West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum and Grand Valley State University worked with Michigan recyclers and waste companies to analyze the composition of municipal solid waste currently landfilled and incinerated in West Michigan and Michigan, and the economic value of this material.

We found that most material currently being disposed of through landfills and incinerators could be recycled or composted without great difficulty where recycling services are available:

- 40% Standard Recycling: Numbered Plastic, Glass, Paper, Metal
- 35% Compostable: Food and Yard Waste, Compostable Paper, etc.
- 9% Recyclable with effort: Textiles, Bulk Items, E-waste, Soil, Hazardous
- 16% Not practical: Miscellaneous Inorganic Waste, Foam Plastic

Total material value of MSW Disposed in landfills and waste-to-energy: $52 MILLION
(W.M Counties = Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, Allegan, Montcalm, Ionia, Barry)

Potential Economic Value: $56 MILLION  Potential Employment Value: 370 JOBS
Recommendations

Efforts to increase the recycling rate in Michigan and West Michigan should first focus on the 40% of materials that have market value, which would include all standard recyclable commodities but glass, plus textiles.

1. Aggressively promote efforts to increase recovery of corrugated cardboard, prioritizing commercial audiences.
2. Support efforts to increase availability and usage of conventional recycling programs with a goal to increase recovery of non-corrugated paper products, metal, and high-value plastic resins HDPE and PET.
3. Through recovery or source reduction, decrease quantity of electronic waste disposed in MSW by half.
4. Promote source reduction and diversion of food waste.
5. Promote source reduction of low-value plastic resins.
6. Initiate efforts to increase recycling channels for textiles and promote availability of textile recycling.
7. Educate the public on the financial difficulties of recycling and waste diversion.
8. Pursue opportunities for further study.

View the full report at wmsbf.org/msw