



SERVICE DELIVERY PARTY | IDP SUBMISSION

FROM WASTE TO WEALTH

**A Circular Economy and Resource Recovery
Programme for Cape Town, 2027–2032**

Submission to the City of Cape Town
Integrated Development Plan 2027–2032
Prepared by Farouk Cassim | October 2026

Anchored in Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa



Waste should cease to be regarded merely as something the City must get rid of. It should become a resource that the City helps turn into economic value.

Summary

Cape Town manages roughly 2.1 million tonnes of waste a year and diverts only about 31.5% of it from landfill. Its Coastal Park landfill is close to full, and the City is now seeking to raise the site's height simply to buy time. The Western Cape's target of diverting all organic waste from landfill by 2027 will not be met.

The City has a Waste Strategy, adopted in July 2025, and a scattering of pilot projects. What it lacks is a programme that treats waste as an industry. This submission proposes one.

The SDP asks the City to include in the 2027–2032 IDP a **Circular Economy and Resource Recovery Programme** built on six pillars:

1. A published, audited waste baseline, updated every year
2. Separation at source across seven streams, phased in from large generators to households
3. Regional composting and vermicomposting hubs, starting in Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain
4. An Organics-to-Agriculture Partnership with the Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA)
5. A construction rubble, oils, plastics and e-waste recovery industry
6. A municipal market for recycled products through City procurement, with waste reclaimers included rather than displaced

Each pillar carries measurable delivery standards. Each is anchored in Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution, which oblige the City to provide services sustainably, to promote social and economic development and a safe and healthy environment and to structure its budget and planning around basic needs.

The question this submission puts to the City is not how much waste it can collect. It is how much value Cape Town can recover from what it currently throws away.



PART ONE

Where Cape Town Stands

01

The scale of the problem

Cape Town is filling its landfills faster than it is building alternatives.

The City's own Waste Strategy records that it manages about 2.1 million tonnes of waste annually, with roughly 31.53% diverted from landfill. Put plainly, more than two thirds of what Cape Town discards is buried.

Coastal Park in Muizenberg is the clearest warning. The City's 2023 Infrastructure Report described a new regional landfill site as a critical priority because Coastal Park had only about four years of capacity left. In 2025 the City opened public participation on raising Coastal Park from 45 metres to 67 metres above sea level, which it says would extend the site's life to around September 2028. Communities living within the buffer zone have objected.

Once Coastal Park closes, waste must travel to Vissershok near Table View, adding cost, fuel, emissions and traffic. The City has warned that its current collection fleet is not suited to long-distance hauling.

Is Cape Town waiting to run out of space before reacting? The evidence suggests it is reacting at the last moment, through engineering measures that create more airspace rather than through an economy that needs less of it.

02

What the City already has

The building blocks exist. They have not been assembled into a programme.

The SDP acknowledges the City's work:

- **The Waste Strategy (July 2025):** Cape Town is the first South African metro to adopt a formal waste strategy, built on three pillars: improving existing services, minimising waste to landfill and widening the range of services offered.
- **Waste-to-energy budget:** R163 million for waste-to-energy capital infrastructure over three years.
- **Organic waste pilots:** about 2,000 households in Langa and Khayelitsha have been separating food waste since May 2024, and vendors at public transport interchanges have contributed nearly 400 tonnes of fruit and vegetable waste. The material goes to the Bellville Compost Plant.
- **Materials recovery:** a new sorting facility at Coastal Park processes recyclables from the door-to-door programme, and an MRF at Vissershok was budgeted in 2023/24.
- **Drop-off sites:** R65 million to upgrade the Killarney drop-off site.



- **Commercial obligations:** large commercial businesses must now submit waste minimisation plans.
- **The Philippi Agri-hub:** a R40 million grant-funded project approved in 2020 that included a food-waste-to-compost plant, with a further R7.6 million for refurbishment in 2023.
- **Private enterprise:** Cape Town Biogas operates a bio-digestion facility in Athlone that takes organic waste.

These are real assets. Each is small, however, compared with 2.1 million tonnes a year. Pilots involving 2,000 households in a metro of almost five million people are not a programme. They are a demonstration that one is possible.

03

Province and nation

The targets are already set. The delivery is not.

