



## News Release

For immediate release

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### **The City of Holland Chosen for Grant Project to Improve Residential Recycling**

*A boost of new technology will help 9,500 local households step up their recycling game and keep Michigan on the leading edge of recycling innovation.*

**Holland, MI** – The **City of Holland** has joined the **Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)**; **The Recycling Partnership**; and Saskatchewan-based Canadian cleantech startup **Prairie Robotics** to launch a 12-month pilot project that – starting next month – uses high-tech cameras, global positioning systems, and computers on city recycling trucks to check the contents of curbside recycling bins and tailor constructive feedback as needed, household by household.

This new project builds on the City of Holland’s citywide distribution of new, 96-gallon Eco Carts to households in April 2021 with EGLE and Pepsi, as well as The Recycling Partnership’s support. This effort, which replaced the yellow-bag collection system, saw the amount of processed recyclables grow by over 700% after the first year of implementation.

“Recycling is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do,” said Dan Broersma, Sustainability Manager for the City of Holland. “Recycling properly saves our taxpayers money by reducing the cost of sending materials that could have been recycled to the landfill, supports jobs, and improves the health of the environment. We know residents want to recycle the right way and through this campaign, we are providing them personalized, real-time feedback to do just that.”

Through \$38,368 in grant funding from EGLE and with technical support from The Recycling Partnership, the city will implement a comprehensive education and outreach strategy. Residents can learn more about what is and is not accepted in their recycling Eco Carts at [recycleholland.com](https://recycleholland.com).

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“The Recycling Partnership is eager to continue working with EGLE and Michigan communities to improve residential recycling across the state,” said **Samantha Longshore, Community Program Manager at The Recycling Partnership**. “We are excited to provide personalized feedback to community members to help support a strong recycling program.”

The project is a modified version of The Recycling Partnership’s “*Feet on the Street*” cart tagging recycling program—a community-wide initiative to improve the quality of recycling in curbside recycling carts by providing residents with personalized and real-time curbside recycling education and feedback. Traditionally, this is done by someone tagging carts on the street if contaminants - items that aren’t accepted for curbside recycling, such as plastic bags – are in the recycling cart.

In this project, instead of a person reviewing contents and placing a tag on curbside recycling carts, Prairie Robotics will retrofit the city’s recycling collection trucks with camera technology. Using machine-learning techniques, the AI scans the material as it is mechanically dumped from each recycling cart into the truck and recognizes unacceptable items such as plastic bags, polystyrene foam, yard waste, and trash. Such items are flagged in real-time, allowing for a personalized postcard or digital notification to be sent to a resident with information about how they can recycle better.

The City of Holland becomes the third Michigan municipality to embrace Prairie Robotics technology. The City of East Lansing piloted the program last year with support from EGLE, Prairie Robotics, and The Recycling Partnership. Initial results show contamination was reduced by nearly 25%.

“We are excited to work with the City of Holland to test this technology and partner with The Recycling Partnership and Prairie Robotics,” said **Emily Freeman, an EGLE Materials Management Division Recycling Specialist**. “Recycling properly saves taxpayers’ money by reducing costly damage to equipment, as well as the expense of sending contaminated, otherwise recyclable material to the landfill,” Freeman said. “We know Michiganders want to recycle the right way. Through this campaign with the City of Holland, we are providing them feedback to do just that.”

This year, more than \$924,000 in EGLE grant funding will be allocated to nine recycling program grantees, representing more than 493,000 households across the Great Lakes State as part of EGLE’s national award-winning “Know It Before You Throw It” campaign, aimed at increasing the state’s recycling rate to 30% by 2025.

The funding is part of EGLE’s strategy to support recycling infrastructure, improve the quality of recyclable materials, and promote market development using the **Renew Michigan Fund**, which the state Legislature created in 2019 in a bipartisan move to bolster the state’s recycling efforts. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the state Legislature are committed to ultimately raising Michigan’s recycling rate to 45% by 2029, exceeding the national recycling rate of 32%.

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**Recycling in the Great Lakes State is now at an all-time high.** The total amount of residential recycled materials reported for fiscal year (FY) 2022 was 620,494 tons –over 66,000 tons more than the previous new record set the year prior. Materials that Michiganders recycled last year would fill the football stadiums at Ford Field, Michigan State University’s Spartan Stadium, and the Big House at the University of Michigan. Michiganders recycled over 339,000 tons of paper and paper products during FY 2022, more than 154,000 tons of metals, more than 71,000 tons of glass, and over 45,000 tons of plastics and plastic products.

More Michiganders than ever have access to recycling services. Since 2021, EGLE, in collaboration with **The Recycling Partnership**, has rolled out 48,468 new curbside recycling carts to communities around the state.

The expanded access is helping Michigan to steadily increase its recycling rate from what was historically the lowest in the Great Lakes region. **The rate has risen from 14.25% before 2019 to 21% in 2023**, based on EGLE’s analysis.

EGLE data shows that recycling, reuse, and remanufacturing industries in Michigan support 72,500 jobs and contribute more than \$17 billion a year to the state’s total economic output.

EGLE’s 2023 data analysis reflects the state’s improved recycling performance is helping Michigan advance toward the goals of the **MI Healthy Climate Plan**, commissioned by Gov. Whitmer as a broad-based roadmap to a sustainable, carbon-neutral Michigan economy by 2050. Carbon neutrality is the global science-based benchmark for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the most devastating and costly impacts of climate change.

Learn more about EGLE’s **“Know It Before You Throw It”** recycling education campaign featuring the [Recycling Raccoon Squad](#). The campaign aims to increase recycling and promote best practices to reduce contamination of materials with unsuitable or nonrecyclable items in recycling bins and at drop-off sites. EGLE data show four in five Michiganders report taking action and changing their recycling behavior for the better following EGLE’s campaign.

### **About The Recycling Partnership**

At The Recycling Partnership, we are solving for circularity. We mobilize people, data, and solutions across the value chain to unlock the environmental and economic benefits of recycling and a circular economy. We work on the ground with thousands of communities to transform underperforming recycling programs and tackle circular economy challenges. We work with companies to make their packaging more circular and help them meet their climate and sustainability goals. And we work with government to develop the policy solutions that will address the systemic needs of our residential recycling system. Since 2014, the nonprofit change agent diverted 500 million pounds of new recyclables from landfills, saved 968 million gallons of water, avoided more than 500,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases, and drove significant reductions in targeted contamination rates. Learn more at [recyclingpartnership.org](https://recyclingpartnership.org).

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**About the City of Holland:**

The City of Holland, Michigan is a vibrant community in a beautiful lakefront setting. It is a world-class city with a small-town feel, making it one of the best places to live, work and vacation. Holland has been recognized by Forbes Magazine and Money Magazine as one of the safest and most beautiful places in the U.S. and was voted as the “Second Happiest and Healthiest Places to Live in America” by Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. In 2015, Holland landed the number three spot on the Livability.com list as one of the “10 Best Cities for Families.”

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