

DEPARTMENT OF

SOLID WASTE SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2031





CONTENTS

Letter from the Director	2
Plan Framework	3
Accomplishments from Previous 5-Year Strategic Plan	4
Environmental Stewardship and Resilience	5
Goal Area 1: Operational Excellence	6
Goal Area 2: Fiscal Responsibility	9
Goal Area 3: Customer Experience	10
Goal Area 4: Community Sustainability and Efficiency	11
Goal Area 5: Energy	13
Solid Waste & Recycling Advisory Commission (SWRAC)	14

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I'm honored to share the updated Municipality of Anchorage, Solid Waste Services Strategic Plan for 2026-2031. This plan builds on the progress we've made over the past five years and sets a bold course for the future.

At Solid Waste Services, our strategic direction is guided by three core principles: **Safety, Efficiency, and Innovation**—with environmental stewardship and resilience woven into everything we do.

But the heart of SWS is not our facilities, equipment, or systems—it is **our people**. The operators, mechanics, drivers, laborers, customer service representatives, finance staff, Energy & Efficiency team, Engineering, and all other support staff are the most valuable resource we have. Everything we accomplish as a department depends on their skill, dedication, professionalism, and pride in serving this community. Our commitment is to protect, support, and celebrate this team and to ensure every employee feels valued and appreciated for the work they do every day. We want SWS to be **the best place in the Municipality of Anchorage to work**—a collaborative, positive, and fun environment where

people can grow, contribute, and take pride in their impact.

Safety remains the foundation of our operations. We've strengthened our commitment to ensuring every employee has the tools, training, and support to work in a secure environment. Safety is not just a priority, it's part of our culture.

Efficiency drives how we manage public resources and deliver value. Operating as an enterprise utility without tax dollars, we maintain one of the lowest solid waste disposal fees in Alaska. This business model challenges us to optimize processes, invest strategically, and provide reliable, affordable service for our community.

Innovation sets us apart. We've elevated environmental stewardship and resilience as guiding principles, and even reflected this in our logo by adding a lightning bolt to symbolize energy. Solid Waste Services is not just about managing trash;



Kelli Toth
Director, Solid Waste Services

we believe **trash is treasure**. From expanding diversion programs and optimizing landfill operations to harnessing landfill gas to make electricity, we're turning waste into a resource. These efforts reduce environmental impacts, strengthen energy resilience, and support Anchorage's sustainability goals. Our commitment includes exploring renewable energy and harnessing resources for beneficial use, such as waste-to-energy solutions for the future.

Our vision is clear: a safe, efficient, innovative, and people-centered solid waste system that protects public health, advances sustainability, and ensures long-term service capacity for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued partnership as we move forward together.

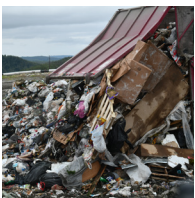
- Kelli

PLAN FRAMEWORK



MISSION STATEMENT

Provide safe, efficient, and innovative solid waste management for the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA).



OUR VISION

Advancing solid waste management through continuous improvement and ethical, transparent performance.



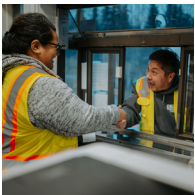
OUR VALUES

Providing value to our community through safe, efficient, and innovative solid waste management.



GOALS

Priority areas where focused effort is needed toward the vision.



PRIORITIES

Targets within each priority area.



