



**KENT COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC WORKS**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **Study finds 465K tons of Kent County waste able to be sustainably processed, recycled**

## *Third-party independent analysis supports need for Sustainable Business Park*

**Grand Rapids, MI** – Do you know what Kent County throws away? The **Kent County Department of Public Works (DPW)** does, and much of it can be recycled, repurposed, or turned into renewable natural gas.

The DPW recently completed a Waste Characterization Study, which sorted municipal solid waste materials by hand in 2021 to determine how much total waste can be recycled or processed instead of heading to a landfill. In total, 12,935 pounds of waste were sorted across three locations, and the study found Kent County has enough divertible waste to support the creation of the Sustainable Business Park.

“Landfills are not the legacy we want to leave our children and grandchildren, and Kent County has a real opportunity here to become a more sustainable community,” said **Dar Baas**, Director of **Kent County DPW**. “We know through this informative study that county residents and businesses generate enough of certain types of waste to support the first tenant at the Sustainable Business Park. We look forward to continuing the conversations that will help the park come to fruition.”

The study was completed by **Gershman, Brickner & Bratton, Inc. (GBB)** — a solid waste management planning and consulting firm — and showed that Kent County generates 612,000 tons per year of municipal solid waste (MSW) and that 75% of that waste could be processed at a mixed waste processing facility, diverting it from landfill. The study found the top three categories of waste were 23% fiber (such as cardboard and paper), 19% organics (such as food waste and yard waste), and 17% plastics (such as soda bottles, milk jugs and other plastics).

“The Waste Characterization Study was intensive and involved picking through Kent County residents’ trash over two weeks. From it, we were able to learn just how much waste can be processed in a much more sustainable way versus continuing to dump it in a landfill,” said **Jennifer Porter**, senior vice president with GBB. “There are materials in the waste stream that have value, so long that they can be successfully recovered from the waste stream and made available for reprocessing.”

The future [Sustainable Business Park](#) is planned for 250 acres adjacent to the South Kent Landfill in Byron Center, Michigan. The study results further make a case for creating a more sustainable system

that catches and moves discarded materials to their best possible use. The DPW has set an ambitious goal to divert 90% of Kent County-generated trash that goes into landfills by 2030 and to build the Sustainable Business Park. Along with the County's Waste-to-Energy facility and Recycling and Education Center, the three facilities would allow DPW to make significant progress toward meeting their waste diversion goal.

The DPW is working on a project development agreement with **Kent County Bioenergy Facility LLC** to build a facility at the Sustainable Business Park that could accept and process 400,000 tons of waste from residential and commercial sources per year. The facility would recover traditional recyclable materials to be sold as commodities and organic material, such as food waste, to be converted into renewable natural gas and organic fertilizer via an anaerobic digestion process. Waste that cannot be processed at the facility would still need to be disposed of at a landfill or combusted at the Waste-to-Energy facility.

View the [Waste Characterization Study](#) online.

The Kent County Department of Public Works provides municipal solid waste disposal services to ensure the effective removal, storage, and disposal of residential and commercial solid waste through various facilities and programs, including Waste-to-Energy, Recycling and Education Center, North Kent Transfer Station, and South Kent Landfill.

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