



# Keep Compost Local:

## A Roadmap for Local Governments to Build Community Prosperity with Composting

By Julia Spector, Nora Goldstein,  
Brenda Platt, Sophia Jones  
January 2026

**ILSR** INSTITUTE FOR  
Local Self-Reliance



## About the Authors

**Julia Spector** is the Policy & Advocacy Specialist with ILSR's Composting for Community Initiative. She works to amplify the team's policy, advocacy, and research efforts to advance local composting. Julia has dedicated her career to promoting social and racial justice, working at organizations focused on democracy, economic, and environmental issues. She received her M.P.A. from New York University and her B.A. in Political Science and Environmental Advocacy from Syracuse University.

**Nora Goldstein** is the Editor/Publisher of BioCycle CONNECT® and BioCycle.net, the Organics Recycling Authority. Nora is in her 5th decade of working at BioCycle. Nora is a leading organics recycling expert, knowledge source, and networker. She is a recipient of the US Composting Council's Hi Kellogg Award for Outstanding Service to the Composting Industry. Nora serves on the Board of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and on the ReFED Advisory Council.

**Brenda Platt** is the Director of the Composting for Community Initiative at ILSR, where she has worked for 40 years. Brenda has authored numerous reports, including *Stop Trashing the Climate*, *Growing Local Fertility: A Guide to Community Composting*, and *A Growing Movement: 2022 Community Composter Census*. In 2017, the US Composting Council awarded her its H. Clark Gregory Award for outstanding service to the composting industry through grassroots efforts. In 2019, BioCycle magazine featured Brenda as one of its organics recycling trailblazers. In 2023, LA Compost presented her with its Community Compost Champion award. She has a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering from The George Washington University.

**Sophia Jones** is the Associate Director for Policy & Advocacy for ILSR's Composting for Community Initiative. Sophia works to advance policies that center local, decentralized composting to build community self-reliance. Her work focuses on analyzing policies, identifying barriers and solutions, and creating tools for local governments, policymakers, and advocates. She also leads the team's project management processes. Sophia received her degree in Environment and Development Studies from McGill University.

## About the Institute for Local Self-Reliance | [ilsr.org](https://ilsr.org)

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) is a national nonprofit research, technical assistance, and advocacy organization that, since 1974, has championed local self-reliance, a strategy that underscores the need for humanly scaled institutions and economies and the widest possible distribution of ownership. ILSR's mission is to provide innovative strategies, working models, and timely information to support environmentally sound and equitable community development. ILSR's Composting for Community Initiative is advancing composting to enhance local soils and community health, benefit local food production, sequester carbon, reduce waste, and create community development opportunities. Through its research, networks, and resources, the Initiative is documenting the viability of local and community-oriented composting; meeting the needs for training, guidance on best management practices, business models, model policies and programs; and highlighting the key role of local government.

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank everyone interviewed for this report for sharing their data and experience, reviewing the final case studies, and answering follow-up outreach. Thank you to the community composters who completed the census survey(s) and who provided photos for this report. Special thanks to Diana Harden for her writing contributions to the sections on education, equity, and health, as well as her copy edits, thoughtful reviews, data analysis, and other support. Thanks to Linda Bilsens Brolis for writing the Philadelphia CCN case study and to Clarissa Libertelli for her thought partnership and contributions to the census. Thank you to Jordan Ashby for her review and copy edits, Meghan Lambert for the design and layout of this report, and Christine Parker for her data analysis support. Any errors are those of the authors.

This report was made possible thanks to financial support from the 11th Hour Project and other donors. This project has also been funded in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under a Recycling, Education & Outreach (REO) assistance agreement to ILSR (EPA Cooperative Agreement 4Y-84077201). The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the Environmental Protection Agency endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document. No federal dollars were used for the Census survey.

Cover Credits: See photos in the report for captions and credit.



# Table of Contents

|                                                     |           |                                                 |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Summary</b> .....                                | <b>4</b>  | <b>End Notes</b> .....                          | <b>57</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....                           | <b>9</b>  | <b>Appendix A: Case Studies</b> .....           | <b>59</b>  |
| Research, Methodology, and Scope.....               | 9         | Albany, New York .....                          | 60         |
| <b>Background</b> .....                             | <b>11</b> | Avondale Estates, Georgia.....                  | 64         |
| Transforming a Broken System .....                  | 11        | Bozeman, Montana .....                          | 68         |
| What Is Local Composting?.....                      | 12        | Cleveland, Ohio.....                            | 72         |
| The Current Landscape .....                         | 12        | Durango, Colorado .....                         | 77         |
| Local Government Support .....                      | 14        | Greenbelt, Maryland.....                        | 81         |
| Not All Compost Is Created Equal.....               | 15        | Hoboken, New Jersey .....                       | 85         |
| Massive Potential Through Public-Private            |           | Los Angeles, California .....                   | 89         |
| Partnerships (PPPs) .....                           | 15        | New York, New York .....                        | 94         |
| <b>The Economic Case for Local Composting</b> ..... | <b>16</b> | Norman, Oklahoma.....                           | 99         |
| Cost Savings and Reducing Financial Risk.....       | 16        | Ocean City, Maryland.....                       | 103        |
| Municipal Motivation .....                          | 17        | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania .....                | 106        |
| Strengthening Local Economies and Fostering         |           | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Farm Philly/CCN) .. | 111        |
| Community Wealth-Building .....                     | 21        | Providence, Rhode Island .....                  | 115        |
| Accessing Public Funds and Leveraging               |           | Traverse City, Michigan .....                   | 120        |
| the Local Advantage .....                           | 23        | Washington, D.C. (DPW) .....                    | 123        |
| <b>How to Keep Compost Local</b> .....              | <b>25</b> | Washington, D.C. ....                           | 128        |
| How to Get Started: Twelve Steps for                |           | <b>Appendix B: 2024 Community Composter</b>     |            |
| Government to Advance Local Composting ...          | 25        | <b>Mini-Census Results</b> .....                | <b>131</b> |
| Public Entities with Composting Partnerships..      | 28        | <b>Tables</b>                                   |            |
| Titles of Public Staff Who Lead                     |           | Table 1. Summary of Case Studies .....          | 5          |
| Composting Projects .....                           | 28        | Table 2. Case Study Partnership Elements ....   | 29         |
| Public-Private Partnerships.....                    | 28        | Table 3. Government Project Costs .....         | 32         |
| Cost .....                                          | 31        | Table 4. Example Project Budget .....           | 36         |
| Financing.....                                      | 38        | Table 5. Collection Subscription Costs.....     | 37         |
| Funding Needs .....                                 | 38        | Table 6. Funding Sources for                    |            |
| Contracting .....                                   | 40        | Government Projects .....                       | 39         |
| Compost Utilization .....                           | 42        |                                                 |            |
| Land Access .....                                   | 42        |                                                 |            |
| Labor .....                                         | 43        |                                                 |            |
| Operations and Infrastructure.....                  | 43        |                                                 |            |
| Contamination.....                                  | 45        |                                                 |            |
| Equitable Access and Distribution of Services .     | 46        |                                                 |            |
| Education and Outreach .....                        | 46        |                                                 |            |
| Fostering Relationships .....                       | 49        |                                                 |            |
| <b>Policy Recommendations</b> .....                 | <b>50</b> |                                                 |            |



# Summary

## The Economic Case for Local Composting

### Cost Savings and Reducing Financial Risk

- Composting locally is a cost-effective alternative to expensive waste disposal methods.
- Investing in local, distributed composting is less expensive than expanding landfills or incinerators.
- Collaborating with local operators presents a cost-effective alternative to starting new programs from scratch.
- Municipalities can reduce expenses related to purchasing soil amendments and fertilizers.
- Local composting saves on green space maintenance costs and contributes to urban greening.
- Local composting can be an effective solution for managing rodent pressure.
- Local composters help support related government programming.
- Compost utilization in green infrastructure can address stormwater management and climate resiliency, providing savings.
- Composting promotes public health via emissions reductions, soil remediation, and green spaces.
- Composting protects the environment and combats climate chaos.
- Local composting strengthens food security and sovereignty.

### Strengthening Local Economies and Fostering Community Wealth-Building

- Local composters support local workforce development and job training.
- On a per-ton basis, local distributed composting creates more jobs than landfills or incinerators.
- Investing in community operations promotes the development of local infrastructure and fosters a circular economy.
- On-farm composting supports farm and garden prosperity and local food systems resilience.
- Supporting community composters benefits a wide range of organizations and business types.

### Accessing Public Funds and Leveraging the Local Advantage

- Partnering with nonprofits and local businesses often qualifies local governments for public funding and strengthens funding applications.
- Partnering with local community operations gives government programs credibility.
- Local community operations strengthen the social fabric of communities.

**Table 1. Summary of Case Study Partnerships**

| City                        | 2024 Population      | Government Entity                                                                | Community Composter / Partner                                                               | Case Study Title                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Albany, NY</b>           | 101,317              | Department of General Services                                                   | Radix Ecological Sustainability Center<br>Friends of the Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm Inc. | Relying on Existing Food Scrap Recyclers                                                |
| <b>Avondale Estates, GA</b> | 3,526                | City of Avondale Estates<br>County Commissioners Office                          | CompostNow                                                                                  | Local Commissioner Drives Pilot Program with Multiple Partners                          |
| <b>Bozeman, MT</b>          | 57,894               | Department of Transportation & Engineering, Solid Waste, Transportation, Streets | Happy Trash Can                                                                             | Bartering Services and Finished Compost for Land Access                                 |
| <b>Cleveland, OH</b>        | 365,379              | Mayor's Office of Sustainability<br>Cleveland Metroparks                         | Rust Belt Riders                                                                            | Partnerships Open Door to Land Access for Composting                                    |
| <b>Durango, CO</b>          | 19,811               | Sustainability Office                                                            | Table to Farm Compost                                                                       | No-Cost Contract Enables Partnership                                                    |
| <b>Greenbelt, MD</b>        | 24,843               | Department of Public Works                                                       | Compost Crew<br>City of Greenbelt Green Team                                                | Citizen Green Team Drives Local Composting                                              |
| <b>Hoboken, NJ</b>          | 59,149               | Office of Climate Action and Innovation                                          | Community Compost Co.                                                                       | Small Pilot Grows to Drop-Off Network and Curbside Subscription Services                |
| <b>Los Angeles, CA</b>      | 3,878,704            | LA Sanitation and Environment                                                    | LA Compost                                                                                  | City Taps Community Composter Network and Infrastructure                                |
| <b>New York, NY</b>         | 8,428,072            | New York City Housing Authority                                                  | Compost Power                                                                               | Public Housing Project Creates Jobs, Supports Gardens, and Reduces Rat Problems         |
| <b>Norman, OK</b>           | 131,010              | Division of Environmental Resilience and Sustainability                          | Fertile Ground Cooperative                                                                  | Climate Commitment and Compost Procurement Underpin Food Scraps Diversion               |
| <b>Ocean City, MD</b>       | 6,884 <sup>[1]</sup> | Public Works Department<br>Ocean City Convention Center                          | Go Green OC<br>Ocean Compost                                                                | Avoided Disposal Costs Help Cover Expenses                                              |
| <b>Philadelphia, PA</b>     | 1,573,916            | Philadelphia Parks & Recreation<br>Philadelphia Department of Prisons            | Bennett Compost                                                                             | City Parks & Rec Barters Land Access for Services / Dept. of Prisons Spurs Job Training |
|                             |                      | Philadelphia Parks & Recreation                                                  | Community Compost Network                                                                   | Volunteer Network Expands Access to Composting and Community Engagement                 |
| <b>Providence, RI</b>       | 194,706              | Department of Sustainability                                                     | Harvest Cycle/Groundwork RI<br>The Community Compost Depot                                  | Cutting City Disposal Costs with Local Food Scrap Recyclers                             |
| <b>Traverse City, MI</b>    | 15,782               | Department of Public Services                                                    | Carter's Compost<br>SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers                                       | Testing Small On-Site Food Scraps Composting                                            |
| <b>Washington, D.C.</b>     | 702,250              | DC Department of Public Works                                                    | Compost Crew<br>Compost Cab                                                                 | From Farmers' Markets to Curbside Collection                                            |
|                             |                      | Department of Parks & Recreation                                                 | Community Compost Cooperative Network                                                       | City Parks & Rec Fosters Volunteer Composting Network                                   |

<sup>[1]</sup> Population swells up to 300,000 during peak season

Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

This table lists the case studies featured in this report (see Appendix A). The report draws largely on research from the case studies.



## How to Keep Compost Local

Key takeaways of establishing and successfully managing public-private partnerships (PPPs) between local composters and local governments are:

- **Cost:** Programs' costs vary widely depending on size, scope, and partnership elements. Lower and no-cost partnership arrangements and support, such as in-kind contributions, also facilitate programs.
- **Financing:** Grant funding helps kick off a PPP. Program permanence requires municipal budget allocations. Other financing mechanisms include redirecting tipping fee payments and bartering.
- **Contracting:** Ideal contracts include multiple years of services provided, with renewals for additional years outlined in the document.
- **Compost Utilization:** Finished compost is a tangible, positive asset of PPPs between municipalities and local composters, and is a key selling point for building support among elected officials.
- **Land Access:** Municipalities have available and/or underutilized land and properties. Granting access to that land for local composting — and, if necessary, modifying the zoning — are key components of successful PPPs.
- **Labor:** Job creation resulting from PPPs is directly related to the scope of services provided. The reliability of those jobs is dependent on the duration and renewal of the service contract.
- **Operations and Infrastructure:** Composting systems that actively manage the food scraps (versus passive static piles) are most common, in large part due to space constraints, the feedstocks being accepted, and rodent management. Methods include 3-bin hot composting, aerated static piles in bunkers, and turned windrows.
- **Contamination:** Local composters employ many different strategies to mitigate and manage contamination, including education, outreach, and manual picking.
- **Equitable Access and Distribution of Services:** Providing multiple options for participation, offering discounted or free services for income-qualified residents, and offering a range of service prices and subscription types can increase accessibility and inclusion. Providing access to residents in multi-family housing, prioritizing equitable access when siting drop-off locations and infrastructure, and using finished compost equitably are key strategies to employ.
- **Education and Outreach:** Community composters and local governments utilize public communications materials, a variety of media and technology, and composting champions to promote programs. Direct outreach, hands-on training, in-person events, and regular communications facilitate engagement and learning.
- **Fostering Relationships:** Relationship-building is key to successful PPPs. Cultivating and stewarding relationships translates to more trust and collaboration between partners.



Bike hauling trailer from GRAS/Resoil Sacramento (CA)  
Credit: David Baker



## Menu of Options to Support Local Composting

Local governments have a unique ability to foster local composting infrastructure and programs. As economic catalysts, they drive local economies through job creation, business support, infrastructure investment, and sustainable growth initiatives. In addition, they directly manage services (such as waste management, schools, parks, prisons), enact rules, and understand their community's particular needs, values, and challenges, allowing for solutions that are customized and inclusive rather than one-size-fits-all.

This menu of options presents some of the ways the public sector can partner with and support local composters. Providing financial support and contracting are among the most impactful strategies. But there are also many low- and no-cost choices such as bartering, policy changes, in-kind donations, and access to public land. Taking action at whatever level is possible will cultivate shared responsibility, trust, and citizen engagement, resulting in more effective and sustainable outcomes.

### Contracting and Financial Support

- Contract for drop-off, curbside collection, or composting services
- Provide direct financial support
- Offer composters the avoided disposal tipping fee for every ton they divert from landfills/incinerators
- Partner on funding applications
- Provide discounts or free services for income-eligible households

### Operations and Land Access

- Allow local collection partners to tip their loads at public composting sites for free in exchange for providing other services
- Provide "browns" for composting (including wood chips, leaves, and tree trimmings)
- Provide access to publicly owned land for composting sites and operations
- Allow drop-off sites to be placed at public spaces, such as parks, community centers, government buildings, and other government-owned land
- Lease or sell public land at or below market value

### Policy and Regulation

- Pass laws to advance local composting
- Facilitate permitting or establish permit exemptions
- Include zero waste, diversion, or composting goals and targets in public planning documents
- Give directives to public offices to engage in diversion and composting efforts
- Rewrite or amend zoning policies
- Establish carve-outs for local composters in solid waste franchise districts

### Outreach and Education

- Contract for outreach and education services, including consultation and use of collateral materials
- Share information on local composting services, including non-partnered services

### Business Development

- Directly procure finished compost products
- Develop markets and uses for finished compost



Harvest Cycle hauler Tyson Bottenus on his pickup route in Providence, RI  
Credit: Connie Grosch





Pile of finished compost at Earth Care Farm in Charlestown, RI  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance

## Policy Recommendations

- Evaluate and identify local regulatory barriers to decentralized composting
- Identify state-level regulatory barriers to decentralized composting
- Designate local composting as a permissible land use within zoning codes
- Uplift permit options for small-sized and decentralized composting centered on performance-based standards
- Establish a per-ton surcharge on waste disposal to fund local composting and food waste diversion infrastructure and programs
- Establish local organics diversion policy if the state doesn't already have one
- Incorporate local composting into Climate Action Plans, Solid Waste or Materials Management Plans, Zero Waste Plans, Sustainability Plans, and Food Systems Plans
- Incentivize compost use
- Require use of compost-amended soil for disturbed land and set procurement requirements that prioritize locally-produced and high-quality compost
- Uplift exemptions for on-farm and decentralized composting from permit requirements
- Incentivize local composting
- Prioritize and carve out operating space for local composters within exclusive waste hauling franchise zones, if applicable
- Ensure that regulations around nuisances, particularly for small sites, are based in performance standards and best management practices
- Ensure right to compost and right to subscribe to a composting service for HOAs and condos
- Designate and participate in Compost Awareness weeks and days
- Adopt local executive orders or resolutions that proclaim official support for composting programs and partnerships



# Introduction

Local governments have a powerful role to play in the success of local composting. The many co-benefits that local composting offers — jobs, resilient soils, enhanced food security, and community engagement, to name a few — contribute to stronger and healthier local communities, both immediately and in the long run. This report provides guidance on implementing initiatives designed to meet local needs and details how supporting and partnering with local composters advances government priorities.

In 2023, the United States generated 73.9 million tons of surplus food, valued at \$382 billion, accounting for 31% of the country's food supply.<sup>1</sup> This food most commonly ends up in landfills. The current burn-and-bury paradigm emits significant pollutants, perpetuates environmental injustice, and consolidates corporate monopoly power.<sup>2</sup> Alongside food waste prevention and edible food rescue and recovery, composting is a powerful solution to close the loop and build a circular economy. Keeping compost local, diverse, and distributed is essential to fostering a system that prioritizes people and planet over profits.

A growing number of cities, counties, and states are recognizing the benefits of composting and, accordingly, enacting measures that create and expand composting programs.<sup>3</sup> Public policy and contracting, however, tend to favor large operations, perpetuating inequality through corporate control and consolidation. Achieving a circular, zero waste economy requires a new playbook: one that centers on communities, local economies, and the environment over the priorities of corporations.

Local governments are uniquely positioned to foster local composting — they have the power to pass ordinances, enter into procurement contracts, provide services, offer land access, raise revenue, and more. *Keep Compost Local: A Roadmap for Local Governments to Build Community*

*Prosperity with Composting* aims to equip and empower local governments to support and partner with local community composters and other community-based organizations to work toward shared goals. A key focus of this content is on successful public-private partnerships (PPPs).

This report is part of ILSR's ongoing work to encourage government support of local and community composting. It supplements other resources on the significant role of local government, such as our five-part webinar series, [Government Support for Community Composting](#), our December 2025 webinar, [Keep Compost Local: A Roadmap for Public-Private Partnerships](#), and [Yes! In My Backyard: A Home Composting Guide for Local Government](#).<sup>4,5,6</sup>

## Research, Methodology, and Scope

This report draws on several bodies of research, including in-depth case studies and a "Census" survey of community composters, as well as years of experience working directly with community composters and local governments.

For the 17 case studies featured in this report (see Table 1), the authors augmented literature research with a series of interviews to capture local government composting programs and partnerships across the U.S. Fifteen of the



case studies feature PPPs between local governments and community composters. Case studies represent a wide range of programs, with diversity in geographic location, composting system type, partnership model, partner organizations, government entities, and more. Community composters and local governments had distinct sets of interview questions; the interviews averaged about 45 minutes each. The interviewees reviewed the case studies.

ILSR hosts a network of community-oriented composters, the Community Composter Coalition (CCC), which includes both composting and collection organizations. ILSR developed the 2024 Mini-Census survey, capturing data from calendar year 2024, and sent it to over 350 organizational members of the CCC who were based in the U.S. The survey was shared with an additional vetted target outreach list of over 130 other U.S.-based community composters. In response, 103 community composters completed the survey. This report also draws on data from the 2023 Mini-Census survey and a fuller 2022 Census for comparative purposes. Eighty-one U.S. community composters participated in the 2023 Mini-Census, and 84 participated in the 2022 Census. Responses were voluntary, which may have influenced the type of respondents (for example, they may reflect a pool of community composters with more spare time and resources than average). Not all questions were required. Census results presented are from the 2024 Mini-Census (see Appendix B), unless otherwise specified.

*Keep Compost Local* highlights the key findings from this research. Tools and recommendations are intended to facilitate replication and program implementation for local governments and community composters. We recognize that local governments are not all municipalities, but include counties, townships, villages, etc.; we tend to use municipalities as an all-encompassing term in this report. This report does not teach how to compost.



Carter's Compost's electric pickup vehicle, the "Peel Mobile," in Traverse City, MI  
Credit: Carter's Compost



Soil Stewardship Training participants completed building an ASP-windrow system for New Roots Community Farm in West Sacramento  
Credit: California Alliance for Community Composting (CACC)



# Background

## Transforming a Broken System

Policy and government contracting frequently privilege large, profit-driven waste companies over community-centered organizations that keep benefits local. Four companies now dominate the \$105 billion waste industry — just two companies own 48% of U.S. landfill volume.<sup>7, 8, 9</sup> Profiting at every stage of waste disposal, these waste giants extract wealth from communities while proliferating the burn-and-bury system that harms communities and the planet.