The Western Cape set a target of 50% organic waste diversion from landfill by 2022 and 100% by 2027. By the end of 2022 no municipality in the province had met the first target. The province is now preparing its Integrated Waste Management Plan for 2027–2032, which runs on exactly the same cycle as the City's next IDP.

This alignment is an opportunity. The City's IDP and the provincial plan should share targets, data and infrastructure planning rather than run in parallel.

PART TWO

Diagnosis

04

Five gaps

The problem is not a lack of ideas. It is scale, speed, data and ownership.

Gap one: no public baseline. Residents cannot see, ward by ward or subcouncil by subcouncil, how much waste is generated, recovered, composted and landfilled. Without a baseline, no target is enforceable and no performance is measurable.

Gap two: pilots that never become programmes. Food waste trials have run in various forms since 2021. Each is evaluated. Few are scaled. A pilot that does not lead to a citywide rollout within a defined period has failed, whatever its evaluation says.

Gap three: waste treated as a cost, not an industry. The City's waste budget is dominated by trucks, depots and landfill engineering. Very little is directed at creating markets for recovered materials. Without a buyer for compost, aggregate or plastic pellets, recovery stalls.



Gap four: separation that is undone. A separation programme loses credibility when residents sort their waste carefully and then watch it being mixed again in the collection vehicle. Collection and processing capacity must exist before residents are asked to sort.

Gap five: the Cape Flats left at the end of the queue. Residents of Dunoon, Philippi and other informal settlements have reported going weeks without refuse collection, which feeds illegal dumping. The communities most affected by dumping are also the ones with the most to gain from recovery jobs. They should be first in line, not last.

05

Why this is a constitutional matter

Sustainable services and economic development are obligations, not aspirations.

Section 152(1)(b) requires local government to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. A system that is running out of landfill space and depends on ever-longer haulage is not sustainable.

Section 152(1)(c) requires local government to promote social and economic development. Recycling, composting, repair and resource recovery are labour-intensive industries suited to the skills and locations of Cape Flats communities.

Section 152(1)(d) requires local government to promote a safe and healthy environment. Illegal dumping, methane from buried organics and leachate threats to the Cape Flats Aquifer are direct environmental harms.

Section 153(a) requires a municipality to structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning to give priority to the basic needs of the community and to promote social and economic development.

Read together, these provisions mean that the City's waste function cannot be confined to collection and burial. The SDP holds that they are justiciable, binding obligations with measurable delivery standards. The programme below is designed so that each obligation is matched by a published target and an accountable office.

PART THREE

The Programme

06

A metropolitan waste baseline

What is not measured cannot be managed or enforced.

Within the first year of the IDP the City should complete a metropolitan material-flow audit and publish:

- Annual tonnages generated, recovered, recycled, composted, digested and landfilled, by



stream and by subcouncil

- Remaining landfill airspace at Vissershok and Coastal Park, with projected closure dates
- An audit of every City composting, recycling, rubble-crushing and transfer facility, including actual throughput against design capacity
- A critical review of the 2025 Waste Strategy, separating what has been implemented, what is under way and what has stalled

The baseline should be updated annually on an open data dashboard and reported to every subcouncil.

Delivery standard: baseline published by 30 June 2028 and updated annually thereafter.

07

Separation at source: seven streams

Sort once, collect separately, process locally.

The SDP proposes a practical seven-stream system:

Stream	What it includes	Where it goes
Organics	Food scraps and suitable garden waste	Composting, vermicomposting and biogas hubs
Cardboard and paper	Boxes, packaging, paper	MRFs and paper mills
Plastics	PET, HDPE, PP and other polymers	Sorting, washing and pelletising
Glass	Bottles and jars	Glass recyclers
Electrical	Appliances, cables, electronics	Licensed e-waste processors
Iron and metals	Scrap metal, cans	Metal recyclers
Residual	Non-recoverable household rubbish	Landfill, as a last resort

Hazardous waste, batteries, medical sharps and oils require separate dedicated collection and must never enter the household streams.

Phasing:

- **Phase 1 (2027–2028):** large commercial generators, municipal buildings, shopping centres, markets, hotels and restaurants. These produce concentrated, predictable volumes, and many already submit waste minimisation plans.
- **Phase 2 (2028–2030):** selected residential areas in every subcouncil, starting where processing capacity is closest.