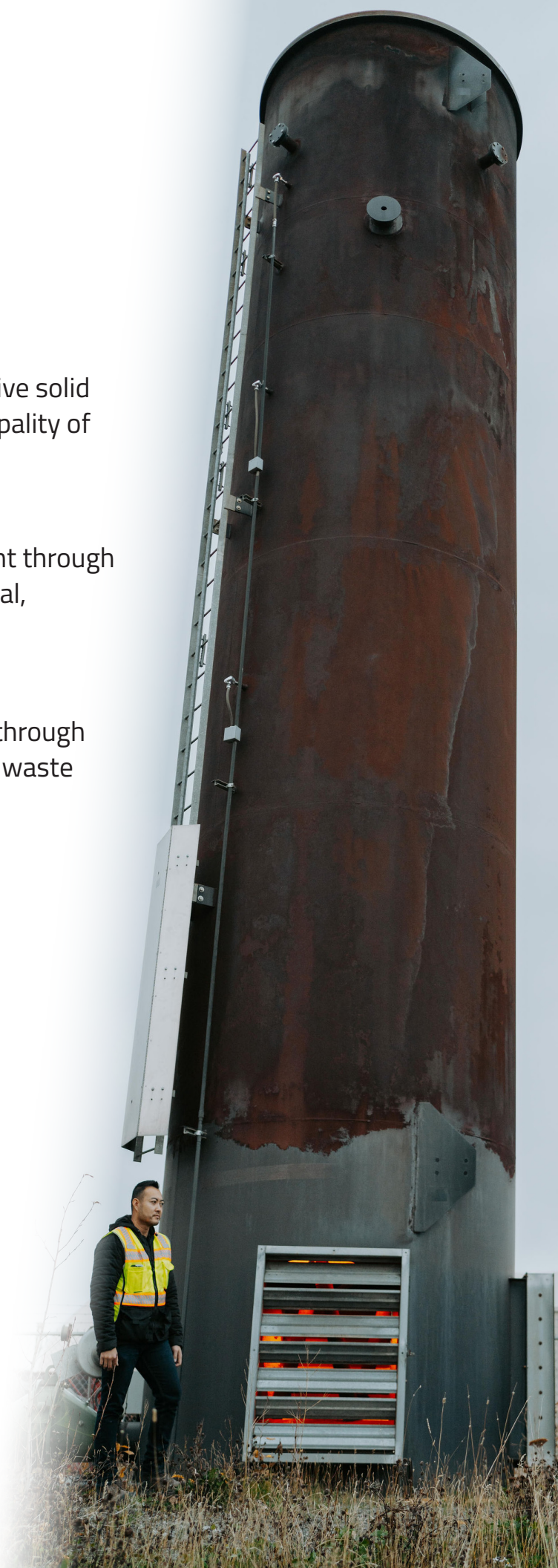
STRATEGIES

Specific activities to drive change toward meeting priority areas.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

How we measure the success of each goal.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE PREVIOUS 5-YEAR PLAN

Over the past five years, SWS advanced major priorities within the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan while maintaining essential services through unprecedented disruption. The previous plan emphasized facility investment, environmental compliance, customer experience improvements, and long-range financial planning, providing a stable foundation for operational resilience and future system upgrades.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Significantly extended the projected life of the Anchorage Regional Landfill by another 41 years. The landfill life extension is attributed to enhanced operational practices, utilization of newer technology, and better equipment.
- Expanded diversion for access to the Materials Recovery Facility including additional collections of plastics, organics, and wood. In 2025, SWS hosted two new free public electronics diversion events, collecting over 10,000 pounds that would have otherwise been buried in the landfill.
- The gates of the new Central Transfer Station (CTS) opened on September 7, 2023. CTS is a modern transfer facility that operates with improved safety and efficiency for diverse visitors including residential, commercial, and SWS traffic users. SWS moved into the new administrative offices at the Anchorage Regional Landfill on January 26, 2023, after it was demolished due to the 2018 Earthquake. SWS continues to modernize core infrastructure supporting safer, more efficient operations at all facilities.



EXTERNAL CONDITIONS SHAPING THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Implementation of the previous plan took place during a period of significant external and system-wide challenges, many of which persist today, including:

- Pandemic impacts on supply chain while building new facilities and staffing shortages impacting project timelines and equipment availability.
- Shifts in waste composition, including increased residential volumes and significantly more cardboard and packaging from online ordering.
- Volatility in recycling commodity market values and limited end-market availability for certain materials hindering a circular economy.
- Rising operating costs and inflation, including fuel, equipment, shipping costs, availability of construction materials, and contracted services.
- Workforce recruitment and retention challenges across skilled trades and operations.

CORE PILLARS

SAFETY

We make smart choices to keep ourselves and others safe.

RESPECT

We treat everyone with kindness and fairness.

TEAMWORK

We help each other and work together to get the job done while creating a fun atmosphere.

RESPONSIBILITY

We do what we say we will do, take care of our work, and show a strong work ethic every day.

PROFESSIONALISM

We act in a way that makes our team and city proud, at work, at events, and in our free time.

GROWTH

We keep learning and improving every day.

INTEGRITY

We are honest and do the right thing, even when no one is watching.

PRIDE

We take pride in our work, our craftsmanship, and how we represent SWS and the Municipality of Anchorage.