Methane emissions are responsible for roughly one-third of warming impacts in the United States, and wasted food accounts for 58% of methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills.<sup>10, 11</sup> Burning organic resources in trash incinerators emits carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other harmful chemicals and pollutants.<sup>12, 13</sup> Landfills and incinerators disproportionately harm low-income, rural, and Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) communities, perpetuating environmental injustices. Of all the municipal solid waste incinerators in the U.S., 79% are located in environmental justice communities, severely impacting communities of color and low-income communities.<sup>14</sup> Forty-six percent of the 3.2 million people who live within one mile of a municipal solid waste landfill in the U.S. are BIPOC.<sup>15</sup> BIPOC folks are more likely than white people to live within one mile of landfills in many states across the U.S.<sup>16</sup> Municipal solid waste landfills and incinerators not only emit potent greenhouse gases that contribute to climate chaos, but also leak leachate and toxic air pollutants, including carcinogens, that have dire health impacts for nearby communities.<sup>17, 18, 19</sup>

On top of the extreme climate and health implications landfills and incinerators bring, landfill space is running out. As of mid-December 2025, one database of landfill ownership

showed 317 landfills in the U.S. nearing capacity.<sup>20</sup> Without alternative solutions, reaching capacity will lead to higher disposal costs due to further hauling distances and the massive expenses for landfill and incinerator expansion and construction.

Composting is an integral part of moving toward a circular zero waste economy that replaces the burn-and-bury wasting paradigm, which disproportionately harms poor rural areas, tribal communities, and people of color and concentrates power within a handful of companies.<sup>21</sup> There is no “away” when it comes to trash. Wasting and the throw-away economy have long been tied to concentrated wealth and unfettered pollution.

The companies that have proliferated the current polluting and community-harming waste system are now expanding their services to include composting. While composting at any level is preferred over landfilling and incineration, the status quo should not favor efforts that consolidate control, siphon benefits away from communities, and prioritize shareholder value. A diverse, distributed composting infrastructure is needed to meet the increasing demand for alternative solutions.



## What Is Local Composting?

Local composting is a composting process characterized by the collection, processing, and use of materials within the same communities where food scraps are generated. Local composting operations include home composting, on-farm composting (both urban and rural), and community composting.<sup>22</sup> In addition to sourcing organic materials locally and using finished compost in local soils, community composting typically engages the community in the composting process. This local approach amplifies the cross-sectoral benefits of composting. ILSR's **Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste & Grow Community** highlights the importance of locally based composting solutions as a priority over systems that privilege monopoly control.<sup>23</sup>



Hands-on check-in with Harvest Cycle, Garden Time, Providence Gardenworks, and Zero Waste Providence at the Open Doors urban processing site (RI)  
Credit: Carla Dougherty

## The Current Landscape

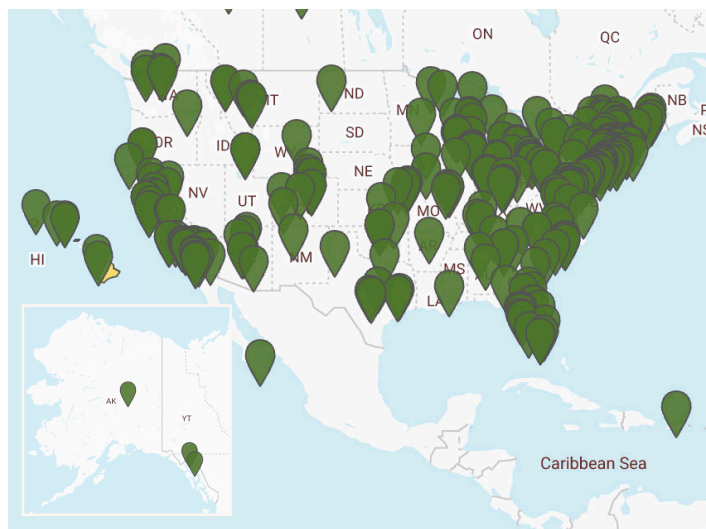
In many cities and regions, community composters have played a leading role in composting food scraps.



As the problem of food waste becomes more widely recognized, composting food residuals is gaining momentum across the country, especially through municipal composting programs. For municipally supported residential food waste collection programs, BioCycle's **Residential Food Waste Collection Access Study** found that from 2021 to 2023:<sup>24</sup>

- The number of households with access increased by 49%
- The number of programs increased by 47%
- The number of communities with access increased by 39%

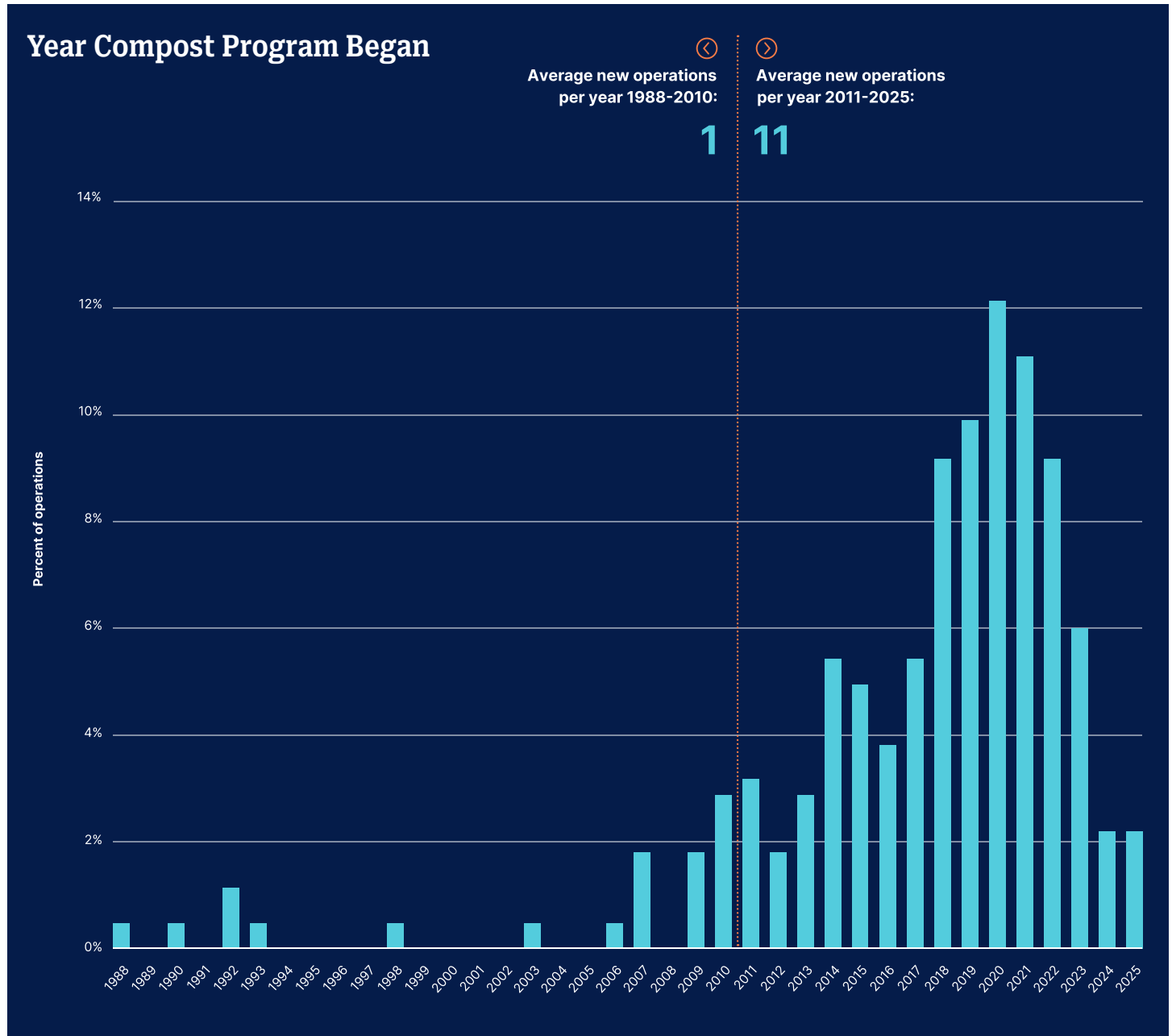
Community composters and local programs continue to grow in number and by scale. ILSR hosts the Community Composter Coalition (CCC), a network of mostly U.S.-based community composters. As of December 2025, the CCC has 422 organizational members from 48 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, two U.S. territories, and 16 other countries, representing a 19% increase in membership from December 2024.



ILSR's **Composting for Community Map** showing community composters in the U.S.

The 2024 Mini-Census shows:

- 76% of survey respondents are scaling up
- 90% of survey respondents across all three surveys began programs after 2010, with a majority starting after 2018
- From 2011-2025, new operations averaged 11 per year, compared to just one per year from 1988-2010
- Nearly 70% of respondents who completed both the 2023 and 2024 surveys reported increased revenue from 2023 to 2024
- Percentages of survey respondents making more than \$1,000,000 in total revenue annually more than doubled from 4.5% in 2023 to 9.1% in 2024





## Local Government Support

**Local governments across the country are realizing the potential of public-private partnerships with local composters.** Recognizing the logistical efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and impact, local governments are tapping into programs already serving their communities. **The percentage of Census respondents who received revenue from government contracts more than doubled from 2022 to 2024, from 12% to 26%.**

2024 Mini-Census survey respondents were asked, “How does your local government support you?”

Thirty-one percent contract with their local government for either drop-off, curbside collection, composting, or outreach and education services.

The type of government support matters for whether organizations can afford paid staff. Having zero waste, diversion, or composting goals/targets was the most common type of government support expressed by survey respondents. **When compared to the influence of “communities with goals/targets” alone, organizations had more paid staff members when they also had a government composting or curbside collection contract.**<sup>25</sup>

However, nearly 19% of 2024 Mini-Census community composters commented that they receive no support from their local government, with even more reporting not enough support. *Note: This was not an original option to select, and those who answered did so by voluntarily writing in this answer.*

### 2024 Mini-Census survey respondents were asked, “How does your local government support you?”





BK ROT team members Bili and Ashera package finished compost in Brooklyn, NY  
Photo Credit: Jae Grumulaitis

## Not All Compost Is Created Equal

Compost ultimately ends up in the soil. It's not soil, but it is a soil amendment. Not all compost is created equal. To protect soils and harness the powerful potential of compost to enhance soils, policies and programs need to foster high-quality compost with high biological diversity and minimal physical and chemical contamination. Source-separation, along with robust education and outreach campaigns, is essential. Also needed are well-managed compost sites that follow best management practices and create conditions favorable to the growth and activity of diverse microbial communities. We encourage policymakers at all levels to change the rules to ban toxic materials, favor reusable, safe foodservice ware and packaging, invest in training and education, minimize contamination, and support best management practices.

## Massive Potential Through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Public-private partnerships with local composters can support municipalities and counties in the stewardship of composting programs. Fifteen of the case studies documented in this report spotlight various mutually-beneficial partnership models and opportunities for replication. Local composters have championed local food scraps collection and composting and are uniquely positioned within the community to serve as program partners. By collaborating with experienced operations, local governments can tap into pre-established systems, leading to efficient, cost-effective solutions. Supporting local businesses, nonprofit organizations, cooperatives, and community efforts not only builds municipal programming but also supports mission-driven organizations that provide many additional benefits to local communities, often unrecognized and uncompensated. One of the biggest barriers to local composting's growth is the cost associated with expanding and scaling up. Municipal support can make the difference in a community program's success and viability.



# The Economic Case for Local Composting

Supporting local composting is a fiscally responsible approach for municipalities to manage organics, establish infrastructure for long-term sustainability, redirect funding to maximize impact, and stimulate local economies. With wasted food making up almost one-quarter of municipal solid waste, supporting a diverse and distributed composting network with good policy and programming paves the way for local governments to save on waste disposal costs. Large waste companies profit off of every ton a community disposes, returning those profits to their shareholders, rather than the community itself.<sup>26</sup> By diverting organics, local governments can avoid disposal costs for organics and expand local infrastructure while supporting local businesses, fostering a circular alternative that turns a wasted resource into local wealth. Alongside the economic advantages of supporting and collaborating with local composters, benefits extend to logistics and operations, food security and sovereignty, climate and the environment, equity and environmental justice, community well-being, and public health.

This section of the report underscores the many reasons why keeping compost local delivers myriad benefits to municipalities and communities.

## Cost Savings and Reducing Financial Risk

Municipal solid waste management represents a significant portion of a municipal budget. With food and yard trimmings making up over one-third of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream, local governments have the opportunity to redirect a significant portion of disposal costs.<sup>27</sup> Case studies in

this report show that cost savings associated with local composting extend beyond municipal solid waste, which can greatly impact a city's financial health and viability, and can reduce financial risk.

➔ **Composting locally is a cost-effective alternative to expensive waste disposal methods.**

Tipping fees rise as landfill capacity runs out, and when local landfills reach their limits, municipalities often resort to hauling waste to distant landfills. These inevitable escalating hauling and tipping fees can strain municipal budgets.

## Municipal Motivation

Why do municipalities support local composting and partner with local operators? Common responses from municipal case study partners include:

- Reduce pressure on landfills as their capacity dwindles
- Reduce the cost of trash disposal and hauling long distances
- Channel the credibility and experience of partners
- Tap into existing efforts
- Enable the city to apply for public grants with community composters delivering services
- Help with related programming
- Increase diversion from landfills and incinerators
- Meet climate and other sustainability goals
- Support local businesses
- Contribute to green job creation
- Build community awareness
- Promote farming and local food security
- Build healthy soils
- Meet cross-sectoral goals



Watch [Economic Benefits of Community Composting](#)

Embracing local composting is an effective way to mitigate these costs while reducing pressure on landfills — a key motivator for municipalities. Composting and reducing food waste are priorities for Albany, New York, as the costs of solid waste disposal are expected to increase due to the transfer and long-hauling of trash, with the landfill scheduled to close in 2028. Providence, Rhode Island, saves on rising trash disposal costs as it surpasses its annual tonnage cap set by the landfill by reducing food in the trash stream through organics recycling with Groundwork RI and The Community Compost Depot. Hauling solid waste is a significant line item in Hoboken, New Jersey's annual budget, with food scraps as the largest portion of the waste stream. The City of Norman, Oklahoma, is incentivized to expand food scraps collection to save on trash-hauling and landfill tipping fees.

*“Solid waste collection (hauling) and disposal is a significant line in the annual municipal budget. Organics, and more specifically food scraps, are the most prevalent waste fraction in Hoboken’s garbage stream. The City is always seeking ways to improve both fiscal and environmental sustainability, including through organics recycling.”*

Jennifer Gonzalez, Director,  
City of Hoboken Office of Climate Action and Innovation

*“The best way to get under the [landfill] cap is to recycle more — and have a cleaner recycling stream since recyclables don’t count against the cap. We tend to hit the cap three months before the end of the year. Even reducing that by one month would yield a huge savings. Another way the City would see savings would be to reduce food waste in [the] trash stream.”*

Kevin Proft, Deputy Director,  
City of Providence Office of Sustainability



➔ **Investing in local, distributed composting is less expensive than expanding landfills or incinerators.**

The financial burden of constructing and maintaining new landfills or expanding current sites can easily reach millions. By leveraging existing composting facilities and investing in new infrastructure, cities can pursue a more cost-effective path while conserving landfill space. Bozeman, Montana, has invested in organics collection and composting as a way to preserve landfill capacity in the region and reduce the number of trips to the landfill.

➔ **Collaborating with local operators presents a cost-effective alternative to starting new programs from scratch.**

Leveraging existing operations and infrastructure can help municipalities avoid hefty capital and operational expenses. While some municipalities can invest directly in new infrastructure and equipment, that is not always feasible. Working with existing local composters offers low- and no-cost opportunities to carry forward composting without a significant financial burden. Community composters can also roll out and scale programs at a relatively low cost compared to industrial and centralized operations. Providence, Rhode Island, would not be able to afford initiating and managing its own food scraps collection program; partnering with Groundwork RI and The Community Compost Depot allows it to engage in composting services. The City of Cleveland does not have its own infrastructure for diverting food scraps; however, existing partnerships with businesses like Rust Belt Riders and nonprofit organizations like Rid-All enable the City to reduce the amount of solid waste sent to landfills.

*“I looked at the lay of the land and came across FoodScraps360 and Radix, which were already providing services. Instead of investing cost and time for the City to start its own food scraps collection, we decided we wanted to contribute to what they were already doing.”*

Sonny Von Tiedemann,  
Recycling & Composting Coordinator, City of Albany

*“We needed to determine operationally what would work best from the District’s perspective — including what the District would need to invest to provide the same service that a contractor would do. While DC DPW had the ability to do the pilot in-house, the cost was so large, and we ran the risk of buying trucks and other collection equipment for a program that may or may not succeed.”*

Rachel Manning, Program Analyst,  
DC Department of Public Works Office of Waste Diversion

*“Partnerships are essential for innovation in municipal operations . . . Community Compost Co. was an instrumental partner in establishing Hoboken’s residential compost collection program and supports the City’s organic recycling efforts by helping fill the void created by limited licensed composting facilities in New Jersey. The City of Hoboken has physical space constraints that prevent the City from establishing its own organic recycling program, and the City’s Zero Waste consultant, Eunomia, determined at a high level that outsourcing waste collection is more cost-effective than bringing those operations in-house.”*

Jennifer Gonzalez, Director,  
City of Hoboken Office of Climate Action and Innovation



Volunteers from the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension's Food Recovery for Rhode Island course helping process compost with Harvest Cycle  
Credit: Sky Sabin

→ **Municipalities can reduce expenses related to purchasing soil amendments and fertilizers.**

PPP models can be structured so that municipalities receive a designated share of the compost produced through the program. This strategic arrangement allows the city to utilize high-quality compost on city-owned land while alleviating the operational costs typically incurred from purchasing soil amendments and fertilizers for landscaping and disturbed soil needs.

→ **Local composting saves on green space maintenance costs and contributes to urban greening.**

Many local composting initiatives take place in parks, urban farms, community gardens, and other natural areas. Supporting existing composting operations not only enhances the health of green spaces but also alleviates the municipality's burden of maintenance. Collaborating with composters also helps manage tree and yard trimmings for the city, as composters can utilize the brown materials in their operations. This is the case with New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA's) program. Local composters also participate in urban greening programs, which can lessen the effects of heat islands, impacting predominantly BIPOC and low-income communities. The greening of areas affected by heat islands in particular can provide healthier air to breathe, sequester carbon in the soil, and support the growth of urban trees, which cool streets and buildings, contributing to savings on air conditioning and supporting buildings without air conditioning.<sup>28</sup> Big Reuse, a compost organization affiliated with the NYC Compost Project, launched the "Street Tree Care" initiative, providing maintenance to urban trees by mixing compost into their topsoil and cleaning their surroundings.

→ **Local composting can be an effective solution for managing rodent pressure.**

By integrating well-managed composting, municipalities can improve and complement their rodent control efforts.<sup>29</sup> This has been successfully demonstrated in cities like New York City, where Compost Power's composting initiatives have led to a noticeable decrease in rodent populations in residents' gardens and public housing areas, due to the food scraps being properly managed and maintaining inhospitable environments for rodents. Implementing local composting reduces costs associated with this issue.

→ **Local composters help support related government programming.**

Local composters have a unique connection to community members, which can be leveraged to implement or promote other government initiatives. In Los Angeles, the City is building out its municipal curbside collection program. As a contracted community partner, LA Compost is able to effectively promote the municipal program, educate about food scraps composting generally, and hand out food scrap pails for the municipal program to residents. Their participation in this effort saves the City money by avoiding outreach and education expenses otherwise needed to conduct this work.

→ **Composting utilization in green infrastructure can address stormwater management and climate resiliency, providing savings.**

In place of using funds reactively, cities can invest them in building resilience against climate chaos. Applying compost increases soil resilience to extreme heat, drought, wildfires, and flooding. It improves soil water retention and can hold roughly five times its weight in water, reducing irrigation costs and energy use for pumping water.<sup>30</sup> Composting protects watersheds and improves stormwater management.<sup>31, 32, 33</sup> These benefits are evident in the City of Norman's partnership with Fertile Ground, which launched the Blue Neighborhoods pilot project in 2023. This project uses compost procured from Fertile Ground and partially funded by the City to top dress residential lawns to reduce pollutants flowing into Lake Thunderbird.

→ **Composting promotes public health via emissions reductions, soil remediation, and green spaces.**

By reducing reliance on polluting landfills and incinerators and supporting soil and bioremediation, composting can save on costs associated with public health in the long term. Municipal solid waste landfills not only emit methane, but also leak toxic leachate and air pollutants, which have dire health impacts for nearby communities.<sup>34</sup> Incinerators emit a laundry list of toxic pollutants, which can cause chronic diseases such as cancers, birth defects, and respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.<sup>35</sup> The Baltimore trash incinerator — located in a predominantly Black community facing persistent socio-economic challenges — causes at least \$53 million annually in health damages in Maryland and neighboring states.<sup>36</sup> Applying compost also helps remediate sites polluted by heavy metals, petroleum products, and salts.<sup>37</sup>



By acting as a filter and a sponge, compost immobilizes and degrades pollutants.<sup>38</sup> Further, compost can support the bioremediation of soils after wildfires. LA Compost has been working in this field following the Los Angeles wildfires.<sup>39, 40</sup> Green spaces promote public health and safety through improved air and water quality, more vegetation and natural environments, and opportunities for physical and outdoor activity. They are especially crucial for underserved neighborhoods, where historically there has been less access to nature and more pollution. Green spaces help lower pollution of air, water, and land by supporting diverse ecosystems.