- **Phase 3 (2030–2032):** citywide residential rollout.

Expansion into each area should follow only once collection and processing capacity is demonstrated. For informal settlements and high-density neighbourhoods, communal sorting points staffed by local cooperatives will work better than several wheelie bins per household.

Delivery standard: no area is asked to separate waste until separate collection is guaranteed. Separation compliance and contamination rates published per subcouncil.

08

Vermicomposting at industrial scale

Cape Town should go into vermicomposting on a very large scale.

Vermicomposting uses worms to turn organic waste into vermicast, one of the most valuable soil products available. It suits small enterprises, training programmes and agricultural supply chains because it is low-energy, scalable in modules and labour-intensive.

It should form part of a wider organics system rather than carry all of the city's wet waste. An industrial programme would work as follows:

1. Separate suitable food and plant waste at source.
2. Shred and pre-compost material where necessary to stabilise temperature and reduce pathogens.
3. Transfer suitable feedstock into controlled worm beds.
4. Harvest, screen and test the vermicast.
5. Sell certified products to farmers, nurseries, landscapers, City parks and community gardens.

There is a Cape Town precedent. GreenCape research documented vermicomposting and other organic processing in Philippi, including work linked to the Philippi Economic Development Initiative. Its current operating capacity should be verified before it is used as a base for expansion.

The hub model: a network of regional composting centres supported by smaller neighbourhood vermicomposting businesses. This reduces transport distances and makes room for cooperatives and emerging enterprises.

Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain should host the first two large regional composting hubs.

Both are close to the PHA, both have large working-age populations needing employment and Khayelitsha households are already separating food waste through the City's pilot.

Meat, grease and contaminated food waste are better suited to enclosed anaerobic digestion or other controlled treatment, and should be routed accordingly.

Delivery standard: two regional hubs operational by 2029, with at least one neighbourhood vermicomposting enterprise per Cape Flats subcouncil by 2032.



09

Wet waste: compost, biogas and fertiliser

Organic waste is a fuel and a fertiliser before it is a problem.

- **Clean garden waste:** chipping and open windrow composting.
- **Food waste:** vermicomposting where suitable, and anaerobic digestion for meat, fats and contaminated material.
- **Sewage sludge:** anaerobic digestion at wastewater treatment works to produce biogas for heat, electricity or upgraded biomethane.
- **Digestate and sludge-derived products:** treated and tested against contamination and agricultural safety requirements before any use on land.

The City's R163 million waste-to-energy budget should be published with a breakdown showing how much is directed at organics digestion and what energy output is expected. Biogas should link to the SDP's electricity plan, contributing to the City's own power supply.

Delivery standard: a published organics processing capacity in tonnes per year, rising each year of the IDP, with the 2027 provincial organics target treated as the first benchmark.

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The Organics-to-Agriculture Partnership with the PHA

Link the city's kitchens to the city's farms.

The Philippi Horticultural Area produces more than 100,000 tonnes of fresh produce a year and sits over the primary recharge zone of the Cape Flats Aquifer. It is Cape Town's food basket and one of its most important water assets.

The SDP proposes a **Cape Town Organics-to-Agriculture Partnership**, with the PHA as its anchor customer and demonstration area:

- Tested compost and vermicast supplied to PHA farmers, building soil organic matter and helping soils retain moisture
- Field trials with farmers to establish application rates, crop responses and long-term benefits
- City support for compost transport, soil testing and farmer training
- Agricultural cooperatives able to negotiate bulk purchases from processing hubs
- Supply to community food gardens across the Cape Flats

The value chain runs as follows:

Households, markets and gardens → source-separated organics → composting, vermiculture and biogas hubs → energy and certified soil products → PHA farms and community agriculture → healthier soils and higher yields → fresh produce, food processing and markets → jobs, trade and local food security



Two non-negotiable safeguards. First, all compost must be tested for pathogens, heavy metals, plastics and other contaminants. Second, no processing plant may displace productive PHA farmland or threaten the aquifer through leachate or poor management.

