tenth year as Executive Director of Eco-Cycle, one of the nation’s oldest and largest non-profit recyclers located in Boulder County, Colorado. Suzanne served eight years on the Boulder City Council from 2011 to 2019, the last four as Boulder’s Mayor. Previously, Suzanne worked 16 years for The Wilderness Society, where she served as the Central Rockies Regional Director leading coalition efforts to protect our nation’s public lands. Suzanne also worked in Washington, D.C. for the



National Wildlife Federation and as congressional staff for the Fisheries & Wildlife Subcommittee in the U.S. House of Representatives. Suzanne has a M.S. in Resource Policy and Management from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and a B.S. in Natural Resources from Cornell University.

### ***About Eco-Cycle***

Eco-Cycle's mission is to innovate, implement, and advocate for local and global Zero Waste solutions to foster a regenerative, equitable, and climate-resilient future. We work in collaborative partnerships within every sector of the local community—residents, businesses, nonprofits, schools, government—to develop and deploy Zero Waste solutions in Boulder County that change the rules, infrastructure/system, and culture. We then export these models to other communities by providing them with the policies, programs, infrastructure, and communications tools needed to replicate our Zero Waste successes and create a critical mass of communities demonstrating and fostering circularity.

Since 1976, Eco-Cycle has been innovating, refining, and implementing first-of-their-kind Zero Waste collections, programs, and facilities in Boulder County, including by: operating the publicly owned [Boulder County Recycling Center](#); founding and operating Boulder's [Center for Hard-to-Recycle Materials \(CHaRM\)](#); running our own commercial recycling and composting hauling business; teaching environmental education in all of the public schools in two school districts; educating and empowering a 1,000-plus network of "Eco-Leader" volunteers; and helping communities throughout the County and state adopt new policies and programs to move up the Zero Waste ladder.

To magnify these solutions and help turn Colorado from a recycling laggard (with a 16% diversion rate) to a leader, Eco-Cycle champions Zero Waste policies at the state level. Recent legislative successes include passage of: the Front Range Waste Diversion Enterprise Grant Program to provide financial and technical support to Front Range communities; a Circular Economy Development Center to promote new businesses and end markets that use recycled materials; the Plastic Pollution Reduction Act to ban single-use disposable plastic bags and polystyrene takeout containers statewide; and Colorado's groundbreaking Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Paper policy to provide access and pay for free recycling services statewide. Further, since our beginning, Eco-Cycle has helped shape the national recycling debate and the Zero Waste Movement, most recently by cofounding Alliance for Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR) with three other nonprofit, mission-based recyclers across the country, to help reclaim recycling from industry greenwashing and to hold plastic producers accountable for the unnecessary pollution they are causing.