BK ROT microhauler Nick rides an e-bike with a trailer to pick up organics from a local coffee roaster in Brooklyn, NY  
Credit: Jae Grumulaitis

### → Composting protects the environment and combats climate chaos.

Climate change levies significant costs on U.S. households — as high as \$1,000 per year in some regions — disproportionately impacting BIPOC and low-income communities.<sup>41, 42</sup> Fortunately, local composting has a positive impact on our environment and reduces expenses related to climate mitigation and adaptation. Indeed, just a subset of the community composters in our latest Mini-Census are diverting nearly 70 million pounds of food scraps from disposal, with huge potential to expand and thus mitigate climate disruption. Compost use in soil also creates a “carbon sink” through carbon sequestration, in which carbon is stored in soil rather than emitted to the atmosphere. Just one acre amended with compost can sequester

approximately 75% of a gasoline-powered car’s annual emissions.<sup>43</sup> Compost use also increases crop yield and vegetation, which further amplifies carbon storage. Further, compost can restore degraded soils, which release carbon.<sup>44</sup> Community composters are increasingly using clean energy in their operations. According to the 2022 Census, 15% of respondents reported using bicycles for collection.<sup>45</sup> Local composters are innovatively powering their operations and continue to push the boundaries of renewable energy. For example, in Durango, Colorado, Table to Farm incorporates solar electric power into its operations. Additionally, at its new site, Rust Belt Riders plans to install equipment (from Agrilab Technologies) to recover the hot air from the composting process to heat a building for its bagging operations. This innovative heat recovery technology has been effectively utilized to heat barns and greenhouses in Vermont.

*“The community and environmental benefits are pretty clear, for example, greenhouse gas emissions avoidance. If a community cares about recycling and investing in recycling, it should be caring about and investing in organic waste management at least on par, if not more.”*

Marty Pool, Sustainability Manager,  
City of Durango

### → Local composting strengthens food security and sovereignty.

With nearly 50 million Americans facing food insecurity, hunger represents a major public health issue with serious health and financial consequences.<sup>46</sup> In tandem with food rescue and recovery efforts, local composting plays a vital role in enhancing local agricultural practices and building capacity for healthy, nutrient-dense food production. Local composting operations also promote community stewardship and sovereignty over local food systems, encouraging a deeper connection to the land and food we eat. Finished compost from community composters is widely used to support food-growing efforts in local communities. For example, almost 100% of compost sold by Happy Trash Can (Bozeman, Montana) is used on farms and in home and community gardens. In Georgia, finished compost from the Avondale Estates’ curbside pilot is distributed to DeKalb County growers by Food Well Alliance and local library gardens to support edible landscapes by Roots Down. In

New York City, finished compost from Compost Power's program is used in public housing resident community gardens and Eco-Hub urban farms. Community composters also help rescue edible food for community members to eat, which is the preferable way to manage excess edible food.<sup>47</sup> At farmers' market drop-off spots, LA Compost assists with capturing edible food for community kitchens. SEEDS (Traverse City, Michigan) distributes compost to City-authorized projects, including community donation gardens for community members to grow fresh produce to share with those in need. Bennett Compost's partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Prisons includes compost use in the Department's orchards and greenhouses, which grow produce for its cafeterias and donations to area food banks.

*"[Green City Force] does the farming and Compost Power does the composting. We use these two programs to train young adults and feed residents."*

Domingo Morales, CEO, Founder,  
Compost Power, New York City



Growing food at Arizona Worm Farm in Phoenix  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance

## Strengthening Local Economies and Fostering Community Wealth-Building

Municipalities and counties that support local businesses and operations stimulate local economic growth by creating new jobs, promoting enterprise and workforce development, and fostering business innovation. When centralized disposal operations and industrial composting facilities are developed away from the areas they serve, potential jobs and investments that could have been made within the community are lost, draining resources and potential wealth. Large waste management companies profit from disposal activities but often fail to reinvest those funds back into the communities from which the resources are extracted.<sup>48</sup> Partnering with and supporting small businesses, nonprofits, and farmers maintains local jobs and keeps profits within the community.

### → Local composters support local workforce development and job training.

Community-centered composting operations help strengthen the local job market through workforce development and job training. Workforce development is a common offering for community composters, often focusing on programs and opportunities for youth and individuals from underserved communities. Creating spaces for BIPOC and disadvantaged youth in particular provides opportunities for applied learning and practical training. Groundwork RI, for example, hires youth primarily from federally recognized disadvantaged communities. Training for community members also sets community composters apart from other businesses; more than 40% of the 2022 Census survey participants offered free training to community members.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Compost Power trains and hires residents from New York City's public housing communities; Radix Ecological Sustainability Center has a high school youth employment program in Albany, New York; and Rid-All in Cleveland has a workforce development and training program for green jobs. Composting also presents opportunities for green re-entry programs, allowing returning citizens to develop skills, gain hands-on training, and contribute to communities impacted by high rates of incarceration and environmental hazards. Bennett Compost works with the Philadelphia Department of Prisons to conduct vocational training and workforce development programming for incarcerated individuals. Garden Time in Providence, Rhode Island, offers employment opportunities for previously incarcerated individuals, and graduates from Garden Time's program have had success beyond the program, including permanent positions with the organization.



→ **On a per-ton basis, local distributed composting creates more jobs than landfills or incinerators.**

On a per-ton basis, community composting creates six times as many jobs as incinerators and three times as many as landfills.<sup>50</sup> When looking solely at composting facilities, smaller facilities employ even more staff per ton than larger facilities.<sup>51</sup> The 2024 Mini-Census reveals that community composters are increasing the number of staff employed compared to previous years, and that the average full-time staff size for operations has grown. Local jobs benefit community members, strengthen the workforce, and stimulate economic development. Further, municipal contracts with local composters through PPPs help create jobs to provide food scraps collection and composting in those communities.

→ **Investing in community operations promotes the development of local infrastructure and fosters a circular economy.**

Local operators have built the foundation for a circular economy through diverse and distributed infrastructure. For example, Radix Ecological Sustainability Center (Albany, New York) delivers food from its farm community-supported agriculture (CSA) to clients who also subscribe to food scraps collection. Delivery is done with an electric tricycle. Supporting initiatives such as these will strengthen local infrastructure and encourage greater community self-reliance. Composting closes the loop on wasted food by returning nutrients to the soil and food to the community. By using compost in the same communities where food scraps are generated, composters create a circular system. Every case study program utilizes compost produced from operations in a local capacity, such as use at urban farms and community gardens, sharing with community members, use on municipal land and parks, and use in backyard gardens. High-quality, finished compost improves the biological, chemical, and physical characteristics of soil.<sup>52</sup> Using compost helps retain soil moisture and suppresses plant diseases, weeds, and pests.<sup>53</sup> Healthier soils provide more opportunities for local food production.

→ **On-farm composting supports farm and garden prosperity and local food systems resilience.**

Composting on farms, in urban and rural settings, and in gardens helps farmers, gardeners, and local businesses save on material management costs. Using compost reduces the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and on-farm



Windrow at One Straw Farm in Maryland  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance

composting may also provide additional sources of income for farms through tipping fees and compost sales. Benefits to soil health lead to higher crop yields and higher-quality crops, which increase food security and support farm profitability.<sup>54</sup> Many community composting operations are sited on farms (rural and urban) and community gardens, such as Ocean Compost (Ocean City, Maryland) and Table to Farm (Durango, Colorado). Rid-All (Cleveland) is an urban agricultural center and community education hub partnering with Rust Belt Riders and the City. Some community composters, such as LA Compost (Los Angeles) and Radix (Albany, New York), run their own urban farms or gardens where compost produced is used to grow food for the community.

→ **Supporting community composters benefits a wide range of organizations and business types.**

Community composters represent a variety of business entities and sizes. The 2022 Census survey showed that over 50% identify as LLCs, almost a quarter as 501(c)3 nonprofits, and over 15% as businesses or social enterprises; other types of organizations include worker-owned cooperatives and B-corporations.<sup>55</sup> Creating a variety of local businesses and organizations contributes to local economic growth and resilience.



## Accessing Public Funds and Leveraging the Local Advantage

Partnering with local composters can help municipalities access public funding, enhance the credibility of new programs, and strengthen existing community relationships.

➔ **Partnering with nonprofits and local businesses often qualifies local governments for public funding and strengthens funding applications.**

Municipal governments are sometimes ineligible for state and federal grants unless they partner with nonprofit organizations. By collaborating with community-centered organizations, local governments can tap into new funding sources while supporting community development. The credibility of the organization's community work, along with the host of community services and co-benefits that these organizations bring, strengthens grant applications for municipal governments. Partnering on funding proposals can increase the likelihood of securing funding.

*“We are supporting a local nonprofit and keeping the work — and job creation — local. Grant funding enables more pilot-scale programs to expand. In our case, having community-based organizations makes it possible for the City to collaborate on grant applications.”*

James Roska, Environmental Engineer,  
Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment Solid  
Resources Support Services Division

*“The City would not be able to afford, given budget constraints, initiating and managing its own food scraps collection program. Therefore, the City's ability to apply for grant funds that can be passed through to existing service providers has made access to food scraps diversion more available for City residents.”*

Kevin Proft, Deputy Director,  
City of Providence Office of Sustainability



Pumpkins and food scraps ready for composting in Fort Collins, CO  
Credit: Compost Queen PBC



→ **Partnering with local community operations gives government programs credibility.**

Community-oriented local composters have been working with their communities, often before local government food scrap composting initiatives, and have built credible reputations. In many cities and regions, community composters have played a leading role in pioneering the composting of food scraps. Community composters bring valuable expertise and experience to these programs, gained from their hands-on work in the field. By working directly in the community, often through multidimensional efforts, community composters and nonprofits have built relationships and trust with community members. Municipal programming can increase its chances of success by working with local partners that have built community collaboration into their mission.

*“Our partnership with CompostNow has been successful. They are pros and were very efficient in getting the program up and operating smoothly. This speaks to partnering with an existing service provider that has learned what it takes to make this type of service successful.”*

Shannon Powell, Assistant City Manager,  
City of Avondale Estates

*“[Partnerships with established community-based organizations] gave the City credibility when it initiated its food scraps collection and composting programs. These groups are recognized for their environmental advocacy and community-focused initiatives. They were doing the work many years before our program started, at a time when there wasn’t a lot of support and funding available for food waste diversion projects. They carved out a space that the City could tap into and support financially for their services.”*

Sonny Von Tiedemann,  
Recycling & Composting Coordinator,  
City of Albany

*“LASAN has leaned very heavily on LA Compost to do outreach and education at the markets, and it has been very effective . . . One of the benefits of working with a community partner is that they have an existing and expanding rapport in the communities they are servicing. The City goes to community events and neighborhood council meetings, but LA Compost has its own relationships with community members.”*

James Roska, Environmental Engineer,  
Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment  
Solid Resources Support Services Division

→ **Local community operations strengthen the social fabric of communities.**

Local composting fosters community through engagement in volunteerism, education and outreach, get-togethers, school programming, and hands-on learning opportunities. The average number of volunteers continues to grow; in 2024, 70% of community composters responding to the Mini-Census survey engaged volunteers, compared to 60% in 2023. Initiatives such as Philadelphia’s Community Compost Network and Washington, D.C.’s Community Compost Cooperative Network demonstrate how volunteerism brings the community together around sustainability and community connection. Through its “Magic Soil Bus,” a mobile learning initiative that provides a dynamic, hands-on classroom on wheels, LA Compost (Los Angeles) offers an immersive educational experience that travels to schools, community centers, and public events across the city.<sup>56</sup> In Albany, New York, the City partners with Radix Ecological Sustainability Center to deliver compost education both at the organization’s site and in local schools. Radix’s Youth Employment Program, which engages and trains high school students, offers hands-on learning opportunities.<sup>57</sup>

# How to Keep Compost Local

This section of the report highlights the various ways in which municipalities and counties can promote composting, particularly at the local level. Local governments can establish their own programs or collaborate with local providers to expand their efforts. Additionally, they can bolster existing operations through supportive policies and regulatory frameworks. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are a central theme within this guidance. Effective policies, contracting, procurement services, and access to land all play crucial roles in advancing composting initiatives. Implementing any of the recommendations listed here represents a positive step forward.



## How to Get Started: Twelve Steps for Government to Advance Local Composting

- 1 Adopt a framework to prioritize food waste prevention and composting strategies that maximize the social, economic, and environmental benefits to the local community:** How food waste prevention, rescue, and composting programs are designed and implemented matters. Prioritize locally based solutions over large-scale regional options. Favor local nonprofits, community organizations, worker-owned cooperatives, mission-driven social benefit enterprises, and the like over corporations with headquarters in faraway places.
  - See ILSR's [Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste & Grow Community](#)
- 2 Integrate local composting as a key strategy into formal government plans and roadmaps:** This creates opportunities for future development through funding, programs, and policies. Consider integration into master plans, solid waste management plans, climate action plans, sustainability plans, and food system resilience plans. Also tie composting to healthy soils, stormwater management, community gardening, environmental and outdoor education, parks and recreation, beneficial land use, economic development, and job creation.
  - See ILSR's [Composting and Climate Action Plans: A Guide for Local Solutions](#)
  - See [Planning for Compost: Leveraging BioResources for Resilient Communities and Economies](#) (People, Food and Land Foundation)



- 3 Enact favorable policies:** Review and amend existing legislation and ordinances and pass new rules and regulations to remove obstacles to and support the success of composting. Consider zoning, procurement, permit requirements, right-to-compost, and more. Legislation or ordinances requiring local composting can facilitate budget approvals for programs.

□ See [Policy Recommendations](#)

- 4 Identify, support, and partner with existing local entities:** Are food scrap collection and composting service providers already operating? Support rather than compete with these small businesses and mission-driven organizations. Assess shared goals and explore how one or more partnerships can align priorities.

□ See ILSR's [Composting for Community Map](#)

- 5 Get buy-in and feedback from the community:** Include stakeholders, community members, and elected officials throughout the process in order to uplift community voices and encourage buy-in. Stakeholder engagement is vital for the long-term success of programming.

□ See ILSR's [Composting and Climate Action Plans: A Guide for Local Solutions](#)

- 6 Ensure equitable access and distribution of services:** Design programs to maximize inclusion and equity. Consider not only who has access to collection services but also who benefits from your financial investment. Do programs offer households options to participate without charge? Do multi-family households have access? Are outreach and education materials available in multiple languages?

□ See [How to Keep Compost Local: Equitable Access and Distribution of Services](#)

- 7 Determine programmatic elements:** Explore home composting, curbside collection, and drop-off sites. Address which materials to accept, keeping a laser focus on producing high-quality compost with minimal contamination. Tailor programs to the needs of your community. Pursue public-private partnerships where these make sense, and harness procurement and contracting ability to provide financial stability to partners. Learn from successful models and adapt the best features of the best programs.

□ See [Table 2. Case Study Partnership Elements](#)

□ See the [BioCycle Nationwide Survey: Residential Food Waste Collection Access In the U.S.](#)

- 8 Fund and finance program(s):** Build composting program costs directly into budgets and seek to secure multi-year funding. Contracting directly with partners provides them with financial stability, especially if contracts cover multiple years and have renewal options. Apply for local, state, and federal grants and support partners in doing the same.

□ See [How to Keep Compost Local: Financing](#)

- 9 Identify land for composting and provide access:** Do you have available or underutilized land and properties? Could that land be used for local composting? Access to land is an obstacle to local composting that local governments can address.

□ See [How to Keep Compost Local: Land Access](#)

- 10 Conduct a pilot program:** Pilots offer an entry point for composting programs. Pilots provide the opportunity to test specific project elements, gather stakeholder input, and incorporate lessons learned. Successful pilots can transform into long-term municipal programs.

□ See [case study on Washington, D.C.: From Farmers' Markets to Curbside Collection](#)

- 11 Educate and provide outreach:** Develop and launch a strong outreach and innovative marketing campaign to increase program participation. Provide culturally relevant resources in multiple languages, and be sure to address how to participate properly and avoid contamination. Partner with organizations that specialize in outreach and education, have relationships with schools, or have experience with social marketing. Offer training opportunities like a master composting course, which provides community members with the opportunity to support home composters and community composting sites.

□ See [How to Keep Compost Local: Education and Outreach](#)

□ See [EPA's Composting Food Scraps in Your Community: A Social Marketing Toolkit](#)

- 12 Measure, evaluate, and improve:** Once a program is established, take steps to expand the reach and impact as appropriate to the community. Evaluate the program to determine the effectiveness of current approaches, where improvements can be made, and how the program can scale up. Consider not only waste reduction and program participation but also social, environmental, and economic development factors.

□ See [case study on New York, New York: Public Housing Project Creates Jobs, Supports Gardens, and Reduces Rat Problems](#)



Skid-steer turned windrow at Cypress Compost Company in Fresno, CA  
Credit: Roe Ortega III





## Public Entities with Composting Partnerships

Cities can look beyond their solid waste management agencies to multiple other departments and entities to advance local composting. Composting can be integrated into any agency that generates wasted food or has the ability to use soil amendments.

- Convention Center
- County Commissioners Office
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Education
- Department of Prisons / Correction and Rehabilitation
- Department of Public Services
- Housing Authority Sustainability Department
- Office of Climate Action and Innovation
- Office of Sustainability
- Office of Waste Diversion
- Parks and Recreation Department
- Public Works Department
- Sanitation and Environment Department
- Solid Resources Support Services Division



## Titles of Public Staff Who Lead Composting Projects

- Assistant City Manager
- Associate Urban Designer
- Communications Manager
- Community Garden Specialist
- Deputy Chief of Staff
- Director of Sales
- Director of Sustainability & Climate Justice
- Environmental Engineer
- Environmental and Sustainability Manager
- Programs and Policy Advisor
- Recycling and Compost Coordinator
- Sustainability Coordinator or Manager
- Urban Agriculture Director
- Urban Greening Coordinator

## Public-Private Partnerships

Community composters' pioneering efforts to collect and compost food scraps create the foundation for municipal governments to build upon. In each of the 15 case studies covering PPPs, the existing community composter was the key to making residential and commercial food scrap collection and composting — whether as a pilot or a program expansion — a reality.

Further, community composters — in order to succeed — have worked through barriers and challenges, from optimizing equipment and collection route density to behavior change, accessing land for composting, and minimizing contamination. Municipalities are finding that tapping into this experience and infrastructure, rather than starting from scratch, gives them a significant leg up in food scraps collection.

Table 2: Case Study Partnership Elements details the key partnership components and support mechanisms between local government and community composters in the case studies with PPPs.

**Table 2. Case Study Partnership Elements**

| City                        | Case Study Partnership Elements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Albany, NY</b>           | The City partners with Radix and Tivoli to provide drop-off locations and processing sites for residential food scraps. The City also partnered with Radix and FoodScraps360 to promote its existing fee-for-service curbside collection offering. The City contracts with FoodScraps360 for food waste collection at events, and contracts with Tivoli and Radix to host a food scraps collection and processing site for the City. Tivoli is on land owned by the City, and the City provides wood chips to Radix and Tivoli for composting. The City also contracts Radix for consulting services, primarily around compost education.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Avondale Estates, GA</b> | The City partners with CompostNow to pilot free weekly curbside food scraps collection for 750 city households for 12 months. CompostNow hauls the food scraps it collects to its facility for composting. Finished compost is distributed to growers by Food Well Alliance, and to local library gardens to support edible landscapes by Roots Down. The City and County Commissioners' office conducted initial outreach and education; CompostNow conducted stewardship and customer service for participants.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Bozeman, MT</b>          | The City of Bozeman provides Happy Trash Can with the use of their land to host its food scraps composting facility. The original arrangement was a barter with Happy Trash Can composting yard trimmings collected by the City. For the City's new grant-funded program to establish food scraps curbside collection for residents, Happy Trash Can does the composting of the collected food scraps and yard trimmings. The new contract term is for three years, with the ability to mutually extend it for one-year intervals up to five years. The City pays Happy Trash Can \$25 per cubic yard of finished compost processed from their program feedstocks; the City retains 20% of the finished compost, and Happy Trash Can can sell or use the remaining 80%. Organics diversion is in the City's climate action plan. The Bozeman City Commission gave a directive to the solid waste office to start a weekly residential organics collection service.                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Cleveland, OH</b>        | The City partnered with Rust Belt Riders to establish eight new residential food scraps drop-off sites with CFWR grant funds. The grant also covers 250 free memberships for SNAP-eligible residents. Rust Belt Riders also partners with Cleveland Metroparks to provide food scraps drop-off locations in 32 city parks (non-contractual partnership). Both the City and Rust Belt Riders conduct education programs, including Rid-All's involvement in workforce development. In March 2025, the City entered into a ground lease with Rust Belt Riders for the use and occupancy of the City's unused property (authorized by the City Council). In August 2025, the City Council authorized the City to sell the parcel to Rust Belt Riders for fair market value, less environmental-related costs. The City is providing \$50,000 toward capital costs for the new facility. The City partnered with Rust Belt Riders in 2022 for a pilot to establish food scraps program for the City-owned West Side Market (under a sole-source contract). Rid-All composted the collected food scraps for this pilot. |
| <b>Durango, CO</b>          | Table to Farm has a five-year PPP with the City to offer citywide, subscription-based curbside food scraps collection for residents and businesses. The PPP does not exclude other entities from also offering food scraps collection. There is no funding attached to the partnership, and customers pay subscriptions directly to Table to Farm. The City helps share information about the collection service with various outreach methods. Table to Farm has a separate contract to collect bagged leaves for the City "on demand" in the fall. The City passed a resolution to research organic waste management ordinances in other communities, conduct pilot organic waste management programs, and form an organic waste management citizen focus group. A grant was awarded to Table to Farm in partnership with the City to also conduct a Curbside Compost Market Study.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Greenbelt, MD</b>        | The City's collaboration with the City's Green Team over the years laid the groundwork for a PPP. The City's Green Team, with assistance from the Department of Public Works, received a grant to build a 3-bin hot composting system for food scraps drop-off, along with a shed to store equipment. For many years, the City offered home composting bins at wholesale prices. The City partnered with Compost Crew to set up a food scraps drop-off site, which Compost Crew continues to service. The City used a USDA CFWR grant to partner with Compost Crew for a curbside food scraps collection pilot for 410 households and to set up a small composting system in the city, where Compost Crew composts the collected food scraps. The City provides wood chips and leaves. The curbside collection and composting program has been approved to continue after the grant-funded pilot ended, and the subscription fee is partially funded by the City. Compost Crew provided the City with educational materials to distribute. The City, with assistance from the Green Team, promoted the program.    |
| <b>Hoboken, NJ</b>          | The City contracts Community Compost Co. to collect and haul residential and commercial food scraps from the City's 14 drop-off sites and door-to-door curbside collection routes. Community Compost Co. provides the City with five cubic yards per year of bulk finished compost at no charge. The City also provides an operations space and truck parking. The City also actively promotes the composting program. The City published a Zero Waste Plan, which includes organics recycling.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Los Angeles, CA</b>      | The City's solid waste bureau and LA Compost applied for and received two USDA grants. The grants, along with City funding, paid for the expansion of LA Compost's farmers' market drop-off sites and establishment of composting hubs. LA Compost also helped the City distribute kitchen pails for its residential curbside collection program. The City's Parks department grants LA Compost "Right of Entry" for access to space at public parks for its regional composting hubs. Both LA Compost and the City conduct outreach and education.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |



|                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>New York, NY</b>                    | The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) received two grants to fund organics recycling, both of which included PPPs with Green City Force and Compost Power. Green City Force created and manages six urban farms, and Compost Power conducts the composting, food scraps collection, and outreach and education. NYCHA land is utilized for community gardens, urban farms, and composting systems. The agreement is essentially a barter — use of the land in exchange for the services Green City Force and Compost Power provide. A portion of the leaves that come down during the fall at the composting sites is used for composting. Finished compost is used in the resident community gardens and the program's urban farms, and a portion is used on the grounds. NYCHA published a Sustainability Agenda that includes the collection and processing of organics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Norman, OK</b>                      | The City contracts with Fertile Ground to collect food scraps from its municipal buildings. The City procures compost from Fertile Ground to top-dress lawns with compost as a part of its Blue Neighborhood program to protect the watershed. Fertile Ground applies the compost for the project. Fertile Ground is a sub-awardee for a USDA grant, which includes piloting three drop-off sites in Norman. The City of Norman includes food scraps and yard trimmings recycling in its climate protection plan. The City's Parks & Recreation Department granted Fertile Ground approval to conduct composting activities at its warehouse.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Ocean City, MD</b>                  | The Town pays Ocean Compost a per-ton fee for the collection of food scraps from local restaurants. The Town pays the same per-ton fee it pays to tip its waste at the incinerator. Go Green OC and Ocean Compost also provide food scraps collection at the Ocean City Convention Center and organics and recycling services for special events. The Town receives back some of the finished compost for use in its landscaping. Go Green OC and Ocean Compost conduct the outreach, education, and training. They partner with the Convention Center for event promotion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Philadelphia, PA</b>                | Bennett Compost has a long-term contract to locate its composting operation at a Parks and Recreation Department (Parks & Rec) facility. In exchange, Bennett Compost collects and composts food scraps collected from Parks & Rec youth programs and from older adult centers. Bennett Compost assisted Parks & Rec in applying for a small-scale food scraps composting permit for the site. Half of the capital improvements to the site were covered by an EPA grant to Parks & Rec. Wood chips and bedding from the Philadelphia Zoo are used for composting. Bennett Compost also has a contract with the Philadelphia Department of Prisons (PDP) to collect and compost food scraps from its prison complex, staffs and manages the prison's orchard and greenhouses, and runs vocational training programs. Bennett Compost assisted PDP with its application for a permit that enables PDP to accept residential food scraps from surrounding neighborhoods. Bennett Compost is assisting with outreach and engagement with residents.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Philadelphia (Farm Philly/ CCN)</b> | Philadelphia's Community Compost Network (CCN) is a partnership between the City's Office of Sustainability and the Department of Parks and Recreation under its Farm Philly program. The 3-bin systems are sited at a mix of community gardens, farms, and schools — where residents are invited to compost their food scraps and yard trimmings. Farm Philly collaborates with PowerCorpsPHL, a youth workforce development initiative, to construct the composting bins and ILSR for support with program design and composting education materials and training. Farm Philly now partners with Bennett Compost for hands-on training.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Providence, RI</b>                  | The City is distributing funds received from an EPA SWIFR grant and a USDA CFWR grant to local composters Harvest Cycle (Groundwork RI) and Community Compost Depot to expand capacity for local composting in the city. Harvest Cycle (part of Groundwork RI) services 15 out of the 18 drop-off sites currently operating in the city. They currently process 10-15% of the food scraps collected themselves. Funds from the City's SWIFR grant are being used to build a new composting site to handle a larger capacity of food scraps. Harvest Cycle is using CFWR grant funds to open six new food scraps drop-off sites and rebuild some of the 3-bin composting systems currently in use. Community Compost Depot is also using CFWR funds for distributed food scraps drop-off and composting. Grant funds provided to Zero Waste Providence are being used to conduct the outreach and education for the programs. Zero Waste Providence is primarily partnering with Garden Time, Inc. for outreach and education tasks, hiring graduates of Garden Time's Green Reentry program to connect with hundreds of households in underserved neighborhoods. Collaborating more closely with the City helped Harvest Cycle navigate zoning requirements for its new composting facility. |
| <b>Traverse City, MI</b>               | The City contracts with Carter's Compost to offer food scraps collection. In exchange, Carter's Compost can bring collected food scraps to the City's site. Carter's Compost tips food scraps from its collection routes into the vessel, adds wood chips, and oversees the operation of the unit. The City contracts with SEEDS to support project management and reporting, conduct education and outreach, perform maintenance of the composting unit, conduct training, and cure and distribute compost. Maintenance and operational tasks are split among the three partners. SEEDS assisted the City in the grant application. The City provides a regular supply of wood chips for mixing with food scraps.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Washington, D.C. (DPW)</b>          | The District has a contract with Compost Crew to provide collection for the District's residential curbside food scraps collection program (which started out as a pilot program). The District contracts with Compost Cab to collect food scraps dropped off at the District's "smart bin" locations. Compost Cab also has a contract with the District to operate 12 free food scraps drop-off events at farmers' markets and community sites. The City Council passed several acts over the years to provide some guarantee of infrastructure permanence for food scraps diversion, including the Compost Drop-Off Program Act and the Home Composting Incentives Amendment Act.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 2026.

## Cost

Program costs can range from no-cost and low-cost investments to significant financial allocations. Program size, number of constituents served, partnership model, and program elements all impact costs. For PPPs, costs can hinge on a variety of factors, such as the existence and amount of collection service fees, total amount diverted, tipping fees at compost and disposal sites, or the amount of finished compost sold. One-time setup fees may be a consideration.

Depending on which services are conducted by the municipality versus contracted out to local composters, common expenses include capital investments, equipment, staff time, outreach and education, maintenance, supplies, materials, land use, and site preparation. In-kind contributions are another way to offer support and partnership without incurring new material costs. Local governments may cap the total spending amounts to ensure compliance with budgetary limits. For example, Ocean City, Maryland, pays Ocean Compost \$90 per ton for the collection and composting of food scraps, with a cap on the number of tons covered.

Several case studies include multiple projects with separate expenses. Of the 21 projects for which we have cost data, five projects cost less than \$100,000, 11 projects cost between \$100,000 and \$400,000, two projects cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million, and three projects cost more than \$1 million. Program length and number of constituents served vary. Some of these projects include scopes beyond just composting or wasted food diversion programs. For Avondale Estates, Georgia (population 3,526), partner CompostNow estimates that curbside collection for the entire city would cost about \$100 per household per year. In Durango, Colorado (population 19,811), partner Table to Farm estimates achieving citywide composting would cost approximately \$500,000 annually.

Table 3: Government Project Costs outlines the cost and investment details for government composting projects. (Providence's EPA grant includes recycling project expenses as well.) Project costs are the total costs allocated to the specific city project. The investment description summarizes what the total project cost covers.



Shredding trimmings at a community garden in a Chicago neighborhood  
Credit: Teegen Compost Services



### Tips for Replication: Cost

- Identify pathways to continue the usage of composting equipment that has been purchased using grant funds (such as pilot program expenditures). For example, Greenbelt (Maryland) passed through grant funds to a local composter to build an aerated static pile operation within the city limits. The local composter is continuing to use the site for a post-pilot food scraps collection program.
- Be as innovative as possible once access to funding is received. Achieve a proof point of success early in the program.
- Make food waste collection as convenient and easy to participate in as trash services. If trash collection is free, for example, food waste collection should also be free.
- Establish the expectation of paying for the food scraps collection service during the pilot to facilitate charging households a fee when a full-scale program is implemented. Compost Crew's experience is that if residents pay nothing or very little for food scraps collection during a pilot, and then their option is to pay the list rate for a company like theirs (at \$32 per month) when the pilot ends, the attrition rate will likely be high. If households are asked to pay a portion of the cost during the pilot — with the remainder provided by the grant funds or the municipality — they are more likely to continue with the service. The company has found that for many people, an investment under \$10 per month is a reasonable amount for the service they are getting.



**Table 3. Government Project Costs**

| City/Government Program                    | Project Cost            | Funding Source       | Investment Description and Cost Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Norman, OK</b>                          | \$6,979 <sup>[1]</sup>  | Municipal budget     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fertile Ground fee to Norman to collect food scraps from Norman's municipal complex is \$189 per month, plus a one-time set-up fee of \$175. The initial duration of the agreement was 36 months (renewed automatically for another 36 months).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Ocean City, MD</b>                      | \$22,500 <sup>[2]</sup> | Municipal budget     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pays Ocean Compost \$90 per ton fee for collection and composting of food scraps from restaurants (capped at 250 tons per year)</li> <li>\$22,500 max amount per year paid by Town for services based on per ton fee and capped year tonnage</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Philadelphia, PA (Dept. of Prisons)</b> | \$35,000                | Municipal budget     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pays Bennett Compost to continue food scraps collection from correctional buildings in its complex and composting on-site</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Los Angeles, CA</b>                     | \$85,800                | USDA CFWR grant      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand LA Compost's existing farmers' market drop-off sites from 2 locations to 5 total</li> <li>Funded the construction of a regional Compost Hub in Griffith Park (operated by LA Compost), where food scraps from farmers' markets are composted</li> <li>Funds supported the development of one additional Regional Compost Hub</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Philadelphia, PA (Dept. of Prisons)</b> | \$91,000                | Municipal budget     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintenance of the PDP composting site</li> <li>Transport food scraps from the corrections building to the composting facility</li> <li>Work with both staff and incarcerated persons to assist in performing composting services</li> <li>Provide instruction to those involved in the program</li> <li>Assist PDP in identifying food scraps drop-off sites in the surrounding neighborhood</li> <li>Transport food scraps to the complex for composting</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>New York, NY</b>                        | \$195,000               | New York State grant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds a 2-year pilot program for Compost Power to collect and process food scraps at 2 NYCHA developments, serving more than 8,000 residents</li> <li>Covered Compost Power staff time for collection and composting</li> <li>Pilot new model for 3-bin composting system not located at campus urban farms</li> <li>Expanded drop-off schedule from three-hour staffed windows weekly to 24 hours, 7 days a week (staffed during some times).</li> <li>Training of five young adults on how to build a 3-bin system using hand and power tools</li> <li>Program monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>Education and outreach by Compost Power (including over 2,800 resident interactions).</li> <li>\$11,000 for materials for the 3-bin system, including pavers and mesh for rodent proofing and totes for food scraps collection</li> </ul> |
| <b>Albany, NY</b>                          | \$200,000               | New York State grant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procure services for (1) food waste collection at events; (2) curbside food scraps collection; (3) hosting a designated food scraps collection site; and (4) hosting a designated food scraps collection and processing site</li> <li>Procure 10 "smart bins" for food scraps drop-off</li> <li>Cover costs of compost "technicians" to help backyard composters</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|                             |           |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Albany, NY</b>           | \$225,000 | New York State grant                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership to provide drop-off locations for residential food scraps collection</li> <li>City promotes existing fee-for-service curbside collection</li> <li>Establishes a backyard composting program, including free at-home composting materials (“Earth Machines” backyard composting bins, kitchen countertop bins, access to free wood chips, educational brochure)</li> <li>Pays for signage at drop-off sites and other outreach and educational materials</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Greenbelt, MD</b>        | \$266,753 | USDA CFWR grant                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curbside food scraps collection pilot for 18 months (households added in phases until reached 410)</li> <li>Set up a small composting system (Compost Outpost, including ASP container system, 25-foot by 20-foot concrete pad). Compost Outpost ASP container system was approximately \$25,000 (two 20-foot shipping containers equipped with wood floors and forced aeration system)</li> <li>Composting of food scraps collected through pilot</li> <li>Education and updates for participants from Compost Crew</li> <li>City outreach and promotion (with assistance from the Green Team), including social media, tabling at events, and news articles</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Providence, RI</b>       | \$285,850 | USDA CFWR grant (including local cash match)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds granted to six service providers to increase food scraps diversion from residents, schools, and businesses</li> <li>\$28,919 to Harvest Cycle (Groundwork RI) paying for six new food scraps drop-off sites (including identifying sites) as well as rebuilding some of the 3-bin composting systems currently in use</li> <li>\$19,881 to the Community Compost Depot used for distributed food scraps drop-off and composting</li> <li>\$84,540 to Zero Waste Providence used to educate and engage the community on the benefits of composting and waste reduction. Activities include outreach at community events, farmers’ markets, local libraries, and recreation centers, as well as door-to-door outreach and resident training</li> <li>Collective \$45,000 worth of City staff time to administer both this CFWR grant and the SWIFR grant</li> </ul> |
| <b>Traverse City, MI</b>    | \$323,428 | USDA CFWR grant (plus 27% city in-kind match) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchasing and hosting a 20-yard in-vessel composter, about the same size and shape as a shipping container and be able to annually process about 100 tons of food waste</li> <li>City providing and supplying sufficient “brown matter” in the form of woodchips</li> <li>Partnering with SEEDS Ecology &amp; Education Centers to support City staff capacity to manage, monitor, and train others as requested in the processing systems. Also to facilitate the distribution of the processed product to City-authorized end-users. Finally, to support the development and implementation of related outreach and information campaigns</li> <li>Partnering with Carter’s Compost to supply the food waste material from residents and/or businesses</li> </ul>                                                                                                    |
| <b>Avondale Estates, GA</b> | \$323,800 | USDA CFWR grant                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with community composter to pilot free, weekly curbside food scraps collection over 12 months</li> <li>Outreach and education prior to and during the launch, including door-to-door marketing, tabling at farmers’ markets, two mailings, social media, newsletter articles, and several open houses at apartment complexes</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



|                                                |             |                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cleveland, OH</b>                           | \$340,961   | USDA CFWR grant                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-year grant establishing 8 new residential food scraps drop-off sites</li> <li>• 250 free drop-off site memberships for SNAP-eligible households (normally \$12/month per membership)</li> <li>• Expands City's existing educational composting training programs, including a public awareness campaign and a green job training program at Rid-All</li> <li>• Establishes Community Compost Ambassadors program; training for Ambassadors; \$1,400 annual stipend for each Ambassador (17 total)</li> <li>• Data tracking and engagement evaluation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Oklahoma City, OK (ACOG)</b>                | \$366,000   | USDA CFWR grant to Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG); subaward to Fertile Ground Cooperative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish 20 residential food scraps drop-off sites (including 3 in Norman)</li> <li>• Service/collect food scraps from 20 residential food scraps drop-off sites for two years</li> <li>• Promote and market the program to households</li> <li>• Upgrade Fertile Ground food scraps composting facility (in Oklahoma City)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>New York, NY</b>                            | \$398,904   | USDA CFWR grant                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds on infrastructure and outreach and education from New York State grant</li> <li>• Continues expansion of access to food scraps drop-off to estimated 11,400 NYCHA residents</li> <li>• Provides additional NYCHA community gardeners and urban farmers with finished compost and technical assistance</li> <li>• Four new satellite food scraps collection points set up by Compost Power</li> <li>• Procure leaf mulching equipment and wood chipper to improve processing of landscape materials</li> <li>• Funds a new position, Compost Power Compost Liaison, who will coordinate the distribution of finished compost to NYCHA grounds, community gardens, and urban farms.</li> <li>• Funds research on the effects of compost and leaf mulching on soil fertility and stormwater management</li> <li>• Outreach and education from Compost Power</li> </ul> |
| <b>Los Angeles, CA</b>                         | \$400,000   | USDA CFWR grant                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the existing 15 farmer's markets drop-off locations</li> <li>• Adds 5 new farmers' markets drop-off locations</li> <li>• Establishes an additional Regional Compost Hub</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Washington, D.C. DPW (Drop-off program)</b> | \$613,000   | Municipal budget                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Servicing 31 drop-off "smart bins" at least twice a week for one year</li> <li>• Operation of 12 food scraps drop-off events at farmers' markets and community sites</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Los Angeles, CA</b>                         | \$904,200   | City's board of public works                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund an additional 10 farmers' market locations</li> <li>• Fund an additional 3 Regional Compost Hubs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Bozeman, MT</b>                             | \$1,605,660 | US EPA SWIFR grant                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covers the capital costs for the City to establish residential curbside food scraps collection infrastructure. Includes \$900,000 for two automated side-loader collection vehicles (\$450,000 per truck), \$500,000 for 8,000 collection carts, and \$5,500 for larger-sized front-end loader bucket (with freight).</li> <li>• Pays for kitchen countertop bins and compostable liner bags</li> <li>• Pays for the composting of food scraps and yard trimmings by Happy Trash Can. The City pays Happy Trash Can \$25 per cubic yard of finished compost produced through processing. The City retains 20% of the compost for use in its parks and open spaces</li> <li>• Outreach and education for City's curbside program, including media interviews, social media, direct household mailers, and flyers</li> </ul>                                                 |

|                                                                 |                    |                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Providence, RI</b>                                           | \$3,348,186        | US EPA SWIFR grant                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and enhance the City's municipal recycling collection and support infrastructure expansions for food scraps diversion</li> <li>\$204,000 to Groundwork RI are for Groundwork RI's new composting facility, the West End Compost Hub. Funds will be used mostly for site work, utilities, and building foundations</li> <li>Collective \$45,000 worth of City staff time to administer both this SWIFR grant and the CFWR grant</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Washington, D.C. DPW (Curbside collection program)</b>       | \$4,270,000        | Municipal budget                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curbside collection one-year pilot program for 9,000 single-family households (free to residents); shifted from pilot to program but same number of households</li> <li>Includes 5-gallon screw-top collection bucket, countertop caddy, and supply of BPI-certified compostable bags for each participating household</li> <li>Includes education and outreach, including educational materials for participants</li> <li>Includes weekly collection for 9,000 households (about \$3.6 million of the total amount)</li> <li>Hauling and tipping the collected organics</li> <li>Provision of one 5-pound bag of compost to each participating household</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Philadelphia, PA (Parks &amp; Rec)</b>                       | N/A <sup>[3]</sup> | US EPA grant; USDA CFWR grant                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full-time employee who provides training and technical assistance at centers, including engagement around source separation and diversion of food scraps</li> <li>Capital improvements included \$55,000 for paving portions of the site and \$10,000 for moving the existing fencing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Philadelphia, PA (CCN)</b>                                   | N/A                | State budget, private funders, federal funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 sites in 2019, as well as a second cohort of nine sites in 2024. Currently expanding to an additional ten sites</li> <li>Each site is provided with the 3-bin composting system, educational materials, hands-on and virtual training, and tools and supplies</li> <li>Each 3-bin system costs: \$4,250 (\$1,500 in materials, \$750 for additional tools and equipment, and \$2,000 in labor to build and deliver to each site)</li> <li>\$6,000 per year to run the workshops and other related programs, and meetings</li> <li>Funds for one full-time staff position dedicated to running the program</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Washington, D.C. (Community Compost Cooperative Network)</b> | N/A                |                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>56 sites in the Community Compost Cooperative Network</li> <li>Training for each individual co-op volunteer member</li> <li>3-bin composting system at each site</li> <li>Recruitment of site managers</li> <li>Signage at each site explaining what it is and how to get involved</li> <li>Communications, such as listserv for site managers to communicate with each other</li> <li>Website on the program, including an interactive map to find a site</li> <li>Cost Details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each 3-bin system costs about \$1,200 for materials; some bins were constructed by a contractor for \$5,000 each</li> <li>\$25,000 paid for wood to build 20 of the 3-bin systems constructed by volunteers</li> <li>\$50 in materials to construct tumbler sifters</li> <li>Contractor to build tumbler sifters for \$500 each</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

<sup>[1]</sup> This figure was calculated by multiplying the monthly service fee by the program duration of 36 months, plus the one-time set-up fee.

Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 2026.

<sup>[2]</sup> This figure was calculated based on the spending cap set by the City.

<sup>[3]</sup> N/A equals not available.



Table 4: Example Project Budget details the budget for Traverse City, Michigan's U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting Food Waste and Reduction (CFWR) Cooperative Agreement grant. The budget is broken down into two parts: (1) the capital and operating expenses paid for by federal grant funds, and (2) the expenses contributed by the City's in-kind matching funds.

**Table 4. Example Project Budget**

| Expense Details for Traverse City, MI USDA CFWR Grant                              | Federal Funds               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Equipment (all-inclusive in-vessel system, S&H, installation, basic training)      | \$136,360                   |
| Supplies (including loading containers)                                            | \$4,800                     |
| Contracted site prep (concrete pad, electric, sorting table & shed)                | \$69,536                    |
| Contracted SEEDS services (coordination support, processing, monitoring, outreach) | \$39,700                    |
| Contracted evaluation consultant (LEAN-style process efficiency evaluation)        | \$5,000                     |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                       | <b>\$255,396</b>            |
| Expense Details for Traverse City, MI USDA CFWR Grant                              | City In-Kind Matching Funds |
| City personnel (including DPS, Engineering, and Communications staff)              | \$15,432                    |
| Site planning, permitting, and feeds                                               | \$4,000                     |
| Use of City equipment                                                              | \$9,000                     |
| Land lease (where in-vessel system is staged)                                      | \$21,600                    |
| Finished compost donated                                                           | \$18,000                    |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                       | <b>\$68,032</b>             |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                                                                 | <b>\$323,428</b>            |



SEEDS and Carter's Compost celebrate installation of in-vessel compost system in Traverse City, MI  
Credit: SEEDS



Painted in-vessel compost system in Traverse City, MI  
Credit: City of Traverse City

Subscription costs for collection vary by frequency, collection type, and amount collected. Table 5: Collection Subscription Costs includes the monthly fees associated with collection (both curbside and drop-off). All collection providers in this table are independent organizations except for the City of Bozeman, which offers the lowest collection fee of \$10 per month. Curbside collection ranges from \$10 to \$45 per month.

The price of finished compost also varies. Happy Trash Can in Bozeman, Montana, charges customers \$70 for one half of a cubic yard, \$80 for one cubic yard, \$3 per gallon, or \$60 for a 32-gallon cart. Bennett Compost in Philadelphia charges customers \$10 per 5-gallon bag of compost (packaged in a reusable sand bag).

