

20 Cities Towards Zero Waste

Iloilo City



Population: 1,293,937

Iloilo City, Philippines

Why this city?



Iloilo city exemplifies a sustainable urban governance with a waste management framework that is inclusive, innovative, community-driven, and designed for long-term resilience.

Impact & Sustainability

By adopting a circular economy framework, Iloilo City has significantly advanced its waste diversion goals over the last three years, marked by a 48% rise in recyclable recovery and expanded organic waste composting, diverting substantial waste from the landfill. This progress is underpinned by strengthened collaborations with waste consolidators, environmental organizations, academes, and the formalized waste pickers' association, which together enhance resource recovery and create economic opportunities.

Partnership & Collaboration

1. EU-Philippines Green Economy Programme (EU-GEPP)

Iloilo City has been designated as a Tier 1 partner of the European Union-Philippines Green Economy Partnership (EU-GEPP). The city receives focused support and resources to develop and implement its circular economy and sustainable waste management plans. The project, which is co-led by the UNDP, DENR and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), provides tailored assistance to help the city identify gaps, craft effective policies, implement circular initiatives, and secure funding for its green initiatives.

2. CEMEX Holdings Philippines, Inc.

Iloilo City has partnered with CEMEX Holdings Philippines, Inc. to process low-density plastic waste into Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF), which is used as an alternative power source for the company's cement manufacturing. This process not only diverts waste from landfills but also reduces the use of fossil fuels in cement production, offering both environmental and economic benefits. The

partnership also includes a socioeconomic component, as the proceeds from the sale of the plastics to CEMEX are directed to the city's formalized waste pickers, providing them with livelihood opportunities.

3. Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC)

The Iloilo City government has partnered with Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC) for a P2.3-billion ISWMF. This facility, currently under development, is designed to be the long-term solution to the city's waste management challenges. It is envisioned as a comprehensive waste-to-energy plant that will not only process up to 475 tons of solid waste daily but also generate renewable energy (3.44 megawatts) and produce RDF and biogas. The energy generated will be used to power a desalination plant, addressing both waste management and water supply issues. This project is a flagship PPP that aims to serve as a national model for sustainable urban development.

Inclusiveness & Social Equity

Iloilo City has undertaken significant initiatives to support and integrate the informal waste sector into its formal solid waste management system, recognizing the vital role these workers play in resource recovery and environmental sustainability.

A pivotal step in this integration was the establishment of the Association 2009, the USWAG Calahunan Livelihood Association (UCLA). This organization offers waste pickers a structured platform to engage in waste management activities, ensuring their contributions are acknowledged and valued within the municipal system. The city has collaborated with international organizations, such as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), USAID and UNDP, to implement projects aimed at improving waste management practices. These collaborations have focused on organizing and officially recognizing informal waste pickers, as well as providing training on health, safety and environmental aspects of waste recovery.

As a key partner of the Iloilo City Government, members of the USWAG Calahunan Livelihood Association (UCLA) are directly responsible for operating the city's Central Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). Their role is crucial in the city's solid waste management system, as they manage the segregation, processing, and upcycling of recyclable materials.

Innovation & Technology

The "Project Agubay" Real-time digital waste monitoring platform. "Agubay" stands for Awareness, Guidance, Unity, Biodiversity, Action, Yield. It's a collaborative initiative between Central Philippine University (CPU) and the Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines, with Iloilo City being the primary beneficiary. This program aims to strengthen ecological solid waste management across 180 barangays of the city. The main goal is to develop a digital platform for barangay- and city-level solid waste management to track real-time data on waste generation, collection, diversion and disposal. This transparency helps the city identify gaps easily, measure progress accurately, and improve accountability across the board—reducing landfill-bound waste and potential leaks, which will

ultimately support the City's sustainable development goals. This innovation enables the city to obtain trackable and auditable solid waste data of its 180 barangays for transparency and compliance with the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law.

Scalability & Transferability

Iloilo City is actively leading the way among Philippine local governments in implementing the EPR Law. The Law enables the city to generate revenue through a plastic credit system. Monetary credits are earned by the city through the recovery, diversion, and proper disposal of all types of plastics. The revenue generated from this system is then reinvested to fund other sustainable solid waste management initiatives, creating a self-sustaining cycle. The city's EPR implementation is part of a broader strategy to transition towards a circular economy.

For more info, kindly see: Romallosa, A. R. D., Penetrante, M. O. T., & Ravena, N. G. (2024). Junkshops as Recycling Chain Actors in the Recovery of Waste Resources from a Highly Urbanized City in the Philippines. *Applied Environmental Research*, 46(3). <https://doi.org/10.35762/AER.2024039> Issue: Vol. 46 No. 3 (2024): Jul.-Sep.

Summary

Key points	Summary
Key achievements	Iloilo City has adopted a circular economy framework, achieving a 48% rise in recyclable recovery and expanded organic composting over the past three years. These efforts have substantially diverted waste from landfills while creating economic opportunities through strengthened collaborations with waste consolidators, environmental organizations, academia, and the formalized waste pickers' association.
Policies & governance	The city operates under the Iloilo City Environment Code (Ordinance No. 2004-149) and other regulations, including a ban on single-use plastics in public spaces (Executive Order No. 043), Plastic Ordinance (Ordinance No. 2013-403), Local Circular Economy Action Team (LCEAT, EO No. 101 Series 2024), Integrated PPP Code (Ordinance No. 2019-524), and Local Energy Code (Ordinance No. 2023-210). These policies institutionalize circular economy principles, sustainable waste management, energy efficiency, and public-private collaboration.
Practices & innovations	Iloilo City promotes zero-waste through multifaceted programs: city-wide IEC campaigns, the "Tyangge sa Basura" (Trash-to-Goods) barter program, and the Social Behavioral Change Campaign (SBCC) across barangays. The city also implements composting, decentralized material recovery facilities (MRFs), and digital monitoring through Project Agubay, providing real-time waste data for 180 barangays to improve accountability and optimize diversion.

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