



June XX 2026

To whom it may concern,

As Douglas County develops its Solid Waste Management Plan, the Douglas County Food Policy Council (DCFPC) recommends that organic waste be recognized as a critical part of both our waste and food systems. While the City of Lawrence currently operates a yard waste composting facility, no public infrastructure exists in our county for the recycling of organic waste produced by home kitchens, restaurants, institutional cafeterias, or any food production facilities. This represents a profound missed opportunity to advance a number of goals set forth in the Food System Plan and Adapt Douglas County. We therefore ask that the county consider two main recommendations:

- (1) **Link organic waste and soil health.** Recycling organic waste via composting can promote soil health and return nutrients to agricultural lands. Intensive agricultural practices that rely on chemical fertilizers to restore nutrient levels for production are not sustainable in the long run, and the availability of inexpensive, locally produced compost can support home and community gardens. Promoting soil health via the adoption of county-scale composting infrastructure aligns with the following objectives from our county-wide plans:

**Adapt Douglas County, Goal 7:** Protect and build the potential of carbon-sequestering ecosystems

**Adapt Douglas County, Goal 12:** Increase community resilience through skill-building, self-sufficiency, and resource sharing

**Food System Plan, Goal 2.3:** Improve soil and water quality

**Food System Plan, Goal 2.5:** Build the resilience of agricultural ecosystems

- (2) **Explore the potential cost-savings of organic waste diversion.** Our organic waste can be a resource for our community, rather than a tax-draining problem. Harnessing the nutrients contained in organic waste can bolster our climate resilience and local food system while reducing our reliance on expensive waste collection infrastructure. We recommend that the potential benefits of improving composting programs and/or facilities in our county, including increased soil health, spending reductions or reallocations, and the reduction of long-term risks associated with waste management, inform the county's approach to organic waste.

As we consider the future of all food-related waste in our county, DCFPC would also like to advocate for the use of compostable cutlery in public facilities. This aligns with **Policy 5.1.4** of the Food System Plan: Adopt public procurement policies that guide waste reduction. Finally, we strongly recommend the

inclusion of community education as a critical component of further transforming our county's culture of waste. (See **Objective 5.1** of the Food System Plan, among other goals.)

Thank you for your work on our county waste plan.

Sincerely,

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Ben Sikes, Co-Chair  
Douglas County Food Policy Council

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Quinlan Carttar, Co-Chair  
Douglas County Food Policy Council

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