

ABOUT THIS PLAN

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), in collaboration with local leaders, is tapping into the economic power of our region's solid waste.

- Historically, trash has been seen as a nuisance, leading municipalities to offer trash **hauling and disposal** as a public service.
- Because of the bounty of flat land in our region, disposal and storage has predominantly been through **nearby landfills**.
- To extend landfill capacity and delay new developments, many cities introduced **recycling services**.

Over time, waste management was largely outsourced to the private sector, resulting in less municipal control over the final disposition of our waste. Our region relies greatly on imports and generates millions of tons of waste. Previous efforts to divert solid waste have fallen short of publicly-stated goals, and trash has become a troublesome material running into real-world limits to its disposal and storage.

[MARC's ReLoop KC](#) plan proposes a new "circular economy" paradigm, where waste is utilized as a stream of valuable recoverable materials. Our plan envisions increasing regional resilience by prioritizing the collection, sorting, and re-circulation of recoverable materials for optimal value. And so, to promote this new approach to solid waste management, we commissioned a study in 2025 to assess the economic impact of processing discarded materials locally.

MATERIAL FLOW ANALYSIS

The District worked with the City of Kansas City, Missouri and Johnson County, Kansas to fund a Material Flow Analysis (MFA) for the entire metro region. The study was conducted by consultants Metabolic and Foundation for Regeneration, with global and local expertise in building circular economies:

- Circular economies are systems where materials are never wasted, and nature is regenerated as a result.
- The study determined which materials are being discarded, which are being landfilled, and how much value could be generated for the local economy by closing that gap (including jobs, prioritization of materials, and examples of how other areas of the world are capitalizing on this already).
- The study determined that nearly 3 million tons of materials are discarded in the KC region each year, with 77% ending up in landfills.
- Products could sell for multiples of their commodity value and could produce the region's next billion-dollar industry cluster.

The Kansas City region has unique intermodal shipping capabilities due to our geographic location. If we look to our trash for untapped resources, our region could become an enviable aggregation destination for tariff-free, domestically-sourced, secondary materials.

RELOOP STRATEGIES

1. Support and promote repair, rental, and borrowing services to reduce consumption of new goods.
2. Support development of reuse hubs to reclaim reuseability materials locally.
3. Support use of reuseable food service ware to reduce single-use plastic waste at large public venues and events.
4. Establish Food Waste Bites program for food service and retail sectors.
5. Establish regional home composting training program.
6. Promote material recovery from construction waste and advocate for deconstruction.
7. Encourage the use of scrap tires in asphalt paving.
8. Encourage the creation of businesses that process recovered materials for use in manufacturing new products locally.
9. Engage economic development specialists with opportunities for business development and growth for material recovery.
10. Promote the integration of this plan with other regional planning efforts (transit, disaster, water quality, etc.)
11. Support statewide Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws for the recycling of paint, batteries and mattresses.
12. Expand energy production from solid waste, including biochar processing of biosolids and anaerobic digestion of organics.

The estimated total residual market value of landfilled materials is ~\$250 million.

If diverted into local circular ventures, that could generate more than 5,000 new jobs.

MARC initiated multiple parallel efforts to engage local stakeholders and build a baseline understanding of what a circular economy is and its potential.

Strategy Stakeholders

Government Leaders

- Regular convening of the SWMD Management Council and an Executive Roundtable of elected officials from the region.
- Secured buy-in from leaders by providing overview of circular economy principles based on **regional reuse study** and **material flow analysis**, planning retreat brainstorming on prioritizing action, and real examples of waste transformation opportunities out there.

Economic Development

- Brought economic development professionals together from across the region to learn about **material flow analysis** results and potential value of developing a local circular economy.

Multi-stakeholder Coalition

- Teamed up with local organizations for a coalition of support:
 - Foundation for Regeneration
 - Re.Use.Full
 - Ingenuity, and others
- Stakeholders included
 - Businesses
 - Nonprofits
 - Government and academic professionals
 - Community leaders
- Convened four roundtable discussions with the group focused on growing the local circular economy.
- Gatherings spawned a new independent network, **Circular KC**.

Working Groups

- Created working groups of local experts to inform how a **material recovery plan** could address barriers to growing local circular economy.
- Groups covered topics ranging from reuse and repair to recycling and end markets.

1-on-1 Interviews

- Interviewed four local businesses leading the way on **Zero Waste initiatives**.
- Case studies were developed to inspire others to follow suit.