

Access for All: Zero Waste Update Completed

As of this Summer, the entire campus has access for the first time to recycling and composting. Proper sorting is now easier than ever, with over 9,000 new bins installed, thousands more reused, and over 30,000 new labels and signs added. These additions ensure everyone has access to recycling and composting and makes sorting simple and convenient. This effort contributed to Stanford achieving its highest diversion rate ever in 2023, at 69%.

“These infrastructure updates are critical to achieving a wasteless community. However, culture and behavior change around waste reduction, reuse, and proper sorting are also needed” says Julie Muir, Associate Director for Zero Waste Systems.

To all of our partners- building managers, facility directors, and other champions—we could not have done this without your help and support.

And a special thank you to all of the LBRE teams that contributed to the success of this project - to LBRE Leadership, the Sign Shop, LBRE Facilities Management team, the Contracted Maintenance Services team, the Maps & Records team, and our custodial partner UG2. We are grateful to have such amazing partners within the Stanford community.



Partners from across campus who celebrated the completion of the Zero Waste Building System.



Office of Sustainability team members standing outside of the last of the 295 buildings to be transitioned to the new waste system, Wallenberg Hall.

It all started in April of 2021. As the campus was quiet, Julie Muir, Associate Director for Zero Waste Systems, inspired by the Zero Waste Characterization in 2019, and the Zero Waste Plan in 2020, began a pilot program to enhance the waste system on campus. It started with 14 buildings from different schools, representing a diverse array of Stanford's waste stream—small to large buildings, labs and office spaces, modern and historic locations.



Julie Muir, Associate Director for Zero Waste Systems, gathering supplies for the launch of the pilot program in 2021.

In each of these 14 buildings, three pivotal changes were made to the waste system: recycling was streamlined, compost collection was added, and shared waste stations became the standard. Over the

course of four months, the pilot demonstrated dramatic increases in diversion - between 29-44%! This means that more material was being recovered through recycling and composting, and less material was being buried in a landfill. Diversion rate increases this significant are rare, especially since Stanford historically and consistently reduced or diverted over 60% of the waste generated. These results demonstrated the immense impact these system changes could have.

This success spurred a plan for implementing the now coined Zero Waste Building System across the entire campus. The new waste system includes:

- Streamlined Recycling
 - All recyclables (glass, paper, plastic, and metal) can now be placed into a single bin for easy sorting
 - Flattened cardboard can be placed in or next to a waste station to make recycling cardboard more convenient
- Compost Collection
 - New compost bins in restrooms, breakrooms, and kitchens to collect paper towels, food scraps, and compostable foodware in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- New Shared Waste Stations
 - Located in common areas throughout a building for increased access to recycling & composting
 - Individual responsibility for bringing personal waste to a station in a common area to reduce landfill waste
- New signage to facilitate quick, easy, & accurate waste sorting



By updating the waste system in every academic building, the team was able to see every waste bin and explore the campus in a very unique way—many places few people get to know. Some of the most memorable stops on our campus tour include: the highest waste bins on campus in Hoover Tower and at the Student Observatory, trekking through the tunnels of the School of Medicine to deliver semi trucks worth of new bins to the labs, the incredible architecture and views from the Knoll, to Cantor Arts, to the top of Margaret Jacks. The team even came across one of the oldest recycling bins still remaining on campus—a paper bin located in the History Department from the 1980s!



Office of Sustainability team members and Facilities Coordinator, Pedro Perira, enjoying the view at the top of Hoover Tower after updating the building's waste system



*Julie Muir and Van-Anh Nguyen,
Assistant Director of Finance &
Operations*

*History Department, with one of the
oldest waste bins on campus; a relic the
History Department treasures!*

Recycling and composting are one of the easiest actions you can take every day to combat climate change and help Stanford reach its goal of zero waste by 2030. Do your part and help contribute to a wasteless community by properly sorting your waste!