

Special Issue Newsletter

International Zero-waste City Network: Auckland's Zero-waste Journey

Preface

The International Zero-waste City Network is a global network initiated by Basel Convention Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific (BCRC China) since 2022, and co-sponsored by 7 other Basel Convention Regional and Coordinating Centres. At present, BCRC China has invited 7 regional centres (BCRCs) of Basel Convention to serve as co-sponsors. As of October 2024, the Network have 48 memberships, including 7 provinces, 31 cities, 8 BCRCs, and 2 observer cities. Since 2021, BCRC China, relying on the Network and in conjunction with the International Conference on Solid Waste Management and Technology, has held five consecutive Zero-waste City high-level forums, inviting more than 60 cities from China and foreign countries to share experiences. At the same time, two training courses along the "the Belt and Road" countries were held, one online training courses held in November 2023 attracting nearly 90 participants from 23 countries, and another face-to-face meeting was held in September 2024 attracting 20 representatives from 8 countries.

In order to facilitate the exchange of good practices of zero-waste initiatives among cities, BCRC China organized the Zero-waste City Mayor Forum from May 18 to 20, 2024, in Hangzhou, China, back-to-back with the 19th International Conference on Waste Management and Technology (ICWMT19). Six cities from different regions of the world shared their experiences on the construction of zero-waste city, including Sihanoukville in Cambodia, Auckland and Palmerston North in New Zealand, Surakarta in Indonesia, Balcarce in Argentina, and Zahle in Lebanon.

At the Zero-waste City Mayor Forum, Parul Sood, General Manager, Waste Solutions, Infrastructure and Environmental Services, Auckland City Council, delivered a presentation on "Auckland's Zero-waste Journey". This newsletter summarizes Auckland's zero-waste city experience and efforts, based on the presentation, focusing on the Auckland Draft Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (2024) Vision, its targets and priority areas.

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Introduction

The International Zero-waste City Network is a global network initiated by Basel Convention Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific (BCRC China) since 2022, and co-sponsored by 7 other Basel Convention Regional and Coordinating Centres, including the BCRC Egypt, the BCRC South Africa, the BCRC Indonesia, the BCRC Iran, the BCRC Russia, the BCRC Argentina, and the BCCC Uruguay. The aim of the Network is to assist cities and other entities with achieving a key set of targets to ensure their long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability within the goals set out by key international, regional and national instruments, policies and other relevant agreements, especially for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The network endeavors to promote the international progress of zero-waste initiatives through sharing good practices, providing technical assistance and capacity building to the city members of the Network.

Zero-waste Vision in Auckland, New Zealand

Parul Sood, General Manager, Waste Solutions, Infrastructure and Environmental Services, Auckland City Council, delivered a presentation on "Auckland's Zero-waste Journey" at the Zero-waste City Mayor Forum held from May 18 to 20, 2024, in Hangzhou, China. As she introduced, the city started its zero-waste journey since 2012. It aspires to be zero-waste by 2040 through working towards a circular economy, using resources for their best and highest value for as long as possible, as well as taking care of people and the environment. This is quite a challenge for a city in New Zealand, because it's geographically distant from other countries. The city does not have sufficient access to local facilities to treat recyclable materials. And the market for recyclables is dependent on other countries far away. In response, Aucklanders must think innovatively about how to achieve zero-waste, maximize resource recycling and focus on waste reduction and reuse rather than recycling.



Auckland Draft Waste Management and Minimisation Plan(2024) Vision

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Targets

Auckland Council updates the Waste Management and Minimization Plan every six years after reviewing the progress on the implementation and relevant targets. In the Draft Waste Management and Minimization Plan 2024, which is now open for public consultation, the targets for 2024 to 2030 have been chosen as measurable 'stretch' targets for its journey to zero-waste. They focus on the total waste to municipal landfill (class 1), domestic waste collected by council-contracted services and the waste generated within the council, shown in the figure below.



Waste Plan Targets 2024-2030 of Auckland

Priority Areas

This draft plan sets out the actions the city will take over 2024-2030 to achieve the goals and objectives. The priority areas as follow represent where they will concentrate their focus. **The first is to identify opportunities to work more closely with the community and the business sector, including the development of waste policy, programmes and projects.** It is important for the city council, as a regulator, not just to make the rules, but also to consult with stakeholders on a zero-waste programme, to enhance their understanding of the rules and the management plan, so as to ensure that people join the zero-waste journey together. One of the project the city keep promoting is the Resource Recovery Network. The network comprised of Community Recycling Centres enable residents and businesses to actually take unworthy materials (the potential waste) to the facilities. The centers are owned or supported by the city council and operated by social enterprises whose revenues will be used back to the community. These social enterprises try their best to reduce waste, to repair and to educate residents, other than recycle and dispose. These centers empower communities to develop solutions that return resources/recyclables to themselves, while creating jobs, training and volunteer opportunities that shape vibrant communities.

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Resource Recovery Network

The second is to target specific activities and materials. i) To work with businesses and within the council to design out and reduce construction and demolition (C&D) waste. ii) To focus on five priority waste streams (organics, plastics, packaging, textiles, and biosolids). iii) And to strengthen the focus on disaster preparedness and climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

The third is advocacy for future action. i) Advocate for the actions to move up the waste hierarchy including source reduction, reuse and repair. ii) Advocate for the implementation of a container return scheme and other mandatory product stewardship schemes.

The fourth is delivering direct action. i) Support Aucklanders to use their kerbside recycling and food scraps bins effectively, and to shift to rates-funded collection services. ii) Transition to a fortnightly kerbside rubbish collection once the kerbside food scraps collection is well established. iii) Accelerate efforts to minimize operational wastes from the Auckland Council Group. iv) And address litter and illegal dumping to protect public health and the environment.

The last is to partner with others to achieve a zero-waste Auckland built on a circular economy, which is emphasized across all priorities.

One of the special service the city provides to residents is inorganic collection. Inorganic items can be collected for repair, repurpose or reused, including large appliances, furniture, sporting, renovations, outdoors, electronics, and small appliances. On collection day, inorganic collections take place between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. Residents have to put items inside their property/section boundary at the front and as close as possible to the driveway/entrance. The municipality hands over the reusable or repairable items to the relevant organizations for repair and subsequent use for other purposes or resale.

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Inorganic Collection Service

Join the International Zero-waste City Network

Any government of cities, counties or any other kind of administrative divisions, who wants to share the objectives and vision of the Network, could apply for membership. If you want to support Network and improve waste management in cities around the world, or be an official partner of the Network, please contact us by sending an email to mea.waste@tsinghua.edu.cn for further collaboration.

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