

## St. Paul, Minn. Vows to Cut Waste From Local Events in Half Within Two Years

by Kristin Underwood, Sacramento, CA on 10.29.09 Tree Hugger.com

### BUSINESS & POLITICS



If you've ever attended a Minnesota Wild game, gone to the RiverCentre Convention Center for a meeting or festival, seen a concert at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium, or been to a reception at 317 on Rice Park, then you've probably contributed to the more than 2.8 million pounds of waste that is generated each year in the city of St. Paul, Minn. In fact, a sustainability firm hired to consult on waste from these venues estimated that from 2007-2008 each visitor left behind roughly one pound of waste (including containers, cups, peanut shells, paper liners, napkins, straws, and on and on and on) on each visit; multiply that by thousands of guests, and that garbage starts to add up. But the city's event organizers plan to do something about it. They've taken a look at advances in recycling and composting, and have decided that they're going to make garbage a thing of the past, [reports TwinCities.com](#).

✓ With the "50-50 in 2" program, as RiverCentre management is calling it, organizers believe they can cut overall waste in half at all RiverCentre venues simply by ramping up recycling efforts and adding composting to the waste management program. Their goal is for waste to be half trash and half recycling, in just two years; currently the venues estimate they recycle at a rate of just 15%. The large venues in the RiverCentre complex (the Minnesota Wild arena, the RiverCentre Convention Center, Roy Wilkins Auditorium and 317 on Rice Park) are prime targets for waste reduction programs because of the volume of people that pass through at one time, who purchase takeaway meals that generate a lot of the garbage.

So how do you get visitors, tourists and residents to start recycling overnight? First you install 280 new recycling bins next to each garbage can in each venue, complete with signs encouraging guests to sort their garbage, recycling and compost. Then underneath each venue, workers constructed a massive "recycling venue" where they use color coded bags to help further sort garbage, as well as compost leftover food, ensuring that as much waste that can be diverted from landfills is.

Progressive Associates, Inc., a sustainability consulting firm, was brought in to help advise on just how to get such a program going and what targets the venues can realistically expect to meet. Purchasing all 280 bins cost roughly \$100,000, but the venues expect to make money from recycling used waste oil, cardboard, paper, and shrink wrap. In addition, they avoid paying a 70% tax on waste just by including composting, so they won't be in the red for long.

Next on the list is targeting energy use at each venue; the software is already in place to get started.

*Image via [Hockey Blog in Canada](#).*