The Philippi Agri-hub audit. The City announced a food-waste-to-compost plant as part of the Agri-hub. Its current operating status, output and results should be independently audited and published, so that new investment builds on what works.

Delivery standard: audit of the Agri-hub compost plant published in year one; partnership agreement with PHA farmer organisations signed by 2028.

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Construction rubble becomes a building-materials industry

Cape Town is building constantly. Its rubble should build the next project.

- Crush clean concrete, brick and masonry into recycled aggregate for road sub-bases, paving, selected blocks and construction fill.
- Recover metals and reusable doors, windows and timber for resale.
- Apply quality testing and engineering specifications before municipal procurement.
- Establish rubble crushing at refuse transfer stations and drop-off sites, so builders have a cheaper option than illegal dumping.

Illegal dumping of builders' rubble is one of the most visible forms of neglect on the Cape Flats. Giving rubble a price changes behaviour faster than enforcement alone.

Delivery standard: a rubble crushing facility in each waste management region by 2030; certified recycled aggregate specified in suitable City road projects.

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Oils and plastics

Keep oil out of drains and plastic out of landfill.

Used cooking oil: collected from restaurants, hotels, food manufacturers and commercial kitchens and supplied to licensed processors making biodiesel or other industrial products. Commercial kitchens should be required to register an oil collection arrangement as part of their waste minimisation plans. Cooking oil kept out of sewers also reduces blockages and overflows.

Used mineral and motor oil: collected separately as hazardous waste and sent to authorised re-refiners for recovery of base oils. It must never be mixed with cooking oil or compostable material. Drop-off points at every City drop-off site.

Plastics: sorted by polymer into PET, HDPE, PP and other streams, then washed, shredded and processed into pellets or flakes for local manufacturing. Difficult-to-recycle plastics require separate solutions that are justified economically and environmentally. Producer responsibility organisations must carry their share of the cost.



Delivery standard: oil collection points at every drop-off site by 2028; published plastic recovery tonnages by polymer.

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Electrical and electronic waste

Every discarded appliance contains metals worth recovering.

E-waste contains copper, aluminium, precious metals and hazardous components. It should be accepted at every drop-off site, stored safely and passed to licensed processors under national extended producer responsibility arrangements. Repair cafés and refurbishment enterprises in community halls can extend the life of appliances and computers before they become waste, and provide training in electronics repair.

Delivery standard: e-waste accepted at all drop-off sites; at least one repair and refurbishment enterprise supported in each Cape Flats subcouncil.

PART FOUR

Making Waste an Industry

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A municipal market for recycled products

The City does not need to own every factory. It needs to be a reliable buyer.

The City's main instruments are land-use planning, procurement, waste-service contracts, infrastructure investment, licensing within its competence and partnerships with producers. Of these, procurement is the most powerful.

- **Roads:** specify an appropriate proportion of certified recycled aggregate in suitable road projects.
- **Parks and recreation:** purchase locally produced compost and vermicast meeting agricultural standards.
- **Energy:** buy biogas-derived electricity or biomethane where it is cost-competitive.
- **Buildings:** use recycled blocks and paving where specifications allow.

These commitments give recovery businesses predictable demand, subject to competitive pricing, safety standards and procurement law. Predictable demand is what turns a pilot into an investment.



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Waste reclaimers at the centre, not the margin

A circular economy should improve existing livelihoods, not displace them.

Thousands of informal waste reclaimers already recover recyclables across Cape Town, often unpaid for the service they provide to the City. The programme should include them through:

- Registration and identification
- Fair payment for the diversion service they provide
- Protective equipment and training
- Access to sorting facilities and buy-back centres
- A path into cooperatives that operate hubs, sorting points and collection rounds

Delivery standard: a reclaimer integration framework adopted by 2028, with the number of registered and paid reclaimers published annually.

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Jobs and enterprise

Every stream is a set of jobs.

Collection, sorting, composting, vermiculture, digestion, rubble crushing, oil collection, plastic processing, repair and the sale of recovered products are all labour-intensive. The SDP proposes that:

- Hub and sorting-point contracts in Cape Flats subcouncils be weighted towards local cooperatives and small enterprises
- Training be delivered with TVET colleges in composting science, materials handling, small-engine and electronics repair and waste business management
- Each hub report jobs created, wages paid and enterprises supported

This connects the programme to the SDP's wider proposals on youth development, community halls, climate action and local economic development.