Environmental Stewardship & Resilience

In this Strategic Plan, “Environmental Stewardship & Resilience” means operating a municipal solid waste system that is reliable and affordable today, while protecting public health and the environment, and maintaining long-term service capacity for the future. For SWS, Environmental Stewardship & Resilience is reflected in day-to-day operational decisions and long-range planning that reduce risk, extend landfill life, improve system efficiency, and effectively manage environmental responsibility. Throughout the plan, Environmental Stewardship & Resilience is highlighted in call-out boxes that provide context and implementation considerations that help interpret the strategies. They are explanatory only and do not create additional commitments beyond the strategies listed.

GOAL AREA 1: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

PRIORITY 1. SAFETY

Foster a consistent, proactive safety culture by increasing training, retention, communication, and workplace practices that protect employees, customers, and the community. Solid waste management is consistently listed among the most dangerous occupations in the United States.

STRATEGIES

- A. Establish a comprehensive safety program that standardizes expectations, fosters shared accountability, and embeds continuous learning, reporting, and improvement across all operations.

KPI: Safety Program Enrollment and Issue Resolution: 100% of employees enrolled in the safety software, which tracks all safety concerns and complaints. Issues requiring attention are resolved within established timelines. Implement “Collaborative Just Culture” program department wide.

Target: 100% employee enrollment in safety software, and 95% of reported safety concerns resolved within 30 business days. Fully implement “Collaborative Just Culture.”

- B. Strengthen and modernize the department-wide safety program through consistent training, engaged leadership, and an internal safety committee that updates standard operating procedures (SOPs), job hazard analyses (JHAs), and ensures employee access to safety equipment and ergonomic tools.

KPI: Ensure the Emergency Action Plan is referenced in 100% of daily toolbox talks and incorporated into quarterly specialty training sessions. Review and update all JHAs and SOPs at least annually or within 30 days of any operational change, maintaining them as living documents.



- C. Expand and enhance safety training programs across all SWS department functions. Training will align with job-specific tasks to ensure safety and operational excellence.

KPI: Training Completion Rate: Percentage of SWS staff completing required safety and operational training annually.

Target: 100% completion of all mandatory training modules by year-end.

- D. Strengthen leadership and supervisor presence in the field through proactive engagement.

KPI: Field Engagement Compliance: Percentage of scheduled leadership walk-throughs and safety audits completed each month.

Target: 100% completion of scheduled activities.



PRIORITY 2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Ensure consistent regulatory compliance by strengthening environmental monitoring, collaborating closely with state and federal regulators, conducting proactive inspections, diligently managing daily landfill gas and leachate, and aligning daily operations and capital projects with state and federal permit requirements.

STRATEGIES

- A. Improve landfill gas collection system performance.
- B. Strengthen environmental monitoring systems and data management tools to ensure consistent regulatory compliance across groundwater, stormwater, air, gas, leachate, and facility operations.

KPI: Landfill Inspection Score

Target: Landfill Inspection Score is 95% or higher.

- C. Expand environmental and regulatory compliance training for operations, engineering, and management staff.

WHAT IS LEACHATE?

Leachate is a liquid that forms when water passes through decomposing waste. Essentially, it's the result of rainwater, melted snow, or other liquids percolating through the garbage at the landfill.

PRIORITY 3. FACILITIES

Improve operational excellence by improving the customer experience including traffic flow and wait times, fleet support areas, and infrastructure performance.

STRATEGIES

- A. Enhance the customer experience by improving traffic flow, upgrading signage, and strengthening safety messages at SWS facilities to deliver a more user-friendly experience for all customers.
- B. Evaluate and implement leachate management solutions for onsite volume reduction, treatment, and disposal to reduce reliance on hauling and disposal and improve operational efficiency.
- C. Reduce leachate generation through various operational practices.

KPI: Tracking and analyzing precipitation and leachate production data.

Target: Track and analyze two years of data to quantify leachate production and diverted storm water volumes.

- D. Expand the Materials Recovery Facility volume and variety of items diverted from the landfill.

KPI: Increasing volume and materials.

Target: 10% increase each year in total volume diverted through the facility.

- E. Increase collection of source-separated cardboard and aluminum can collection at facilities.

KPI: Increase volumes of cardboard and aluminum cans.

Target: Increase by 10% annually.