**Table 5. Collection Subscription Costs**

| City                        | Collection Entity                      | Service Description | Subscription Costs                                                          | Details                                                 |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Albany, NY</b>           | Radix Ecological Sustainability Center | Curbside collection | \$20 per month for weekly service                                           |                                                         |
| <b>Albany, NY</b>           | FoodScraps360                          | Curbside collection | \$26 per month for one 5-gallon bin<br>\$30 per month for two 5-gallon bins |                                                         |
| <b>Avondale Estates, GA</b> | CompostNow                             | Curbside collection | \$29 per month                                                              |                                                         |
| <b>Bozeman, MT</b>          | City of Bozeman                        | Curbside collection | \$10 per month regardless of cart size                                      | Seasonal 8-month option available                       |
| <b>Cleveland, OH</b>        | Rust Belt Riders                       | Curbside collection | \$45 per month                                                              |                                                         |
| <b>Cleveland, OH</b>        | Rust Belt Riders                       | Drop-off            | \$12 per month                                                              |                                                         |
| <b>Durango, CO</b>          | Table to Farm                          | Curbside collection | \$28 per month for weekly service<br>\$18 per month for every other week    |                                                         |
| <b>Greenbelt, MD</b>        | Compost Crew                           | Curbside Collection | \$20 one-time delivery fee for collection bin<br>\$21.09 per month          | City pays \$11.09 monthly<br>Resident pays \$10 monthly |

Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 2026.



## Financing

Federal, state, and philanthropic grant funding help to establish municipal food scraps recycling programs serviced by local composters. To make these programs permanent, however, ongoing allocations in municipal budgets are necessary.

**Municipal budgets** that cover program expenses provide direct funding for program operations. Several PPPs are financed strictly with municipal funding, including Washington, D.C., Hoboken (New Jersey), Norman (Oklahoma), and the Philadelphia Department of Prisons. In each case, municipal funding is allocated in the annual budget. In several cases — Bozeman (Montana) and Greenbelt (Maryland) — grant funds were used to establish the program, and now the city councils allocate funding for the ongoing food scraps collection and composting services. The City of Albany, New York, utilized state grants to fund its backyard composting program and to contract with existing service providers to provide collection and composting. These programs are expected to remain in perpetuity after grant funds expire.

**Tipping fee savings** is a straightforward financing mechanism where funds can be allocated to pay for composting fees rather than disposal tipping fees. This model reallocates municipal funds that would be spent regardless. The Town of Ocean City, Maryland, sends its solid waste to an incinerator in Chester, Pennsylvania, where it pays a tipping fee of \$90 per ton. In 2021, the Town established an agreement with Ocean Compost to pilot the collection of food scraps from several restaurants and compost them at a nearby farm. The Town agreed to pay Ocean Compost the same per-ton fee it pays to tip its waste at the incinerator. Following the pilot, the agreement has been renewed annually; it is capped at a set tonnage of food scraps per year.

**Federal and state grant funding** is another financing option for composting programs. Public funding can sometimes be used for capital expenses and equipment to launch projects and pilots. A number of the PPPs analyzed for *Keep Compost Local* utilized federal grant funds from USDA's CFWR Cooperative Agreements. Two — Bozeman, Montana, and Providence, Rhode Island — received the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grants. The City of Bozeman utilized SWIFR grant funds to purchase organics collection trucks and curbside carts. Providence passed through funds it received to existing local composters and zero waste organizations.

## Funding Needs

More than half of community composters in the 2024 Mini-Census would request funds for equipment and supplies if they had the choice. The next most common funding needs identified were vehicles, land/sites, staff, and site improvements. The median amount of funding respondents would seek is ~\$135,000. Thirty-seven percent of respondents need funding between \$10,001 and \$100,000, and an additional 38% need funding between \$100,001 and \$500,000.

State agencies have funded several PPPs, including Albany, New York; Durango, Colorado; and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) (which also received a USDA CFWR grant). These grants cover program operations and the creation of local composting infrastructure. Look for grants with options to extend (as the City of Albany has, receiving two rounds of grant funding from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation).

**Philanthropic funding** from local foundations is another source for local composting. Rust Belt Riders received a \$750,000 loan at 3.5% interest from the Cleveland Foundation to help build its new food scraps composting facility. The City of Detroit received a \$100,000 grant from the Carhartt Foundation to conduct a one-year residential food scraps drop-off collection program serviced by local composters.

**Bartering** is a low- or no-cost tool that has proven effective for exchanging services. Municipalities can barter with community composters, essentially trading goods and services to achieve mutually beneficial goals. In August 2020, Bennett Compost — founded in Philadelphia in 2009 — signed a long-term contract with the City of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department (Parks & Rec) to locate its composting operation at an underutilized Parks & Rec maintenance facility in northeast Philadelphia. In exchange, Bennett Compost collects and composts food scraps from Parks & Rec youth after-school and summer programs, and older adult centers. The Department did not have the capacity to collect and compost food scraps from its recreation centers, nor did it have the funds to pay for collection. The barter arrangement between Bennett Compost and Philadelphia Parks & Rec provided Bennett with much-needed access to land. However, a second site, and any additional sites established, would be for processing under a paid, contractual agreement.

Table to Farm in Durango, Colorado, entered into a 5-year public-private partnership with the City of Durango to offer citywide, subscription-based curbside food scraps collection for residents and businesses. Participation is voluntary. No funding is attached to the partnership; however, the City of Durango helps publicize Table to Farm's collection service, for example, through signage on its trash and recycling collection vehicles.

**Municipal funding/cost-share programming** is a strategy for pooling resources from several parties, creating buy-in and shared responsibility. Splitting costs among municipalities, residents, and community composters can ease financial burdens for all parties while cultivating shared interests. After the federal funding for a 410-household curbside food scraps collection program ended in the summer of 2025, the Greenbelt, Maryland City Council approved a subsidy

for residents to continue participating for a fee that is split between the City and the households. Compost Crew, the local company that serviced the 18-month pilot, charged \$21.09 per month. The City will cover \$11.09 of that cost, and residents who continue to participate will pay \$10.00 per month.

Table 6: Funding Sources for Government Projects captures the various sources of funding for case study government projects. Departments and projects with separate funding streams are specified. Most projects have utilized multiple funding sources. Federal grants are the most common, followed by financing provided directly in city budgets. Subscription fees charged by community partners are not reflected in Table 6.

**Table 6. Funding Sources for Government Projects**

| City/Government Entity Project(s)                | Municipal Budget | State Budget | Federal Grant | State Grant | Private Funding | Enterprise Fund |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Albany, NY                                       |                  |              |               | ✓           |                 |                 |
| Avondale Estates, GA                             |                  |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| Bozeman, MT                                      |                  |              | ✓             |             |                 | ✓               |
| Cleveland, OH (Mayor's Office of Sustainability) |                  |              | ✓             |             | ✓               |                 |
| Durango, CO                                      | ✓                |              |               | ✓           |                 |                 |
| Greenbelt, MD                                    | ✓                |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| Los Angeles, CA                                  | ✓                |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| New York, NY                                     |                  |              | ✓             | ✓           |                 |                 |
| Norman, OK                                       | ✓                |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| Ocean City, MD                                   | ✓                |              |               |             |                 |                 |
| Philadelphia, PA (Dept. of Prisons)              | ✓                |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| Philadelphia, PA (Dept. of Parks & Rec.)         |                  |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| Philadelphia, PA (Farm Philly)                   | ✓                | ✓            | ✓             |             | ✓               |                 |
| Providence, RI                                   |                  |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| Traverse City, MI                                |                  |              | ✓             |             |                 |                 |
| Washington, D.C. (Dept. of Parks & Rec.)         | ✓                |              |               | ✓           | ✓               |                 |
| Washington, D.C. (Dept. of Public Works)         | ✓                |              |               |             |                 |                 |

Source: Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 2026.



## Tips for Replication: Financing



- Explore how fees for food scraps collection and composting via a public-private partnership can be incorporated into existing billing for solid waste services, such as a line item in a utility bill.
- Pay local composters a consulting fee for designing and implementing a pilot to gauge community interest in a food scraps collection program.
- Explore the various ways grant funds may be used, including to initiate a municipal pilot program, expand access to organics recycling services, e.g., building out a network of drop-off sites, and/or procuring composting equipment. During this period, work with elected officials and other decision makers towards having a permanent program with a budget line item to continue access year after year.

## Contracting

Contracts can be in the form of fairly simple service agreements or much more complex procurement of services (e.g., the DC Public Works Department contract for a one-year pilot serviced by Compost Crew is 52 pages, whereas Fertile Ground's service agreement with the City of Norman, Oklahoma, is six pages). The contracts describe the services to be provided and for what duration, and include the agreed-upon fee to be paid to the local composter. Multiple-year contracts with renewals for additional years outlined are preferred, especially when the local composter must invest in labor and equipment, such as collection vehicles, to service the contract.

**Requests for proposals (RFPs)** can hinder or encourage local composting operations and fair competition. Municipalities are discouraged from being overly prescriptive in their RFPs for food scraps collection and composting services when it comes to equipment to use and related logistics. "What the municipality wants is to have food scraps collected on a regular basis and be composted. Let the proposer suggest how to do it, e.g., the size and color of the bucket, the day of the week to collect," noted Compost Crew.

**Service agreements** vary in length and content and come with varying degrees of risk. Fertile Ground's service agreement outlines which feedstocks are accepted, usage of certified compostable liner bags, which collection containers

are provided, the cost of replacement containers due to damage, among other details. It also outlines provisional charges, e.g., if materials are outside the confines of the bin, an overage charge is assessed. If Fertile Ground needs to make an extra trip to the client's location outside of the regularly scheduled route, a removal charge is assessed. The City of Bozeman's contract with Happy Trash Can Curbside Composting LLC is a professional services agreement with "more risks and liability for the vendor" than the basic services agreement Happy Trash Can had with the City originally, noted the City's solid waste official. The agreement includes an allowance for Happy Trash Can to operate its composting facility on City property.

**Right-of-entry agreements** can provide local composters with access to land while ensuring quality control. LA Compost's contract with the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks (LARAP) Department is essentially a "Right of Entry" agreement to access the parks, versus having a lease for each Hub. LARAP provides keys to unlock the park gates. In addition, the contract includes a one- to two-year trial period during which LA Compost must prove it is a good steward, not causing litter, noise, or odors, and not attracting vectors, and being open during hours that suit the neighborhood where the Hub is located. "Once we prove we are good partners and neighbors, then LARAP executes a 10-year Right of Entry agreement," explains Michael Martinez, founder and former Executive Director of LA Compost.



Carter's Compost curbside residential pickups in Traverse City, MI  
Credit: Carter's Compost

**Contract duration** is an important element of agreements. The contracts specify the length of the contract, either for a set number of months or years, or a specific end date, e.g., December 31, 2025. The right of either party to cancel the contract is included in the language, e.g., "The City reserves the right to cancel this Agreement at any time without

cause.” Longer duration and automatic renewals to continue the service are preferable in contracts with municipalities. The duration of Fertile Ground’s contract with the City of Norman is 36 months. Language in the contract states the “agreement will automatically renew for a consecutive 36-month term unless terminated in writing by one of the parties with 60 days written notice.” Long-term contracts or the ability for renewal options without going out to bid competitively help community composters build financial stability.

**Payment arrangements** should also be specified in contracts. Fertile Ground charges a one-time setup fee and then a monthly fee for the services provided to the City of Norman to service its municipal building complex. Payment for Happy Trash Can’s composting services is based on the volume of unscreened finished compost versus a per-ton fee for incoming food scraps and yard trimmings. A 30-cubic-yard City roll-off container is used as the measuring “device.” The City of Bozeman pays Happy Trash Can \$25 per cubic yard and retains 20% of the compost for use in its parks and open spaces. Under the contract, the composter can sell the remaining compost and retain the revenues.



## Tips for Replication: Contracting

- Avoid being overly prescriptive in a Request for Proposals (such as specifying that the hauler needs to use “x” size curbside containers, as the local hauler/composter has likely worked out those logistics).
- Simplify contracts and service agreements if possible — while still ensuring all parties are legally protected — to reduce legal expenses and bureaucratic red tape.
- Spell out the individual roles for the involved parties and who holds what responsibilities during the program.
- Detail a “scaling trajectory” and the steps needed by both parties to scale a program, maintain it, etc.
- Consider a multiple-year agreement with terms for renewals when contracting for a pilot that is likely to grow into an expanded program. This is especially important if the local composter needs to procure additional equipment and/or vehicles and hire employees to service the agreement.
- Specify clear responsibility and adequately compensate for outreach and education to residents and/or businesses in service agreements.
- Consider a carve out in Request for Proposals for food scraps collection services to be provided by local food scraps composters in municipalities that contract with solid waste and recycling services and want to expand into food scraps collection. This helps utilize their vast experience and knowledge about designing programs for success in the community.
- Draft memorandums of understanding with community-based organizations (CBOs) when partnering on grants to ensure they are adequately compensated and do not get cut out of programs after funding has been received.
- Be creative in the partnership agreements to open doors for problem-solving and solutions to implementing a permanent program, such as budgeting and profit-sharing for compost sales.
- Anticipate equipment maintenance hiccups that can impact the delivery of services and reflect that downtime in the partnership agreement. The City of Traverse City (Michigan) used its grant from the USDA to procure an in-vessel composter. Maintenance challenges with the composting unit — including waiting for replacement parts — were not reflected in the operating model, according to the local composter who delivered collected food scraps to the site.

## Compost Utilization

Arrangements for the utilization of the compost produced under public-private partnerships vary. In a number of cases, such as in Greenbelt, Maryland, and Traverse City, Michigan, the compost is distributed to community gardens in the municipality. In other cases, it is retained by the local composter and marketed. In all cases, the finished compost is utilized locally. Finished compost is a tangible, positive asset of PPPs between municipalities and local composters, and is a key selling point for program development and building support among elected officials who have to approve a contract or allocate funding. If you're using or buying compost, you're helping to drive the market and create demand. There are different ways to do so.

Compost Crew's food scraps collection contract with the DC Public Works Department requires that participating households receive one 5-pound bag of free compost each year. The company creates 5-pound bags of Farm Feast, its own finished compost, to meet this requirement. Finished compost made by Compost Power at the six composting sites on NYCHA's property is used at the resident community gardens and the Eco-Hub farms operated by Green City Force. A portion is used on the grounds. Compost produced by Radix Ecological Sustainability Center and Friends of the Tivoli Lake Preserve & Farm in Albany is used in the organizations' urban farm and gardens.

## Land Access

Keeping compost local requires having access to local land for composting operations. In many instances, municipal and county governments have the keys to make land available and the ability to change zoning, if needed, to allow composting as an approved land use.

**Access to city land** granted to local composters for operations is a powerful way to support community composting. Repurposing unutilized or underutilized land can enable programs and transform local environments. Friends of Tivoli Lake Preserve & Farm operates on land that is owned by the City of Albany. The farm hosts a municipally-supported residential food scraps drop-off site. Consider using available land in city parks for local composting. For example, LA Compost has a "right-of-entry" agreement with the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation & Parks to compost food scraps from the City's farmers markets at several park locations. Happy Trash Can initially bartered

access to Bozeman's property to compost food scraps in exchange for also managing the City's yard trimmings composting site. That arrangement evolved into Happy Trash Can being the contracted composter for Bozeman's new residential food scraps collection program. The Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (Parks and Rec) Department had an underutilized maintenance building that it made available to Bennett Compost in exchange for collecting food scraps from Parks and Rec youth and senior centers. The building serves as Bennett's headquarters, where it stores equipment and bags compost. The property outside of the building is used for aerated static pile composting. The initial term of the contract for Bennett's use of the property was one year, with the option to extend the term by up to three additional one-year terms. In 2024, the Philadelphia City Council approved an extension to this contract, allowing for additional renewal terms, up to ten years total.

### Municipally-facilitated access to privately-owned land

is another path municipalities can take to advance local composting. The Trinity Assembly of God, a church in Greenbelt, Maryland, made underutilized land on its property available to the City of Greenbelt for composting residential food scraps. Compost Crew, the service provider, leases the land from the church.

**Zoning rules** have significant implications for local composters; zoning can prohibit, hinder, or support local efforts. Local composting as an approved land use is typically designated in the zoning code or by conditional use approval. The City of Detroit is drafting a Compost Guidance and Policy Ordinance to establish composting as a legitimate land use and create standards for urban composting, such as setback distances and allowable structures. **Policy Recommendations** has more details on zoning.



Windrows at Arizona Worm Farm in Phoenix  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance



## Labor

Job creation resulting from PPPs is directly related to the scope of services provided, e.g., a small collection pilot with several hundred households versus a program like Washington, D.C.'s, serving 9,000 households. The reliability of those jobs is directly dependent on the duration and renewal of the service contract.

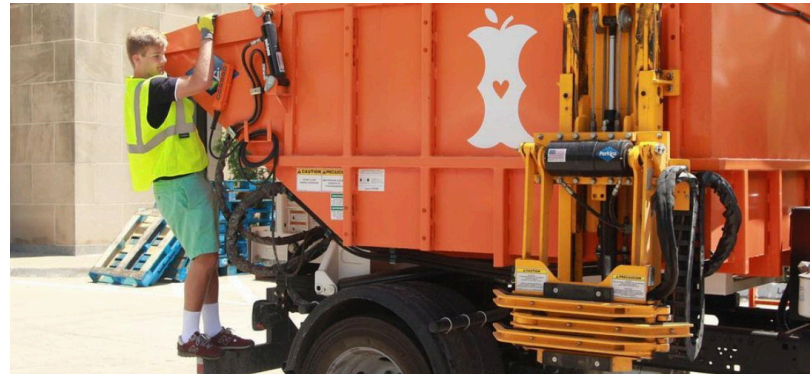
**Employment** is a central operational expense that supports local green jobs and the local economy. Compost Crew employs about 20 people to provide weekly food scraps collection to 9,000 households to service its collection contract with the DC Department of Public Works. In other cases, municipal contracts and support enable local composters to retain and support existing staff.

**Engaging volunteers** is another way to involve local community members in operations and activities. Compensating volunteers when possible is optimal. Ocean Compost engages volunteers at its farm to compost food scraps from businesses in Ocean City, Maryland. Tivoli in Albany, New York, and Harvest Cycle in Providence, Rhode Island, also engage volunteers in their composting operations. Additionally, LA Compost offers opportunities for community members to volunteer at composting sites. Providing volunteers with finished compost is another way to compensate them while keeping compost use local, as LA Compost does.

**Volunteer- and member-cooperatives** offer a different model for labor and operations. The DC Department of Parks and Recreation supports a Community Compost Cooperative Network, a network of 56 composting sites spanning the district. Each site is run as a cooperative, managed largely by volunteers. The City supports the construction and equipment for the sites, as well as education and training. Modelled after D.C.'s Network, Farm Philly's Community Compost Network (CCN) is a network of 20 composting sites across Philadelphia, operated by volunteer community members. The City supports the construction and development of the sites as well as training, education, and program design, while each site is run by volunteer site managers and community members.

**Adequate government staff time and buy-in** are key to successful PPP implementation. The PPP program manager at the City of Albany emphasizes the importance of having a full-time employee to create and manage the programs initiated. He also recommends creating connections with

community groups first and then, together, presenting the proposed plans to elected officials, like a City Council, to help build support for the desired projects. NYCHA's sustainability team, which manages the PPP with Green City Force and Compost Power, recommends building meaningful partnerships with all internal stakeholders who are key to a project's success. In NYCHA's case, that means engaging with the Property and Waste Management Departments as the PPP sits in the middle of that space, and bringing together elements of each department's areas of responsibility.



KC Can Compost truck for smart can program in Kansas City, MO  
Credit: KC Can Compost

## Operations and Infrastructure

Some local composters use a mix of their own as well as commercial composting sites to manage food scraps collected through PPPs. Others exclusively use their own facilities. A commonality is the collection of food scraps in their own container (versus commingled with yard trimmings). Routing software is commonly used for collection efficiency; the software tool may incorporate messaging to customers during collection if contamination is identified or a bin is not set out at the curb.

**Utilizing multiple composting sites** in an area enables a resilient and comprehensive composting system that is more flexible than relying on one regional facility. Food scraps collected by Compost Crew in Washington, D.C., are taken to a large facility in nearby Prince George's County, Maryland. However, food scraps collected by the company in Greenbelt, Maryland, are composted in Greenbelt at a Compost Outpost. CompostNow operates in multiple states. In the Raleigh-Durham (North Carolina) area, CompostNow takes collected food scraps under PPPs to two commercial composting facilities (McGill and Brooks Contractor). In the Atlanta region, CompostNow has its own composting facility.

**Diversity in composting systems** enables the scaling of programs at an affordable cost. Many community composters start with a fairly low-tech, low-cost composting system such as a 3-bin hot composting structure. As they scale, some operations switch to stand-alone aerated static piles contained within bunkers or to free-standing aerated static piles. Harvest Cycle, part of Groundwork RI, has several sites using hot composting bins. With funds from the City of Providence's SWIFR grant, Harvest Cycle is remediating a brownfield site and building infrastructure to house an in-vessel Earth Flow composting system. The system will process four to six tons per week of food scraps. Rust Belt Riders is purchasing an unused property from the City of Cleveland and is building its own food scraps composting facility for preconsumer food scraps. It will continue to use a commercial composting facility outside of Cleveland for the postconsumer food scraps it collects from residents and businesses.

**Curbside and drop-off collection** programs are both great options for municipalities. Some PPPs choose food scraps drop-off exclusively (e.g., Fertile Ground and LA Compost); several others exclusively provide curbside collection (e.g., Traverse City and Ocean City). The more common model is a combination of curbside collection for residential and commercial food scraps, and drop-off for residential food scraps. Rust Belt Riders charges \$12 per month for residential food scraps drop-off, whether customers subscribe directly with Rust Belt Riders or via the PPP. "The \$12 fee is based on our configuration of service and the total amount of money we need to continue building out the program in other jurisdictions," explains Michael Robinson, co-founder of the worker cooperative. The DC Department of Public Works has a contract with Compost Crew for residential curbside collection, and a separate contract with Compost Cab to service its food scraps drop-off sites at farmers' markets and stand-alone drop-off kiosks. In Albany's PPP, Radix hosts a food scraps drop-off site and offers a subscription-based residential collection service. Bicycles are used to service collection routes.