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What other cities show

Cape Town should learn, then adapt.

- **Milan** introduced citywide residential food-waste collection between 2012 and 2014, using the collected organics for biogas and compost. It shows that a large city can separate food waste at scale.
- **Amsterdam** has made circularity part of economic planning, targeting a 50% reduction in primary raw material use by 2030, with food, consumer goods and construction as priority sectors.



- **Copenhagen** designs collection around material recovery, with source separation across multiple streams and support for reuse.

Cape Town does not need to copy these systems. Its housing patterns, income inequality, transport distances, water constraints and existing reclaimer economy require local arrangements. The lesson is that scale is achievable when a city commits to it.

PART FIVE

Implementation, Finance and Law

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A five-year roadmap

Year	Key actions
2027/28	Material-flow audit; Waste Strategy review; Agri-hub audit; commercial separation contracts begin; reclaimer framework drafted
2028/29	Baseline published; PHA partnership signed; oil collection at all drop-off sites; residential separation begins in selected areas of every subcouncil
2029/30	Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain regional hubs operational; rubble crushing expanded; recycled aggregate in City road specifications
2030/31	Citywide residential separation under way; neighbourhood vermicomposting enterprises across Cape Flats subcouncils
2031/32	Full programme review; diversion and jobs reported against IDP targets; plan for 2032–2037

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Paying for it

The financial model should combine:

- **Avoided costs:** every tonne diverted saves landfill airspace, haulage and future landfill development
- **Material sales:** compost, vermicast, aggregate, metals, plastics and oils
- **Energy value:** biogas and biomethane
- **Producer responsibility funding:** extended producer responsibility levies for packaging, e-waste and lighting
- **Private investment:** concession and partnership agreements for processing facilities
- **Municipal procurement:** City departments as anchor buyers
- **Existing budgets:** the waste-to-energy allocation and capital budget for transfer stations and MRFs, redirected where justified



Carbon finance may contribute where eligible, but should not be assumed until independently verified. The next stage of this proposal is a fully costed submission, which depends on the City publishing the baseline and facility audit in section 06.

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The legal framework

Beyond Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution, the programme must comply with:

- The National Environmental Management: Waste Act and its regulations, including extended producer responsibility regulations
- The Municipal Systems Act, which governs the IDP and municipal service delivery
- The City's Integrated Waste Management By-law
- Environmental authorisation requirements for processing facilities
- Specific controls for hazardous oils, contaminated rubble, sewage sludge and industrial treatment facilities

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Accountability

In keeping with the SDP's principle that delivery must be matched by accountability, the programme should have:

- A single named executive office responsible for the circular economy programme
- Targets written into the IDP scorecard and the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan
- Quarterly reporting to subcouncils on diversion, separation compliance, hub throughput and jobs
- Annual publication of the waste baseline on open data

CONCLUSION

The Choice Before the City

Cape Town can keep building higher landfills and hauling waste further, or it can build an industry. The first path ends with a city that has run out of space. The second ends with compost in Philippi soil, biogas in the grid, aggregate in its roads and jobs on the Cape Flats.

Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution do not leave this as a matter of preference. They require sustainable services, economic development and a healthy environment, and they require the budget to be organised accordingly.



The SDP asks the City to:

1. Adopt **From Waste to Wealth: A Circular Economy and Resource Recovery Programme for Cape Town, 2027–2032** as a programme in the IDP.
2. Publish a metropolitan waste baseline and facility audit within the first year.
3. Roll out seven-stream separation at source, phased from commercial generators to households.
4. Establish regional composting and vermicomposting hubs, beginning in Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain.
5. Sign an Organics-to-Agriculture Partnership with the Philippi Horticultural Area, with strict contamination and aquifer safeguards.
6. Build recovery industries for rubble, oils, plastics and e-waste.
7. Use City procurement to create a reliable market for recycled products.
8. Integrate waste reclaimers through fair payment, protection and cooperative ownership.
9. Report progress quarterly to subcouncils against published delivery standards.

The question is not how much waste Cape Town can collect. It is how much value Cape Town can recover from the materials it currently discards.

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