PRIORITY 4. WORKFORCE

Support a skilled, engaged, and resilient workforce through consistent communication, comprehensive training, clear pathways for professional growth, and a strong culture of retention and mentorship.

STRATEGIES

- A. Strengthen onboarding by providing structured early training, defined performance expectations, and dedicated mentorship to support employee success.

KPI: Utilize safety reporting software

Target: 100% of all employees onboarded to Safety Reporting Software within 5 days of hire and 100% completion for all SWS employees within 30 days of issuance of introductory training modules.

- B. Develop and implement standardized training, certification, and professional development programs that support employees at all stages of their careers.
- C. Improve internal communication and alignment through clear expectations, consistent supervisory practices, and regular information sharing across divisions ensuring guiding documents, such as this strategic plan, are considered living documents.

KPI: Safety discussions to be included in all morning briefings documenting participation throughout the department.

Target: Documented participation in safety briefings of 100% of all employees.

PRIORITY 5. SHARED SERVICES

Strengthen internal collaboration with other departments aligning SWS services and initiatives for greater Municipal efficiency.

STRATEGIES

- A. Align coordination with Anchorage Water & Wastewater Utility (AWWU) on customer service delivery, administrative processes, project planning, development, and communications.
- B. Enhance joint environmental compliance strategies across groundwater, stormwater, air quality, landfill gas, capital projects, and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) management.
- C. Strengthen MOA recycling program, encouraging all departments to implement recycling and diversion policies.

KPI: Increase recycling services to MOA departments within the SWS service area.

Target: Increase collections of source-separated items such as aluminum and cardboard by 50%.

- D. Expand operational efficiencies where appropriate by aligning safety programs, exploring opportunities for integrated operations, and sharing training resources, new technologies and innovations.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE:

Environmental Stewardship & Resilience

Operational excellence and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. SWS's commitment to environmental stewardship and resilience is reflected in its efforts to reduce leachate generation, strengthen landfill gas capture systems, and modernize stormwater and energy infrastructure across all facilities. The department is expanding opportunities for diversion and material recovery, supporting cleaner and more efficient fleet operations, and maintaining a strong compliance posture through proactive inspections and monitoring.

GOAL AREA 2:

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

PRIORITY 1. FISCAL PLANNING

Manage the enterprise utility's financial standing with an eye toward ensuring short-term operational efficacy and long-term sustainability.

STRATEGIES

A. Manage annual operating and capital budgets, monitoring cash-on-hand liquidity, by optimizing operations and asset management to ensure sustainable financial performance for the enterprise utility.

KPI: Quarterly review to ensure alignment with percentage of the year.

Target: Alignment in the percent of budgeted expenses and revenues to actual.

KPI: Disposal cost per ton compared to revenue per ton.

Target: Stabilization and an even balance between cost and revenue.

B. Systematically conduct fiscal planning for larger infrastructure capital projects, reviewing funding mechanisms including grants.

C. Ensure long-term financial stability by rate modeling, budgeting, and funding decisions align with operational needs, capital investments, and customer affordability.

D. Monitor financial position, impacts on customer behavior and system use.

KPI: Monitor ratio of capital reserves to net assets, percent of ARL closure costs in reserves.



FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY:

Environmental Stewardship & Resilience

As a self-funded enterprise utility, SWS evaluates the full lifecycle cost of infrastructure and operational investments, including long-term operations, maintenance, and replacement needs, to protect rate stability and system reliability. Fiscal resilience enables SWS to responsibly pursue strategic funding opportunities, such as State revolving loan programs and targeted grants, while maintaining sufficient liquidity to respond to unforeseen disruptions. By aligning financial planning with environmental performance, such as landfill gas capture, stormwater management, and diversion infrastructure, SWS supports long-term system sustainability, affordable rates, and a cleaner, healthier community.

GOAL AREA 3:

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

PRIORITY 1. CUSTOMER SERVICE

Improve the customer experience by enhancing communication, streamlining facility flow, and providing clear, accessible information that reduces confusion and wait times.

STRATEGIES

A. Maintain reliable, high-quality collection and disposal services supported by clear communication, proactive service alerts, and real-time customer updates.

KPI: Missed stop-work orders for residential and commercial collections.

Target: Reduction of number of work orders missed.

B. Improve customer flow by optimizing facility navigation and minimizing wait times.

KPI: Percent of calls answered in under 30 seconds and minimized gate-wait times.