The majority of 2024 Mini-Census respondents' collection services provide both curbside and drop-off collection. In 2023, curbside collection was more commonly offered than drop-off collection; by 2024, the majority provided drop-off collection over curbside.

**Collection details and materials accepted** vary. Container sizes for residential food scraps range from 5-gallon buckets with lids to slightly larger containers (e.g., 7-gallon) with a locking mechanism. Various collection frequencies are

offered, from weekly (the highest subscription fee) to twice a month to monthly (the lowest fee). Drop-off services are typically the lowest cost option. Some PPPs include the use of certified compostable liner bags for the collection of food scraps at residences and businesses.

The majority of programs take a wide range of food scraps, including meat, fish, and dairy, but materials accepted are determined by the compost service provider, often based on the composting system used. For example, Carter's Compost in Traverse City, Michigan, does not accept proteins from clients whose scraps are composted at hyper-local sites in small bin systems. However, a wide range of food scraps is accepted for composting in the in-vessel Earth Flow system located on City property. Many programs also accept soiled paper and pizza boxes; some also accept certified compostable food-contact packaging (e.g., cups and plates). Among 2024 Mini-Census respondents, 98% handle food scraps; 61% accept meat, dairy, and bones; and 41% accept compostable packaging that has been certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) or the Compost Manufacturing Alliance (CMA).

**Providing access to carbon-rich materials** is an asset that local governments can offer to local composters. The City of Albany provides wood chips to Radix, Tivoli, and participants in its backyard home composting program. In Greenbelt, Maryland, the City supplies Compost Crew with wood chips and leaves to blend with the incoming food scraps. Compost Power has access to carbon-rich leaves, as some of the NYCHA properties where they compost food scraps are heavily treed. In some cases, Compost Power composts leaves in separate windrows to alleviate what has to be collected by the NYC Department of Sanitation.

## Tips for Replication: Operations and Infrastructure



- Develop standard operating procedures during a pilot for small- to medium-sized food scraps composting (e.g., system operation, outreach and education, budget line items) that can be carried forward in a full-scale program and future public-private partnerships.
- Establish the hours a drop-off site(s) will be open when launching as part of a partnership. Provide staffing for the first few weeks at a minimum to explain what materials are accepted and answer questions.

## Contamination

Contamination tends to be minimal for local composters doing manual collection (vs. automated mechanisms). For example, collectors are trained to look into buckets and remove visible contamination — as well as let the subscriber know about the contamination via an “oops” tag or a message sent through the routing software. At small sites, especially, the incoming material is often decontaminated by hand, providing an extra level of detailed review. Ongoing contamination by subscribers is largely not tolerated. The majority of respondents in the 2024 Mini-Census report 0-1% contamination rates of incoming materials. When asked to score on a scale of 1-10 how effectively they were able to manage contamination in their operations (with 10 being most effective), 70% scored themselves as 7 or higher (with 56.3% scoring 8 or higher).

*“We usually receive cleaner loads of food scraps on our routes that divert to our municipally-partnered Compost Outposts since we have a direct line of communication with the participants and essentially perform a waste audit each week during decontamination. We provide real-time education and updates to reduce contamination, which results in a safer environment for our staff and higher quality end product.”*

Kristie Blumer, Senior Director of Composting,  
Compost Crew, Rockville, Maryland

### Community composters were asked how they mitigate contamination in their operations:

Requiring training of commercial/institutional program participants



Manually picking contamination from material

Mechanically screening contamination from material



Determine where the contamination is coming from



Targeted education and outreach (different from training, such as posters or flyers with instructional materials or social marketing)



Taking photos of contamination at points of collection or points at unloading and sharing with collection service providers or food waste generators

Charging higher prices for contaminated loads

Tagging carts with too much contamination (for example, with stickers informing clients about issues)

Requiring training of residential program participants

Rewarding participants who minimize contamination

Rejecting loads with too much contamination



## Equitable Access and Distribution of Services

Ensuring the equitable distribution of and access to services is important to take into account when developing food waste collection and composting programs. This is key to ensuring community-wide accessibility, especially for those in underserved communities.

**A range of service prices and subscription types** offered increases accessibility for residents. Providing various levels of service at different price points creates more affordable options for those who wish to participate but may not be able to afford a premium service. This can include offering different sizes of collection receptacles, varying collection frequencies (such as weekly or bi-weekly pickups), and introducing seasonal services. Drop-off services can also be a no-cost or lower-cost opportunity for participants.

**Discounted or free services** provided for income-qualified residents remove a major barrier to participation in organics collection, especially for those with lower incomes. Utilizing existing financial qualification guidelines can help facilitate offering discounted or free services to lower-income populations without re-inventing the wheel. For example, Cleveland's PPP provides 250 free monthly drop-off subscriptions to SNAP-eligible households. Program participants can access the drop-off services through the PPP, as well as Rust Belt Riders' additional drop-off sites across the city. In Durango, Colorado, a discounted curbside collection program covers 90% of costs for income-qualified residents. The program builds on other discounted programs already in existence; residents participating in the food tax rebate or utility refund program are automatically approved.

**Multiple options for participation** enable higher chances of engagement. Not everyone has space to compost at home, and many do not have access to curbside services, some because of cost, and some because there is no service available to them. Providing options for participation, including support for backyard composting, drop-off collection, or curbside collection, expands participation in composting.

**Services for multi-family housing** residents increase accessibility. Public works departments are typically only responsible for providing trash and recycling services for single-family homes or for up to four-unit residences (while multifamily households are generally serviced by the private sector). As such, many residential curbside collection programs are available only for single-family homes or

for up to four-unit residences. Even in places where food scrap collection is mandatory, infrastructure for multi-family housing is underdeveloped or otherwise not in compliance with the mandate. LA Compost fills this gap by offering drop-off services throughout the City of Los Angeles (both under contract and separately as part of LA Compost programming) as well as across Los Angeles County, via PPPs with municipalities. Organics collection can also be incorporated into the planning of new building developments.

**Prioritization of underserved households** when siting drop-off locations and infrastructure makes for a more equitable program. Distance from drop-off locations can pose a barrier for those who live farther away or don't have access to a vehicle. By siting locations within a reasonable distance from as many community members as possible, more residents can participate. In Cleveland, new PPP drop-off sites were selected using the **15-minute city index** for maximum geographic and population coverage.<sup>58</sup> GIS mapping of population density and public transit accessibility data was used to identify locations to ensure equitable access to infrastructure. LA Compost also prioritizes equitable access to its Compost Hubs.

---

*“Ultimately, our goal is to have the Compost Hubs equally distributed around the city. Certain areas, like South Central and Southeast Los Angeles, are not as park-heavy, but we still want to create something inclusive.”*

Michael Martinez, Founder and former Executive Director, LA Compost, Los Angeles

---

**How finished compost is distributed** and made available for community use also matters. Using compost locally for growing healthy food and building healthy soils supports food security, soil remediation, climate adaptation and resiliency, and environmental justice.

## Education and Outreach

Incorporating education and outreach into programming is key to program success. In some PPPs, education and outreach are handled by the local composter, while in other programs, municipalities take the lead. Often, there is a collaborative approach. Common outreach practices include the use of signage and posters, direct engagement with community members, various forms of media, and having designated program champions.



Food Isn't Trash flyer  
Credit: Fertile Ground

**Signage, posters, banners, and other public communications materials** are crucial for program promotion, education, and raising awareness. Common locations for signage include drop-off sites, public waste receptacles, and collection vehicles. Organizations like Compost Power in New York City involve local community members to give input on what their compost site banners should say and look like. Efforts such as these strengthen the effectiveness of public-facing communication materials to spur involvement.

**Utilizing a variety of media and technology to promote programs** can expand reach and impact. Reaching communities where they are through local news, social media, and newsletters helps connect composting programs to a wider range of local residents. For example, the City of Bozeman promoted the program through interviews with local news outlets and social media posts. Similarly, Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment (LASAN), in partnership with LA Compost, posts flyers about future events and infographics via social media.

**Direct outreach to residents** offers an effective strategy and builds personal connections. Through promotional mailers, doorhangers, and handing out flyers, cities and organizations can inform and involve residents in the initiative. The City of Avondale Estates, in partnership with CompostNow, conducted door-to-door marketing using door hangers, tabling at the farmers' market, and mailers. The Radix

Ecological Sustainability Center, in partnership with the City of Albany, New York, participates in tabling at farmers' markets and other community events.

*"When we expanded to apartment complexes, we held several open houses in building lobbies to publicize the pilot. Our goal was to meet people where they are. Doing outreach and education fulfilled the City's in-kind contribution to the USDA grant."*

Ellen Powell, Marketing & Communications Director,  
City of Avondale Estates

**Community-based social marketing** goes beyond solely raising awareness to changing behavior. This discipline builds on research-informed strategies for addressing barriers to taking action through specific behaviors. The practice provides an effective tool to advance activities beneficial to society. EPA's **Composting Food Scraps in Your Community: A Social Marketing Toolkit** delivers guidance on creating composting campaigns for those seeking to launch a new program, increase participation in existing programs, or reduce contamination in their collection stream.<sup>59</sup>



Zero Waste Providence Street Team conducting outreach at the Amos House block party (RI)  
Credit: Carla Doughty

## Tips for Replication: Education and Outreach



- Have consistent and ongoing messaging. The responsible party should be accessible to participants to respond to their questions and concerns, and to have license to communicate directly with participants, especially when contamination is identified.
- Meet people where they are. Attending public events or meetings creates convenient opportunities for effective engagement with community members and potential participants.
- Tailor education and outreach strategies to the needs of the community. Translate materials into the language(s) of the community. Involving community members in the development of materials can also increase engagement and result in community-specific deliverables.

*“LASAN has leaned very heavily on LA Compost to do outreach and education at the markets, and it has been very effective.”*

James Roska, Environmental Engineer,  
Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment Solid  
Resources Support Services Division

*“Just start shaking trees and make people aware of composting, and then come in with a program. All of the hot composting and worm bin efforts the City and the Green Team made were a foot in the door to public engagement and outreach. And key is to get the City Council interested in putting money into food scraps composting. People want it, and it benefits all.”*

Luisa Robles, Sustainability Coordinator,  
City of Greenbelt Department of Public Works

**Hands-on training** creates opportunities for community involvement and skill development. Providing access to practical training equips community members with the tools to take action. Many organizations in the PPP case studies incorporate training into their outreach and education efforts, including Community Compost Co. (Hoboken, New Jersey), Rid-All (Cleveland), and Go Green OC (Ocean City, Maryland). Offering training and educational opportunities for home composters — from short, virtual videos to more in-depth master composting courses — is a fairly low-cost, low-investment point of entry for local government to cultivate community awareness and know-how.

**Composting champions** can encourage further participation. Identifying and equipping community members who are knowledgeable or passionate about composting with opportunities to engage their networks on behalf of the program can increase participation and buy-in. The City of Cleveland received grant funds to establish the Community Compost Ambassadors program. Through this program, Ambassadors receive a \$1,400 stipend to attend events in their neighborhood, check sites monthly, and assist neighbors with questions.

**In-person events** complement outreach and education efforts. SEEDs, a collaborator in the Traverse City (Michigan) PPP, bridges the gap in compost education. It offers home composting classes and a “Compost Petting Zoo” at its site, which features eight different composting systems from home composters to farm systems. Traverse City also hosts an annual “Pumpkin Smash” event held at Carters Compost’s site, which draws many families, providing an opportunity for education about the benefits of food scraps composting.

**Targeted and regular communication** for those enrolled in a composting program keeps communities continuously engaged. By tailoring targeted outreach such as reminder emails, notifications, and monthly newsletters, organizations can easily update and keep those participants in the loop. The DC Department of Public Works uses reengagement emails for those who are not setting out bins and has established a city Call Center to answer questions about the composting program. In partnership with Compost Crew, they have implemented ‘oops’ tags for bins with contamination as tangible engagement for those involved in the program.



## Fostering Relationships

Leaning into relationship-building with program partners and champions is key. Successful public-private partnerships rely on having a fundamental trust between the partners and open lines of communication. Municipalities can positively capitalize on the local composters' community engagement skills. Local food scraps haulers and composters succeed by engaging with and nurturing the communities they serve, such as setting up composting programs at community gardens, offering food scraps drop-off at farmers' markets, and educating residents and businesses about compost's connections to soil health and food access, job creation, and other benefits.

Those relationships are assets that local composters bring to the public-private partnership, and are anchors to program success. Examples are the partnerships between the City of Albany and Radix Ecological Sustainability Center, NYCHA and Compost Power/Green City Force, and the City of Los Angeles and LA Compost. The City of Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment agency observes that for a successful public-private partnership, "it's necessary to find the right partner with the ability to conduct the work and also has a vision and scope of work that aligns with each other's goals so it is sustainable for all. Once the proper partner is identified and an agreement is put in place, making it official, the collaboration that ensues highlights each other's skills and capacities. The collaborative effort helps all parties succeed at a citywide level and at a hyperlocal level."



## Tips for Replication: Fostering Relationships

- Identify champions within the municipality — they are invaluable to assisting with navigating bureaucracies, red tape, and related roadblocks.
- Consider providing assistance in navigating bureaucratic requirements, e.g., billing, which can be important to successful partnerships.
- Network and talk to people within the public agency about solutions for currently intractable challenges. For example, Compost Power's ability to eradicate rats at community gardens on public housing campuses where it operates composting sites has been a huge win for all stakeholders.
- "Be in tune with what is going on and how to tailor solutions," says Domingo Morales of Compost Power. "Bounce ideas off each other and create a strong and sustainable relationship. Once the partnership is underway, only ask for help when it is completely necessary. The municipal partners need to see that you can get things done without bugging them too much."
- Establish meaningful partnerships with all internal stakeholders key to a project's success. In NYCHA's case, this involved the sustainability team that leads the composting program engaging with the Property and Waste Management Departments.

*"Our partnership with Go Green OC and Ocean Compost is built on trust, shared values, and a mutual commitment to making Ocean City a model for sustainable event destinations. From the very beginning, our goal has been to create something that not only diverts waste but also inspires our community, visitors, and event clients to see environmental responsibility as an essential part of our culture... This is not a short-term initiative — it's a long-term commitment to growing our composting program, expanding zero-waste services, and showing that environmental stewardship and economic vitality go hand-in-hand in Ocean City."*

Kim Mueller, Director of Sales,  
Ocean City Convention Center



# Policy Recommendations

Laws, regulations, contracting, and procurement can either uplift or significantly hinder the ability of local composting programs to operate, scale up, and successfully divert organics from landfills or incinerators. Local policy directly shapes the composting landscape. Local governments also have an important role to play in shaping state and even federal policy to establish wider support systems. Sometimes, a state may be hesitant to adopt a new policy because it's not sure how it will work across the various jurisdictions within the state. If local governments implement policies and programs that support distributed composting, this signals an appetite for these measures and allows the state government to see how policies work within the state.

This menu of recommendations lays out a wide array of supportive state and local policies. Depending on the specific needs and capacity of each local government and community, these policies can be adopted in a variety of configurations. Incorporating any of the following policies is a step in the right direction.

*“The role of government in this space, in my view, is to set up the public policy environment for businesses that want to push the envelope, especially on climate change and also addressing embedded environmental challenges. We want those businesses to survive in our current context. They need to show a return on investment. There is no reason they can’t do that. And now, a worker-owned enterprise is building a composting facility that will help the City achieve its climate goals. What could be better!”*

Sarah O’Keeffe, Director of Sustainability & Climate Justice, Cleveland Mayor’s Office of Sustainability



Demonstration outside of Manhattan, NY City Hall to restore and expand the city budget for community composting  
Credit: Nora Tjossem

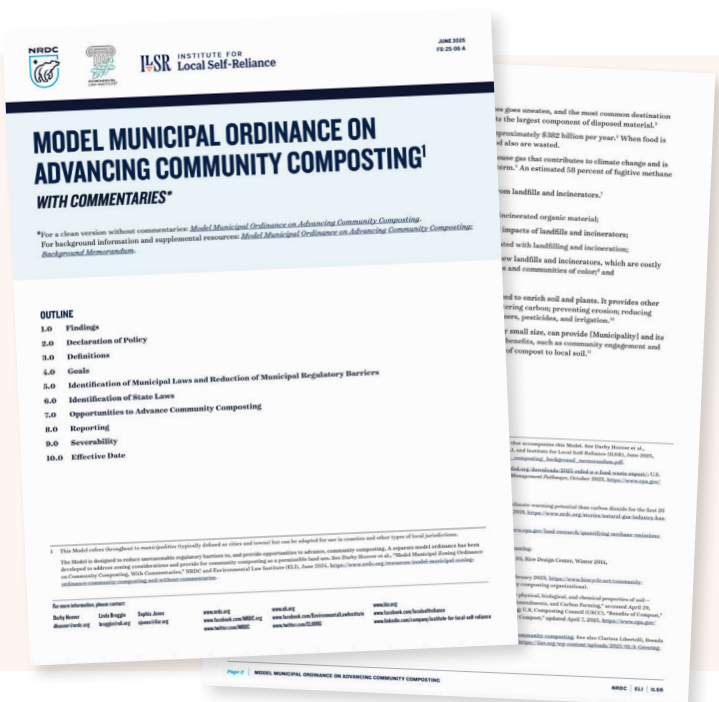


## → Evaluate and identify local regulatory barriers to decentralized composting

Many existing laws may have been written in ways that unintentionally impose on and create barriers for community composting operations. One example is community composting being automatically lumped in with regulations designed for large solid waste facilities. Identifying and reviewing regulations that apply to decentralized composting operations builds a foundational understanding of local policy needs and barriers to be addressed. One way to prompt this review is through an ordinance. If regulations on composting span multiple government departments, ensure that all applicable regulations work in tandem with each other to avoid contradictions.

Working with local community-based and decentralized composters to identify and understand these barriers is essential to addressing the community's unique context. Community-based composters provide essential representation of the community's needs and desires in systems that are often dominated by the voices and needs of the biggest corporate players.

### **Featured Resource: Model Municipal Ordinance on Advancing Community Composting**



Model Municipal Ordinance on Advancing Community Composting  
Credit: NRDC, Environmental Law Institute, Institute for Local Self-Reliance

## → Identify state-level regulatory barriers to decentralized composting

There is a role for local governments in addressing state laws and regulations that govern local composting, even when state laws ultimately supersede local policy. Identifying and addressing any state-level barriers and aligning local laws to match go a long way to avoid potential confusion and unnecessary restrictions on local composting. Additionally, local governments can request and encourage collaboration and alignment across state agencies that regulate composting.

### **Featured Resource: Model Municipal Ordinance on Advancing Community Composting**

## → Designate local composting as a permissible land use within zoning codes

Local and community-scale composting should be explicitly addressed in zoning codes such that it is a permissible land use in local zoning districts. Because many local zoning codes do not include specific language on land use for composting, it gets classified as solid waste, subjecting composters to certain steps that, while necessary for landfills or incinerators, may be unnecessarily prohibitive for small- or medium-sized composting operations. This is often one of the primary hurdles that local composters face. In fact, 29% of community composters surveyed in the 2022 Census reported “local zoning, land use ordinances, and/or other local government regulations” as a challenge.

For example, Harvest Cycle in Providence, Rhode Island, was not sure which zoning requirements applied to the land where a new composting facility was to be built, since the zoning code did not explicitly mention community-scale composting. They had to collaborate directly with the City of Providence to determine this and get an official designation in writing to ensure that their new composting site wouldn't run into any issues. Zoning code that includes specific language for composting enables composting operations to get established more efficiently while also promoting composting that follows best management practices, produces high-quality compost, and results in zoning that protects public and environmental health.

Each local jurisdiction determines its own zoning regulations, but local codes should ideally align with any existing statewide composting requirements to promote regulatory transparency and avoid confusion.



Codifying local, community-scale composting as a permissible land use in multiple zoning districts also addresses another common barrier for local composters: land access. Adding composting as an accessory activity for agricultural land can ensure that composting may happen on farms across the state or locality, regardless of the existence of zoning code explicit to composting. CompostNow in Georgia was involved in a process to change the zoning of a facility from an industrial zone to an agricultural zone, which designates composting as a permissible activity.

### **Featured Resources: Zoning for Community-Scale Composting • Model Municipal Zoning Ordinance on Community Composting**

#### ➔ **Uplift permit options for small-sized and decentralized composting centered on performance-based standards**

Many local and community-scale composters have to navigate permitting systems that are designed for large-scale, industrial facilities that don't account for local, decentralized composting operations. Establishing permits and permit exemptions designed specifically for smaller, community-based operations ensures that local composting operations can operate smoothly and achieve organics diversion at scale. Bennett Compost in Philadelphia supported the update of **Pennsylvania's G-17 Composting permit** to specifically address small non-farm composting facilities processing source-separated organics, under which they now operate.<sup>60</sup>

### **Featured Resources: Performance-Based Composting Permit Regulations • On-Farm Composting Rules and Permit Exemptions**

#### ➔ **Establish a per-ton surcharge on waste disposal to fund local composting and food waste diversion infrastructure and programs**

One funding mechanism with a proven track record of raising funds to reduce and recycle waste is the establishment of a per-ton surcharge on waste landfilled and incinerated. A waste disposal surcharge is typically a fee added to the per-ton tipping fees charged for disposal at waste disposal sites such as landfills, incinerators, and transfer stations. They can be charged to waste haulers or even at the generator level, such that households and businesses are directly charged based on waste generated. Generated revenue can be allocated to fund local waste reduction and diversion

efforts, including reuse, rescue, composting, and recycling. By making disposal nominally more expensive and investing in alternatives to disposal, local governments can preserve dwindling landfill space and minimize the harmful effects of landfilling and incineration.

There are many state and local governments that have a disposal surcharge in place that funds local diversion efforts. Ohio, for example, has a total statewide surcharge of \$4.75 per ton to fund state and local waste management, litter prevention, and infrastructure development, as well as grants for local organizations. Ohio's Community and Litter grant program awarded \$3.4 million to 77 projects in 2021, ranging from organics composting, to public space litter cleanups, to recycling equipment like organic material chippers. Ohio's local Solid Waste Management Districts are also authorized to levy per-ton disposal surcharges to fund their own waste management and diversion programs.