Target: Reduce number of times lines queue more than 5 minutes by 50%.

C. Enhancing communication channels such as website, social media, text and email alerts, billing inserts, public events, etc., with consistent messaging and standardized procedures.

KPI: Quarterly process review to determine gaps; review customer feedback and assess internal processes.

Target: Reduction of customer complaints by 50%.



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:

Environmental Stewardship & Resilience

SWS advances environmental stewardship by designing customer experiences that reduce waste, conserve resources, and support long-term system resilience. By prioritizing digital-first communication, clear guidance, and real-time information, SWS minimizes reliance on printed materials, reduces contamination in the waste stream, and helps customers make informed decisions about disposal and diversion. Investments in integrated technology, staff training, and consistent customer education strengthen operational efficiency while supporting broader sustainability goals, ensuring that Anchorage's waste system remains resilient, environmentally responsible, and accessible for future generations.

GOAL AREA 4:

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY & EFFICIENCY

PRIORITY 1. OPERATIONS

Collections and disposal units operate in a way that maximizes financial and environmental efficiencies and supports sustainability.

STRATEGIES

A. Improve fleet performance, reduce emissions, and manage lifecycle costs through standardization, efficiency improvements, partnerships, and exploration of alternative fuel opportunities.

KPI: Reduce the average amount of energy used by fleet segment.

Target: Optimize route efficiencies by studying schedules and routes.

B. Standardize fleet assets and replacement cycles to improve reliability, maintenance efficiency, and long-term cost control.

C. Extend the life of the Anchorage Regional Landfill by optimizing airspace, improving compaction and stormwater management, and expanding landfill gas capture and beneficial use technologies.

D. Perform the care and management of legacy landfills/historic closed landfill sites throughout Anchorage.

PRIORITY 2. ORGANICS

Organics are removed from the waste stream and put to beneficial use.

STRATEGIES

A. Establish a food-to-livestock program that collects food scraps and redirects them to feed local animals, aligned with the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy to strengthen local food security.

KPI: Identify large back-of-house food waste generators and begin supplying local farmers with food for livestock.

Target: Year 1 (Pilot): Enroll 5 generators and 1 farm. Year 3 (Scale): Enroll 15 generators and 5 farms; divert X tons of food scraps annually. Year 5 (Impact): Enroll 30 generators and 10 farms; achieve X% diversion of food waste to livestock feed.

B. Expand organic material collection by offering curbside and commercial services, and enhance end-use applications from soil amendment to livestock feed.

KPI: Number of enrolled participants (curbside and commercial). Total volume of organics collected, percentage of collected organics for livestock feed, contamination rates, and collection and delivery reliability.

Target: Growth in enrolled participation and volumes collected. Reduce contamination rate to under 10%. Achieve 95% on-time collection and delivery reliability.

PRIORITY 3. RESOURCE RECOVERY

Develop and implement practical, results-based strategies that increase material resource recovery, strengthen partnerships, and reduce the volume of waste sent to the landfill.

STRATEGIES

A. Increase resource recovery rates and improve collection efficiency for single-source separation of items such as cardboard and aluminum cans at the Anchorage Regional Landfill Recycling Center and Girdwood transfer station.

KPI: Measure resource recovery rates for cardboard and aluminum, cost per ton collected, and hauling density.

Target: Increase cardboard and aluminum resource recovery rates by 10% and improve collection efficiency by reducing cost per ton and increasing hauling density through compacting and baling.

B. Increase resource and recovery in public venues and at municipal facilities by improving diversion infrastructure and exploring targeted pilot programs, including multi-family collection.

KPI: Track overall resource recovery rate in public venues, total annual tons of recyclables collected, and capture rates for targeted materials (e.g., cans, cardboard).

Target: Increase overall resource recovery rate in public venues by 10%, increase total annual tons of recyclables collected, and improve capture rates for targeted materials by 10%.

C. Host educational facility tours and partner with Anchorage School District (ASD) to develop school programs

KPI: Total number of group tours at Central Transfer Station and Anchorage Regional Landfill, and number of students reached in schools.

Target: Monthly tours and bi-annual events such as an open house.

D. Establish a school program reaching students of all ages by training high school students (grades 9-12) to deliver presentations to younger students (primarily grades 4 and 5) regarding diversion options such as composting, vermi-composting and recycling.