### **Featured Resources: Waste Surcharges to Fund Composting and More • Model State Legislation: Funding Waste Diversion and On-Farm Composting via a Disposal Surcharge**



Model State Legislation for a Disposal Surcharge  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance

### → **Establish local organics diversion policy if the state doesn't already have one**

Several states have established organics diversion policies in place, and those can serve as an anchor for local composting programs. However, if there is no statewide organics diversion mandate or if the statewide mandate lacks strength or nuance, local governments may establish organics diversion policies to dissuade disposal and encourage food rescue and composting. Washington, D.C., for example, established a food scrap diversion mandate for large commercial food scrap generators in 2023.<sup>61</sup> Expanding this food scrap disposal ban would be a next step to encompass all sectors, including residential.

Having an organics diversion policy in place can also provide an anchor for and encourage municipal partnerships with community composters. However, care should be taken that local governments pursue infrastructure and program investments with local and decentralized composters rather than allot complete control of organics collection and composting to large corporations that don't reinvest into the community.

#### **Featured Resource: Food Scrap Recovery Policies**

### → **Incorporate local composting into Climate Action Plans, Solid Waste or Materials Management Plans, Zero Waste Plans, Sustainability Plans, and Food Systems Plans**

Local plans are an important way to incorporate local composting into the actionable measures the government takes to advance local composting and food waste reduction. Climate Action Plans, Solid Waste or Materials Management Plans, Zero Waste Plans, Sustainability Plans, and Food Systems Plans each present opportunities to include support for local and community-based composting as a central part of materials management systems, needs, and goals. The processes for developing these plans usually have periods of stakeholder engagement and public input built in so they can be an ideal place to capture measures that will truly make a difference for local communities.

Many local governments across the country have incorporated composting into their various plans. Traverse City, Michigan, is part of a three-county group developing a Material Management Plan to include food scrap diversion, following a statewide 2022 policy requiring counties to replace existing solid waste management plans with

sustainable materials management plans, prioritizing recycling and composting. Cleveland lists a requirement for “all new residential and commercial properties to have the infrastructure for recycling and food waste collection containers, along with their trash containers” in its Climate Action Plan. Hoboken, New Jersey’s Zero Waste Plan includes requirements for businesses to collect and divert food scraps, develop a network to connect food donors and recipients, and advocate for a new composting facility. NYCHA’s Sustainability Agenda includes collection and processing of organics in partnership with several urban farms, increasing residents’ access to organics collection, designing for circularity, and improving soils with compost generated on site. Bozeman, Montana, includes organics diversion as a priority in its Climate Action Plan. And finally, the City of Norman, Oklahoma, has been part of the Conference of Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement since 2005, which includes plans for food scraps and yard trimmings recycling.

#### **Featured Resource: Composting & Climate Action Plans: A Guide for Local Solutions**

*“We want to serve residents, create jobs, and reduce waste. This is a lot easier at NYCHA because of its 10-year sustainability agenda — and composting is on that agenda.”*

Domingo Morales, CEO, Founder,  
Compost Power, New York City

### → **Incentivize compost use**

Application of compost to soils not only builds healthier soils but also contributes to carbon sequestration and storage.<sup>62</sup> Often, policies supporting soil health fail to uplift compost application as a proven soil-building practice. In accordance with soil health science, many state and local governments are enacting policy measures that consider the benefits of composting and compost use with the understanding of soil's ability to preserve ecosystems, bolster biodiversity, support food systems, build resilience, and even mitigate climate change.<sup>63</sup> Government procurement is one way to address this. Supporting farmers and community members to use compost can be another option to boost application of compost to soils and demand for high-quality compost. This can be achieved through tax credits for the purchase of

compost. For example, farmers in North Carolina are exempt from paying sales or use tax on compost used as part of farming operations.<sup>64</sup> Reimbursement programs are another option; for example, [Hawaii's Compost Reimbursement Program](#) reimburses farmers and landscapers for their costs to purchase compost, including transportation costs.<sup>65</sup>

**Featured Resources: Healthy Soils and Compost Policy Guide • Policies on Soil Health and Carbon Sequestration • State Policy Toolkit: Developing End Markets for Compost**

### ➔ **Require use of compost-amended soil for disturbed land and set procurement requirements that prioritize locally-produced and high-quality compost**

Local governments can help to create market demand for finished compost by requiring use of compost for disturbed soils and establishing compost procurement requirements. Adding compost to soils disturbed by activities such as construction and road maintenance can support soil health and resiliency by reducing non-point source pollution (through enhanced management of agricultural and urban stormwater runoff), reducing erosion, and stream sedimentation. Use in landscaping and turf management improves water conservation and reduces fertilizer and pesticide needs.

By requiring procurement of locally-produced compost and prioritizing it over non-renewable soil amendments, governments can use their purchasing power to bolster the local composting industry and support organics diversion goals. Procuring compost produced by local and community composters minimizes transportation impacts, creates demand for a sustainable compost product, and helps “close the loop” by turning waste into a recycled, value-added product to be applied to soils likely in the same area where the material was generated. Specifying and demanding high-quality compost will also drive the market towards operations that follow best management practices, minimize contamination, and seek high biological diversity in their composting process. Smaller operations are often more discerning about what they accept and do not accept, and the quantities they handle can allow them the ability to more effectively hand-pick and remove contaminants.

**Featured Resources: Compost Procurement Policies • State Policy Toolkit: Developing End Markets for Compost • Model Compost Procurement Policy • Healthy Soils and Compost Policy Guide**



Healthy Soils and Compost Policy Guide  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance

### ➔ **Uplift exemptions for on-farm and decentralized composting from permit requirements**

Permit exemptions allow compost operations on farms and smaller-sized facilities, such as community gardens, to operate without the barrier of permitting requirements intended for larger, industrial compost facilities. Because there are often significantly fewer risks or hazards associated with on-farm and small-sized composters, many states have incorporated permit exemptions into their composting regulations for such cases. Local zoning regulations can also be amended in order to facilitate on-site composting.

Several of the case studies reflect sites that operate under the threshold for permit requirements, including Compost Crew in Greenbelt, Maryland; LA Compost in Los Angeles; and Harvest Cycle in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Featured Resource: On-Farm Composting Rules and Permit Exemptions**

### ➔ **Incentivize local composting**

Policies that provide direct incentives for local and at-home composting can be adopted to make composting more accessible to a wider group of community members. For example, D.C.'s [Home Composting Incentives Amendment Act](#) includes rebates up to \$75 to encourage residents to purchase and use a home composting system after participating in a course covering at-home composting.<sup>66</sup> ILSR helped write and support the passage of this act.



### → **Prioritize and carve out operating space for local composters within exclusive waste hauling franchise zones, if applicable**

In some places, local governments contract with waste haulers to grant exclusive rights for waste collection within specific geographical areas. They are very common on the West Coast, but are also growing in other parts of the country. While exclusive solid waste agreements put the responsibility of negotiating with waste companies on the local government and may lead to a decrease in disposal truck traffic, many exclusive franchise agreements shut micro haulers and local composters out of the playing field.

Awarding exclusive franchise districts to singular haulers provides an environment ripe for extractive monopoly practices, including squashing competition and raising prices. Usually, contracts for franchise districts require a bidder to provide multiple hauling services, which is something that smaller players can't provide unless the City accepts bids that combine multiple service providers. If a local government establishes or renews exclusive waste hauling franchise contracts, it is critical that it ensures a carveout allowing local composters and other specialty haulers to be allowed to operate within the franchise zone.

In Norman, Oklahoma, the City's franchise agreement for residential trash and recycling collection originally did not allow for a separate food scraps collection contract. Commercial entities were not subject to the confines of the franchise agreement, and a local coffee shop signed up with Fertile Ground for food scraps collection. When the City ended the franchise contract and brought recycling in-house, it opened up the opportunity for food scraps collection across the city.

The City of Los Angeles' [2025 Request for Proposals](#) (RFP) was issued with the intention of awarding eight-year waste collection contracts for its 11 Franchise Zones.<sup>67</sup> The RFP requires bidders to partner with community composters to manage organic material composting, effectively carving out and cementing in space for local composters to continue operating.

**§ Featured Resources: [Composting for Community Podcast - "Cities' Exclusive Agreements with Trash Collectors are Holding Back Community Composters"](#) • [Model Municipal Ordinance on Advancing Community Composting](#) • ["How California boosted composting — but broke local composters in the process"](#)**

### → **Ensure that regulations around nuisances, particularly for small sites, are based in performance standards and best management practices**

Performance-based compost regulations establish standards to be met by the composter without imposing restrictions on the exact way to meet those standards, taking into account that no one regulatory model is necessarily best for every facility. This type of policy can foster innovation and adaptability for composting sites, each of which operates under a unique set of needs and conditions.

Local composting can be an effective strategy for reducing rodent troubles, exemplified by Compost Power, a community composting operation that has been driving rats out of public housing sites where it operates. With effective site management practices, composting diverts food scraps from dumpsters and trash bags and eliminates environments hospitable to rodents. Rather than codifying arbitrary and prescriptive site specifications, establish regulations that encourage training and site management practices that produce high-quality compost and keep nuisances at bay.

**§ Featured Resources: [Performance-Based Composting Permit Regulations](#) • [Oh Rats! How to Avoid Rodents at Community Composting Sites](#) • [Model Municipal Ordinance on Advancing Community Composting](#) • [Rodent Reduction Rubric](#)**

### → **Ensure right to compost and right to subscribe to a composting service for HOAs and condos**

Homeowners' associations (HOAs) or condominiums may prohibit or unnecessarily restrict the ability of residents to engage in composting. Enacting policies that remove this barrier for HOA or condo residents is a key step to making composting accessible to more communities. In Maryland, for example, [a 2021 law](#) allows condominium and HOA unit owners to subscribe to food scrap collection services and allows HOA lot owners to compost on their property.<sup>68</sup> Texas has a [similar law](#) on the books.<sup>69</sup>

**§ Featured Resource: [Rules to Encourage Composting](#)**

Ch. 459  
2021 LAWS OF MARYLAND

this title;

or

(6) A sewage sludge utilization permit in accordance with this title;

(6b) A refuse disposal permit in accordance with this title;

Article - 000000

LAWRENCE J. HOGAN, JR., Governor

Ch. 459

LAWRENCE J. HOGAN, JR., Governor

Ch. 459

Chapter 459

(House Bill 248)

AN ACT concerning

**Condominiums and Homeowners Associations - Rights and Restrictions - Composting**

FOR the purpose of prohibiting a recorded covenant or restriction, a provision in a declaration, or a provision in the bylaws or rules of a condominium or a homeowners association from ~~prohibiting or unreasonably restricting~~ a person from composting organic waste materials for certain uses under certain circumstances or contracting with a private entity for the collection of organic waste materials for composting at a composting facility, providing for the interpretation of a certain covenant, restriction, or provision that unreasonably impedes the ability of a private entity to access certain common elements for the purpose of collecting certain organic waste materials, defining certain terms; and generally relating to condominiums and homeowners associations.

BY repealing and re-enacting, without amendments,

Article - Environment  
Section 9-1701(a) and (a)  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2013 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

BY adding to  
Article - Real Property  
Section 11-111.4 and 11B-111.8  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2013 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article - Environment**

9-1701.

(a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

- (1) "Composting facility" means a facility where composting takes place.
- (2) "Composting facility" does not include a facility that is required to obtain:

- (i) A natural wood waste recycling facility permit in accordance with

- 1 -

LAWRENCE J. HOGAN, JR., Governor

Ch. 459

(a) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(2) "COMPOSTING" MEANS THE CONTROLLED AEROBIC BIOLOGICAL DECOMPOSITION OF ORGANIC WASTE MATERIAL.

(3) "COMPOSTING FACILITY" HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 9-1701 OF THE ENVIRONMENT ARTICLE.

(4) "LOCAL JURISDICTION" MEANS THE COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY WHERE THE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION IS LOCATED.

(5) A RECORDED COVENANT OR RESTRICTION, A PROVISION IN A DECLARATION, OR A PROVISION IN THE BYLAWS OR RULES OF A HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION MAY NOT ~~PROHIBIT OR UNREASONABLY RESTRICT~~ A LOT OWNER FROM:

(1) COMPOSTING ORGANIC WASTE MATERIALS FOR THE LOT OWNER'S PERSONAL OR HOUSEHOLD USE, PROVIDED THAT THE LOT OWNER OWNS WHERE THE COMPOSTING IS CONDUCTED; OR AND

(2) OWNS OR HAS THE RIGHT TO EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE AREA WHERE THE COMPOSTING IS CONDUCTED; OR AND

(3) OBSERVES ALL LAWS, ORDINANCES, AND REGULATIONS OF THE STATE AND LOCAL JURISDICTION THAT PERTAIN TO COMPOSTING; OR

(4) CONTRACTING WITH A PRIVATE ENTITY TO COLLECT ORGANIC WASTE MATERIALS FROM THE LOT OWNER FOR COMPOSTING AT A COMPOSTING FACILITY.

(5) A RECORDED COVENANT OR RESTRICTION, A PROVISION IN A DECLARATION, OR A PROVISION IN THE BYLAWS OR RULES OF A HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION THAT UNREASONABLY IMPEDES THE ABILITY OF A PRIVATE ENTITY TO ACCESS THE COMMON ELEMENTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF COLLECTING ORGANIC WASTE MATERIALS FROM A LOT OWNER SHALL BE INTERPRETED AS A RESTRICTION ON THE LOT OWNER'S RIGHT TO CONTRACT FOR PRIVATE COMPOSTING SERVICES UNDER SUBSECTION (4)(2) OF THIS SECTION.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect on January 1, 2021.

Enacted under Article II, § 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, May 30, 2021.

- 3 -

## ➔ Adopt local executive orders or resolutions that proclaim official support for composting programs and partnerships

Local governments can advance local composting through resolutions, executive orders, and ordinances that provide top-down directives and indicate the priorities of local leadership to local policymakers, regulators, and other stakeholders. These can range from establishing pilot composting programs to setting ambitious food scrap diversion goals.

In many cases, local businesses and organizations that desire to make progress in this space need a supportive and ambitious public policy environment in order to anchor strategic decision making and catalyze movement in the right direction. Directing the establishment of public-private partnerships with local composters is one of the best ways to do this, and many local composters are eager to answer the call. In Durango, Colorado, a 2025 resolution called for research into organic waste management options and the establishment of a pilot organics collection program. Durango partnered with Table to Farm to conduct the pilot program. Other pathways being considered by the City's staff include food scraps drop-off locations, rebates for low-income households, support for commercial composting through the Visit Durango sustainable tourism funding, and a pilot "pay as you throw" program.

Bozeman, Montana, was able to mobilize its organics collection service to be offered year-round, following what was previously only seasonal availability, because the City Commission gave a directive to the Solid Waste Office in 2022. Philadelphia provides another example of positive action spurred by public support from local leadership: the 2016 Zero Waste and Litter Executive Order committed Philadelphia to the goal of 90% zero waste by 2035, citing efforts to divert food waste as the most impactful way to meet that goal.

## § Featured Resources: NRDC Municipal Model Policies on Food Waste Reduction

## ➔ Designate and participate in Compost Awareness weeks and days

Participating in **International Compost Awareness Week**, **World Soil Day**, **America Recycles Day**, and others that incorporate the topic of compost are opportunities for local governments to show support for composting and compost use.<sup>70, 71, 72</sup> Publicly connecting compost to healthy soils, waste reduction, and strong communities builds public awareness and buy-in on composting and its benefits. In 2023, New York State officially designated a Compost Awareness Week, aligned with International Compost Awareness Week.

## § Featured Resources: ILSR's Guide to International Compost Awareness Week: Sustainable Communities Begin with Compost • Healthy Soils and Compost Policy Guide

1. *From Surplus to Solutions: 2025 ReFED U.S. Food Waste Report*, ReFED, February 2025, (<https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem/>)
2. S. Holmberg, *Power Play: How Monopolies Leverage Systemic Racism to Dominate Markets*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, June 2024, (<https://ilsr.org/article/independent-business/powerplay/>)
3. N. Goldstein, *The State of Organics Recycling*, BioCycle, October 2017, (<https://www.biocycle.net/state-organics-recycling-u-s/>)
4. *Webinar: Government Support for Community Composting Webinar Series*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, November 2022, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/govt-support-for-community-composting-series/>)
5. *Webinar: Keep Compost Local: A Roadmap for Public-Private Partnerships*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, December 2025, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/keep-compost-local-2025/>)
6. B. Platt and C. Fagundes, *Yes! In My Backyard: A Home Composting Guide for Local Government*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, May 2018, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/yimby-compost/>)
7. J. Wallace, *Waste and recycling is now a \$100B industry, report says*, WasteDive, March 2025, (<https://www.wastedive.com/news/us-recycling-waste-market-100-billion-revenue-milestone-waste-business-journal/743163/>)
8. *Waste Industry Data Pack*, Waste Info, 2025, (<https://www.wasteinfo.com/datapack.htm#menu0>)
9. *Directory of Waste Processing & Disposal Sites*, Waste Info, 2025, (<https://www.wasteinfo.com/diratlas.htm>)
10. *Biden-Harris Administration Finalizes Standards to Slash Methane Pollution, Combat Climate Change, Protect Health, and Bolster American Innovation*, Environmental Protection Agency, December 2023, (<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-finalizes-standards-slash-methane-pollution-combat-climate>)
11. *Quantifying Methane Emissions from Landfilled Food Waste*, Environmental Protection Agency, March 2025, (<https://www.epa.gov/land-research/quantifying-methane-emissions-landfilled-food-waste>)
12. G.H. Guendehou et al., *Incineration and Open Burning of Waste*, IPCC, 2006, ([https://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/pdf/5\\_Volume5/V5\\_5\\_Ch5\\_JOB.pdf](https://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/pdf/5_Volume5/V5_5_Ch5_JOB.pdf))
13. D. Rosenberg et al., *Burned: Why Waste Incineration is Harmful*, NRDC, July 2021, (<https://www.nrdc.org/bio/daniel-rosenberg/burned-why-waste-incineration-harmful#:~:text=Regardless%20of%20what%20is%20being,cause%20lung%20and%20heart%20diseases>)
14. A. Baptista et al., *U.S. Municipal Solid Waste Incinerators: An Industry in Decline*, Tishman Environment and Design Center, May 2019, ([https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d14dab43967cc000179f3d2/t/5d5c4bea0d59ad00012d220e/1566329840732/CR\\_GaiaReportFinal\\_05.21.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d14dab43967cc000179f3d2/t/5d5c4bea0d59ad00012d220e/1566329840732/CR_GaiaReportFinal_05.21.pdf))
15. *The Hidden Cost of Landfills*, Industrious Labs, May 2024, (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/681a42ab30e6d15b8dac0c79/t/685adf2438f2071d89235cae/1750>)
16. Ibid.
17. *Pollution and Health Impacts of Waste-to-Energy Incineration*, GAIA, 2019, (<https://www.no-burn.org/resources/pollution-and-health-impacts-of-waste-to-energy-incineration/>)
18. *The Hidden Cost of Landfills*, May 2024.
19. *Buried Consequences: The Chiquita Canyon Story*, Industrious Labs, February 2025, (<https://youtu.be/QTEZcDI9id4?si=cPSNYvQR-FpQQvJ2>)
20. *Who Owns U.S. Landfills?*, Full Circle Future, ([https://www.fullcirclefuture.org/ownership-and-expansion?mc\\_cid=78b5906113&mc\\_eid=1d575c6c91](https://www.fullcirclefuture.org/ownership-and-expansion?mc_cid=78b5906113&mc_eid=1d575c6c91))
21. *Power Play: How Monopolies Leverage Systemic Racism to Dominate Markets*, June 2024.
22. *What is Community Composting*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, (<https://ilsr.org/composting/what-is-community-composting/>)
23. B. Platt, *Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste & Grow Community*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, April 2017, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/food-waste-hierarchy/>)
24. N. Goldstein et al., *BioCycle Nationwide Survey: Residential Food Waste Collection Access in the U.S.*, BioCycle, September 2023, (<https://www.biocycle.net/residential-food-waste-collection-access-in-u-s/>)
25. *Internal analysis of 2024 Mini-Census data*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, December 2025. A statistical model designed for count data was used to examine how different types of government support relate to the number of paid staff in organizations. As the most common type of government support, “communities with zero waste, diversion, and composting goals/targets” served as the reference for comparison against other types of government support reported by respondents.
26. J. Ashby, *Transforming Your Community's Waste to Wealth: Infographics*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, March 2025, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/transforming-communitys-waste-to-wealth/>)
27. *Guide to the Facts and Figures Report about Materials, Waste and Recycling*, Environmental Protection Agency, September 2025, (<https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/guide-facts-and-figures-report-about>)
28. A. Sierra and S. Hosain, *As Heat Islands Worsen in Baltimore, Local Composting Can Relieve Its Effects*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, August 2022, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/baltimore-heat-islands-cooled-by-composting>)
29. S. Hosain et. al, *Oh, Rats! How to Avoid Rodents at Community Composting Sites*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, August 2022, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/composting-ohrats/>)
30. *Environmental Value of Applying Compost: Improving Soil Health for Stormwater Management, Contaminated Site Remediation, Ecosystem Restoration, Landscaping and Agriculture*, Environmental Protection Agency, January 2025, (<https://www.epa.gov/land-research/environmental-value-applying-compost>)
31. B. Bell and B. Platt, *Building Healthy Soils with Compost to Protect Watersheds*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, June 2014, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/paydirt/>)
32. *Compost — Assists in Stormwater Management*, U.S. Composting Council, (<https://www.compostingcouncil.org/general/custom.asp?page=StormwaterBenefits>)
33. *The Ocean Lovers Guide to Compost*, 11th Hour Racing and Ocean Hour Farm, 2025, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/ocean-lovers-guide-to-compost/>)
34. *The Hidden Cost of Landfills*, May 2024.
35. *Trash Incineration More Polluting than Coal*, Energy Justice Network, (<https://energyjustice.net/incineration/worsethancoal/>)
36. K. Tu et al., *Health damages and disparities from municipal and medical waste incineration in Baltimore, USA*, medRxiv, July 2025, (<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2025.06.27.25330313v2>)
37. *Environmental Value of Applying Compost: Improving Soil Health for Stormwater Management, Contaminated Site Remediation, Ecosystem Restoration, Landscaping and Agriculture*, January 2025.
38. Ibid.
39. *Webinar: Restoring Soil with Compost: Lessons from the LA Wildfires & More*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, August 2025, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/restoring-soil-with-compost/>)
40. *Soil + Soul Healing Toolkit: Compost Issue*, LA Compost, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/compost-soil-contamination-remediation-toolkit>)