KPI: Number of high school students trained and number of classroom presentations delivered annually.



COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFICIENCY:

Environmental Stewardship & Resilience

By prioritizing waste reduction and diversion, optimizing landfill operations, modernizing fleet and facility systems, and improving data-driven decision-making, SWS reduces environmental impacts while strengthening long-term system reliability. These actions support greenhouse gas reductions, extend landfill life, improve public safety and facility performance, and encourage proper waste disposal behaviors that contribute to a cleaner community. Through integrated planning, operational efficiency, and continuous improvement, SWS advances sustainability outcomes that balance environmental responsibility, service quality, and affordability for customers.

GOAL AREA 5: ENERGY

PRIORITY 1. LANDFILL GAS TO ENERGY

Maximize the beneficial use of landfill gas collected by SWS to reduce emissions and support local energy needs.

STRATEGIES

- A. Explore and develop infrastructure necessary to maximize beneficial use of landfill gas and improve gas quality for external partners at the Anchorage Regional Landfill.
- B. Continue improving landfill gas capture efficiency and system performance to reduce methane emissions and support energy recovery.

KPI: Percent of landfill gas captured and put to beneficial use.

Target: 100% utilization by 2040.

Energy:

Environmental Stewardship & Resilience

By maximizing the beneficial use of landfill gas, improving energy system performance such as installing gas scrubbers, developing new energy projects, and exploring future waste-to-energy opportunities, SWS reduces greenhouse gas emissions, supports local energy resilience, and offsets reliance on external energy sources. Energy planning emphasizes long-term system reliability, operational feasibility, and environmental performance, while coordinating with municipal partners to align energy projects with broader environmental and resilience goals. Through careful evaluation of technologies, infrastructure, and phasing, SWS advances energy solutions that support emissions reductions, fiscal sustainability, and long-term community benefit.

PRIORITY 2. BENEFICIAL USE OF RESOURCES

Increase internal energy production and efficiency to offset external energy purchases.

STRATEGIES

- A. Develop and implement renewable and alternative energy systems that improve energy efficiency and increase on-site energy production where feasible.
KPI: Ratio of energy produced to energy used.
Target: Net energy producer by 2040.
- B. Advance development of a waste-to-energy system, increase the life of the landfill, reduce gas and leachate production, and produce reliable local power with the additional community benefits of developing local capacity for contaminated soil remediation, PFAS remediation, and wastewater biosolid treatment.
- C. Explore use for waste heat, and harness other resources that would otherwise divert to the landfill for beneficial use such as fats, oils, and grease.

PRIORITY 3. ENERGY DATA, EDUCATION, & COORDINATION

Increase understanding of SWS energy systems and projects through data tracking, reporting, and coordination.

STRATEGIES

- A. Track energy production and use data to influence energy related project development and education and outreach.
KPI: Publish annual energy performance summaries and ways Anchorage residents can conserve energy resources.
- B. Coordinate with Municipality-wide energy initiatives to align SWS projects with broader energy and resiliency goals.

SOLID WASTE & RECYCLING ADVISORY COMMISSION (SWRAC)

The SWRAC is a Mayoral-appointed advisory board of commissioners who provide technical and policy guidance to the Municipality of Anchorage on solid waste management, recycling, and diversion programs.

The Commission serves as a forum for subject-matter expertise, applied research perspectives, and stakeholder input, with a focus on practical implementation, cost-effectiveness, and system performance. SWRAC members include professionals with experience in engineering, construction, materials management, and research.

WHY THIS PLAN MATTERS TO SWRAC

While the SWS Strategic Plan is developed and implemented by staff, it provides an important framework for the SWRAC's advisory work.

The plan establishes long-term priorities, performance expectations, and areas of planned investment that shape the technical, policy, and research questions brought to SWRAC over time. As SWS implements this plan, SWRAC's role is to provide feedback on initiatives, projects, and emerging issues aligned with the plan's direction, helping ensure strategies remain practical, data-informed, and responsive to evolving conditions.



CUSTOMER SERVICE CALL CENTER

Monday - Friday, 9:00am - 4:00pm

(907) 343-6250

swcs@anchorageak.gov



Prepared by:

ONETEAM TWO COMPANIES

DENALIDANIELS + ASSOCIATES ALASKA SURVEY RESEARCH