41. K. Clausing et al., *How Much is Climate Change Costing U.S. Households?*, Brookings, October 2025, (<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-much-is-climate-change-costing-us-households/>)
42. *Climate Change and the Health of Socially Vulnerable People*, Environmental Protection Agency, August 2025, (<https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-health-socially-vulnerable-people>)
43. Whendee L. Silver, Sintana E. Vergara, Allegra Mayer, "Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Potential of Composting and Soil Amendments on California's Rangelands," 2018. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment. (<https://marincarbonproject.org/what-are-the-potential-climate-mitigation-benefits-from-composting-and-soil-amendments-on-californias-rangelands/>). The study found that the addition of 0.25 inches of compost to California's rangeland resulted in soil carbon storage of 2.1 Mg C per hectare (0.85 Mg C per acre). The EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator (<https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>) was used to convert to car emissions.
44. *Environmental Value of Applying Compost: Improving Soil Health for Stormwater Management, Contaminated Site Remediation, Ecosystem Restoration, Landscaping and Agriculture*, January 2025.
45. B. Platt et al., *A Growing Movement: 2022 Community Composter Census*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, March 2023, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/composting-2022-census/>)
46. *Hunger in America*, Feeding America, (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>)
47. *Hierarchy to Reduce Food Waste & Grow Community*, April 2017.
48. *Transforming Your Community's Waste to Wealth: Infographic*, March 2025.
49. *A Growing Movement: 2022 Community Composter Census*, March 2023.
50. Ibid.
51. B. Platt et al., *Pay Dirt: Composting in Maryland to Reduce Waste, Create Jobs, & Protect the Bay*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, May 2013 (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/paydirt/>)
52. *Environmental Value of Applying Compost: Improving Soil Health for Stormwater Management, Contaminated Site Remediation, Ecosystem Restoration, Landscaping and Agriculture*, January 2025.
53. Ibid.
54. L. Bilsens Brolis, *On-Farm Composting & Compost Use Resources*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, January 2024 (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/on-farm-composting-resources/>)
55. *A Growing Movement: 2022 Community Composter Census*, March 2023.
56. *Magic Soil Bus*, LA Compost, (<https://www.lacompost.org/magicsoilbus>)
57. *Youth programs*, The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center, (<https://www.radixcenter.org/youth-programs>)
58. *Transportation Demand Management*, City of Cleveland, ([https://planning.clevelandohio.gov/TDM/TDM\\_Program\\_Standards.pdf](https://planning.clevelandohio.gov/TDM/TDM_Program_Standards.pdf))
59. *Composting Food Scraps in Your Community: A Social Marketing Toolkit*, Environmental Protection Agency, November 2025, (<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/forms/composting-food-scraps-your-community-social-marketing-toolkit>)
60. B. Platt and S. Jones, *Pennsylvania — Small Scale and On-Farm Composting Permit*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, March 2023, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/pennsylvania-2/>)
61. *Commercial Food Waste Diversion Guide*, Zero Waste DC, (<https://zerowaste.dc.gov/commercialfoodwaste>)
62. S. Brown, *Connections: EOM Is The Key To SOM*, BioCycle, March 2021, (<https://www.biocycle.net/connections-eom-is-the-key-to-som/>)
63. *State Healthy Soil Policy Map*, Nerds for Earth, April 2025, (<https://nerdsforearth.com/state-healthy-soils-policy/>)
64. *Senate Bill 582: North Carolina Farm Act of 2023*, North Carolina General Assembly, April 2023, (<https://dashboard.ncleg.gov/api/Services/BillSummary/2023/S582-SMTQ-27%28e3%29-v-2>)
65. *Compost Reimbursement Program 2025*, State of Hawai'i Plant Industry Division, January 2024, (<https://dab.hawaii.gov/pi/main/compost-reimbursement2025/>)
66. *D.C. Law 22-146. Home Composting Incentives Amendment Act of 2018*, Council of the District of Columbia, 2018, (<https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/22-146>)
67. *Bureau of Sanitation, Bureau of Contract Administration, Joint Board Report No. 1*, Department of Public Works, September 2025, (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/26090877-bpw-2025-0575/>)
68. S. Jones, *Maryland — Right to Compost for HOAs and Condos*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, July 2021, (<https://ilsr.org/article/composting-for-community/maryland-composting-in-hoas/>)
69. *Property Owners' Associations*, Texas State Law Library, November 2025, (<https://guides.sll.texas.gov/property-owners-associations/ccrs>)
70. *International Compost Awareness Week 2026*, Compost Research & Education Foundation, (<https://compostfoundation.org/icaw-home/>)
71. *Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities*, United Nations, (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-soil-day>)
72. *America Recycles Day*, Environmental Protection Agency, November 2025, (<https://www.epa.gov/circulareconomy/america-recycles-day>)





## Appendix A:

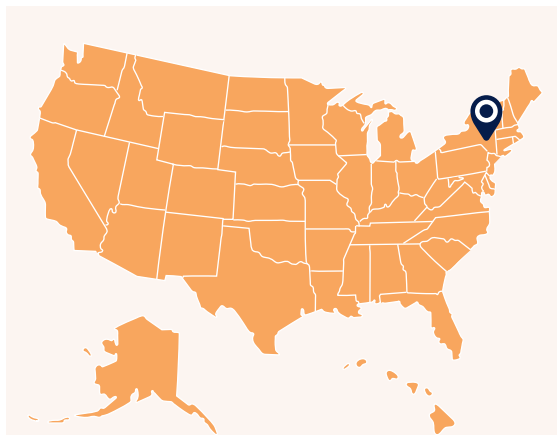
# Case Studies for Keep Compost Local Report





# Albany, New York

## *Relying on Existing Food Scrap Recyclers*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

City of Albany, Sonny Von Tiedemann,  
Recycling & Composting Coordinator

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTERS:

The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center (Scott Kellogg, Educational Director) and Friends of the Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm, Inc. (Kim Tateo, Executive Director and Farm Manager)

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

In May 2021, the City of Albany kicked off a multi-pronged residential food scraps diversion program using a \$225,000 grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC). The grant enabled the City's Department of General Services to partner with two community-based organizations — The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center (Radix) and Friends of the Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm (Tivoli) — to provide drop-off locations for residential food scraps. The City also partnered with Radix and a for-profit business — FoodScraps360 — to promote its existing fee-for-service curbside collection offering. The grant also established a backyard composting program that provided free at-home composting materials, including a kitchen bin, a backyard composting bin, access to free wood chips, and an educational brochure to help residents successfully compost at home.

In 2023, the City of Albany received another grant from NYS DEC for \$200,000. With those funds, a request for proposals (RFP) was issued to procure services for: 1) food waste collection at events; 2) curbside food scraps collection; 3) hosting a designated food scraps collection site; and 4) hosting a designated food scraps collection and processing site. The City awarded the contract to service City of Albany events to FoodScraps360, a woman-owned collection service, which uses the City of Bethlehem's (New York) food scrap and yard trimmings composting facility. No contract has been awarded for curbside collection. Tivoli and Radix received the contracts to host a food scraps collection and processing site. The grant was also used to procure ten "smart bins" for food scraps drop-off to be installed around Albany that are accessible via an app or key card. In addition, the City of Albany set aside funds to cover the cost of compost "**technicians**" to help backyard composters assess the health of their compost piles and manage various challenges that arise during the composting process, such as bad odors, unwanted bugs, and low compost production.

City of Albany Community Compost Drop-Off sign at Radix. Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance



## Municipal Motivation

The City of Albany's Rapp Road Landfill is scheduled to close by 2028, which could potentially increase the cost of solid waste disposal due to the transfer and long-hauling of the trash. Food waste comprises about 20% of Albany's trash stream; thus, reduction in wasted food and composting is a focus of Albany's solid waste management planning. When the City received the \$225,000 grant from NYS DEC in 2021, the goal was to ensure that all Albany residents could pick one of the three options — backyard composting, drop-off, or curbside collection. "The City has a pretty high poverty rate," notes Sonny Von Tiedemann. "The City wanted to make sure all of Albany's residents could pick one option. Not everyone has a car, people don't have money to pay for a subscription service, and some don't have backyards. If they don't have access to a backyard, they can do drop-off, and if they have financial means to pay for collection, the City can offer access to service providers." Von Tiedemann started working at the City of Albany when the original grant was awarded. "I looked at the lay of the land, and came across FoodScraps360 and Radix, which were already providing services," he adds. "Instead of investing cost and time for the City to start its own food scraps collection, we decided we wanted to contribute to what they were already doing."

The grant funded the purchase of Earth Machines for backyard composting, and kitchen countertop containers that households use to collect food scraps, whether for composting at home, bringing them to a drop-off site, or setting out at the curb for collection. Radix already had a food scraps drop-off bin at its one-acre urban farm and educational center. With the grant, it became an "official" City drop-off site. The Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm is on land owned by the City of Albany. Tivoli set up a food scraps drop-off site and a 3-bin composting system using the grant funds. The City provides wood chips to both Radix and Tivoli to layer onto food scraps that are dropped off, as well as for use in composting. The City also gives wood chips to households with backyard bins when the bin is set up and provides information regarding additional free wood chips to participants throughout the year.

During the period of the initial \$225,000 DEC grant, the City of Albany contracted with Radix to provide consulting services, primarily around compost education. This included educational programming for youth, both at Radix's Center and in the City's schools. The organization also has a high school youth employment program.

Albany has about 36,000 single- up to 4-unit households. Over 1,000 backyard composting bins have been set up since 2021; about 150 households participate in Radix's



FoodScraps360 packer truck for food scraps collection.  
Credit: City of Albany

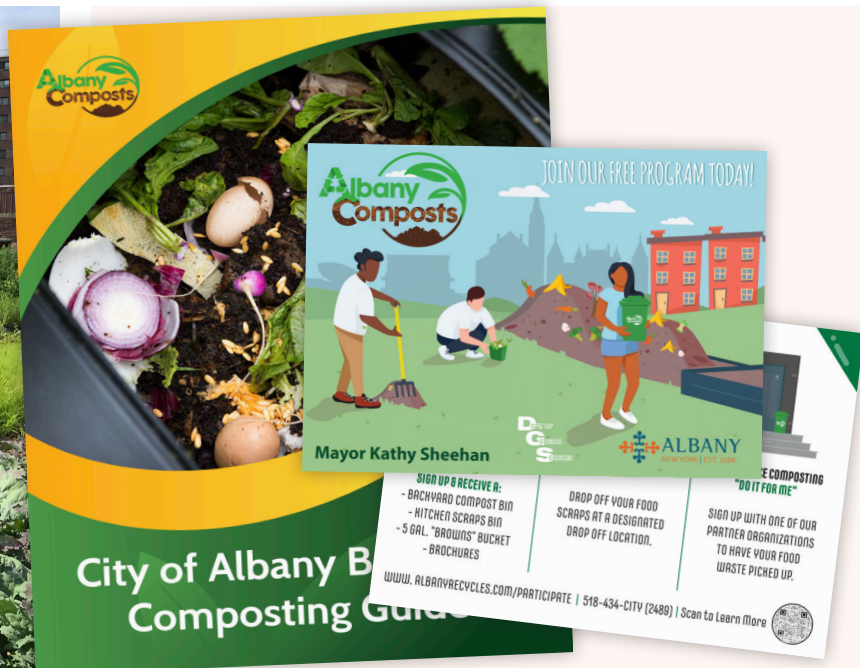
*"I looked at the lay of the land and came across FoodScraps360 and Radix, which were already providing services. Instead of investing cost and time for the City to start its own food scraps collection, we decided we wanted to contribute to what they were already doing."*

Sonny Von Tiedemann,  
Recycling & Composting Coordinator, City of Albany

curbside program, which costs \$20 per month for weekly service. Radix uses electric cargo bicycles and tricycles to collect food scraps. Residents also have the option to use FoodScraps360's pick-up service. The cost is \$26 per month for one 5-gallon bin and \$30 for two 5-gallon bins. In 2024, grant-funded initiatives diverted about 270 tons of food scraps via backyard composting, drop-off, and curbside collection, as well as commercial collection done by Radix. (Not included are the commercial tonnages collected by FoodScraps360.)



Summer youth workers at Radix's urban farm  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance



City of Albany Home Composting Guide and postcard encouraging participation in composting  
Credit: City of Albany

## Composting Activity

Radix accepts vegetative food scraps, unbleached soiled paper, and meat and dairy in small amounts. Collected food scraps are fed to a flock of chickens and ducks. Radix has passively aerated composting piles that process the manure scrapings removed from the birds' enclosure; on occasion, food scraps are composted in these piles when there is more than can be managed by the flock. Finished compost is used on Radix's urban farm; produce is sold in a farm share program.

Tivoli accepts vegetative food scraps, shredded soiled paper and cardboard, leaves, grass clippings, coffee grounds and filters, and tea bags at its drop-off site. Staff and volunteers manage the 3-bin composting operation; finished compost is used in Tivoli's gardens.

## Outreach and Education

The grant funds helped pay for signage at the drop-off sites, collection bins for households to use for their food scraps, and other outreach and educational materials. The City's Albany Composts [webpage](#) describes the programs and opportunities available to households to participate. Von Tiedemann participates in composting education and outreach in the community, including tabling at various community events, such as at farmers' markets.

## Costs & Benefits: City of Albany

The City of Albany's partnerships with established community-based organizations "gave the City credibility when it initiated its food scraps collection and composting programs," says Von Tiedemann. "These groups are recognized for their environmental advocacy and community-focused initiatives. They were doing the work many years before our program started at a time when there wasn't a lot of support and funding available for food waste diversion projects. They carved out a space that the City could tap into and support financially for their services." The NYS DEC grants enabled the City of Albany to create and sustain the City's composting programs. The grant funds awarded in 2023 expire in 2026. The City of Albany has the option to extend the grant for two additional years. "We will be filing the extensions," adds Von Tiedemann. "After the grant expires, all of the programs are expected to continue in perpetuity."

## Costs & Benefits: Community-Based Organizations

While Radix had been offering food scraps collection and processing services prior to the grant funding, the monies have helped offset the costs of site improvements and labor. Eventually, the City of Albany would like to use some of the compost produced by its partners for springtime plantings throughout the city and potentially for soil remediation in environmental justice communities.





Chickens eating food scraps at Radix  
Credit: Radix



Greenhouse at Radix  
Credit: Radix

## PPP Lessons Learned

If municipalities want to establish a program like the City of Albany's, a full-time employee is needed to create and manage the programs initiated. "Working with Radix and Tivoli on this project has taught me the importance of balancing the expectations and budgetary conditions of both the City and the nonprofit partners so that everyone is comfortable with the project and believes it is moving in a direction that best serves the residents and achieves the City's sustainability goals," explains Von Tiedemann. "Create connections with community groups first and then, together, present the proposed plans to elected officials like a City Council. That helps build support for the desired projects."

In a presentation on an ILSR webinar, Von Tiedemann offered recommendations for municipal governments when partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs), including:

- Ensure the needs of the environmental justice communities are made central in drafting composting policy
- Preference composting strategies that are decentralized, local, and community based
- Adequately compensate community-based organizations (CBOs) — don't assume they will do the work purely out of love
- Draft memorandums of understanding with CBOs when partnering on grants to ensure they do not get cut out of programs after funding has been received

## More Information

**RFP** For The Provision Of Food Waste Collection And Processing Services (August 2023)

**Albany Compost** website

**The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center** website

**FoodScraps360** website

**Friends of the Tivoli Lake Preserve and Farm** website

**City of Albany Backyard Composting Guide**

ILSR Webinar: **Government Support for Community Composting Part 3: Cities and Counties with Public-Private Partnerships (feat. City of Albany)**

ILSR Webinar: **Government Support for Community Composting Part 4: A Menu of Options – Zoning, Grants, and Contracts (feat. Radix)**

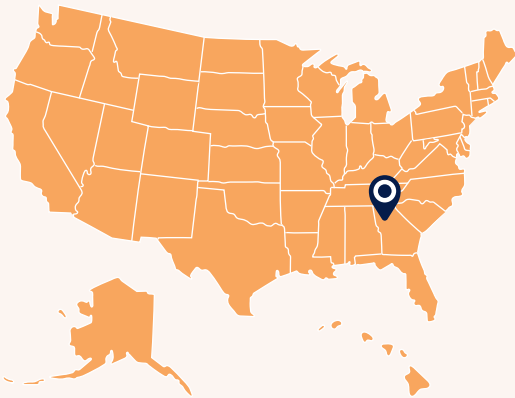
Video: **Environmental Benefits of Community Composting**



SOIL  
SLINGER

# Avondale Estates, Georgia

## *Local Commissioner Drives Pilot Program with Multiple Partners*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEES:

City of Avondale Estates, Shannon Powell, Assistant City Manager, and Ellen Powell, Marketing & Communications Director; Miranda Rupkey, Deputy Chief of Staff, Commissioner Ted Terry, Super District 6 office

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

CompostNow (David Paull, Chief Impact Officer, and Kate Emrich, Executive Assistant and Project Coordinator)

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

The City of Avondale Estates is a small suburb (population ~3,500) in DeKalb County in the metropolitan Atlanta region. In 2024, the City was awarded \$323,800 through a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreement to pilot free curbside food scraps collection from city households in partnership with CompostNow, DeKalb County Super District 6 Commissioner Ted Terry, Food Well Alliance, and Roots Down. The USDA grant funding is for two years and includes the 12-month curbside pilot program that covers service for up to 750 households. The City partnered with CompostNow, a subscription-based food scraps collection and composting company with operations in North Carolina, Georgia, and Ohio, to provide households with weekly collection using a 7-gallon food scraps bin. The initiative is CompostNow's first municipal curbside pilot. The company was included in the USDA grant as a partner.

In April 2025, the City was told that funding for the program was paused to "implement Administration priority alignment actions." In turn, Avondale Estates paused the pilot after eight months of collection. In late July 2025, the City's program passed USDA review, resulting in [the reinstatement of funding](#). Collection resumed in August 2025 and ends in early December 2025.

### Municipal Motivation and Pilot Logistics

DeKalb County Super District 6 Commissioner Ted Terry was interested in developing a viable curbside residential food scraps collection program that could be replicated in other municipalities in DeKalb County. "Commissioner Terry approached the City of Avondale Estates to gauge

CompostNow team member  
Credit: CompostNow



CompostNow team members delivering food scraps bins  
Credit: CompostNow

its interest in partnering with his District office, CompostNow, and several other organizations to apply for the USDA CFWR grant,” says Miranda Rupkey. “We explained that the pilot would be turnkey and that the City didn’t need to do any legwork to set it up. The City had conducted a successful film plastic bag collection pilot using buckets distributed to households, and was amenable to trying a pilot focused on food scraps.”

A total of 534 households were participating in the pilot program when the USDA funding was suspended. Midway through the first eight months, it was decided to offer collection to multi-family households to reach the 750-participant goal of the pilot. Originally, service was limited to single-family dwellings. During the first eight months of the pilot, CompostNow collected and composted 80,243 pounds of food scraps. Accepted materials include a wide range of food scraps, BPI-certified compostable items, soiled paper and pizza boxes, household plants and soil, and pet food. Participating households enrolled in the pilot on CompostNow’s website and then received the 7-gallon curbside bin for their food scraps. CompostNow notified pilot participants that collection was restarting and delivered the 7-gallon bins that had been returned to the company when the pilot was suspended.

## Composting Activity

CompostNow hauls the food scraps it collects from Avondale Estates to its composting facility in Meriwether County, Georgia. It has a Georgia Environmental Protection Division Class II Permit By Rule composting permit, which enables the facility to take preconsumer and postconsumer food scraps. Approximately 6,000 tons of feedstocks are processed



Behind the Bin informational Zoom session flyer and flyer for the City's curbside compost program  
Credit: City of Avondale Estates, CompostNow

annually, including collected organics from Avondale Estates. Finished compost from the Avondale Estates’ curbside pilot is distributed to DeKalb County growers by Food Well Alliance, and to local library gardens to support edible landscapes by Roots Down.

CompostNow has been working for the last decade to grow composting infrastructure in Georgia. On its [website](#), the company notes that its advocacy for changing the zoning of its previous facility in Douglas County from Residential Agriculture to Agriculture was successful. “This was a massive victory for compost facilities and composting infrastructure in Douglas County and Metro Atlanta to allow for composting facilities to be an approved use under the more-protected agriculture umbrella, as opposed to heavy industrial,” explains CompostNow.

## Outreach & Education

Both Avondale Estates and Commissioner Terry’s office conducted outreach and education to households prior to launch and during the pilot. Door-to-door marketing using door hangers, tabling at the farmers market, two mailings, social media, and articles in the City’s bimonthly newsletter were used. “When we expanded to apartment complexes, we held several open houses in building lobbies to publicize the pilot,” says Ellen Powell. “Our goal was to meet people where they are. Doing outreach and education fulfilled the City’s in-kind contribution to the USDA grant.” CompostNow supplements the City’s and County’s outreach via its [webpage](#) where households sign up to join the pilot. Instructions on the collection schedule and materials accepted, along with monthly impact reports (for all participating households combined), are provided.





CompostNow Meriwether composting facility  
Credit: CompostNow



CompostNow team member delivers food scraps bins  
Credit: CompostNow



CompostNow Meriwether composting facility  
Credit: CompostNow

Commissioner Terry's office conducted a survey of participants to gauge their interest in and satisfaction with the pilot. "The response was overwhelmingly positive," notes Rupkey. "About 30% of participants responded. One question asked if the pilot weren't free, would they have participated? In their responses, 68 said maybe, 50 said no, 22 said yes (13.9%), and 18 said other. One person who said they would not have paid to join the pilot but has enjoyed diverting their food scraps so much that they would pay [for the service] when the pilot ended!"

The pilot did not originally include compostable liner bags and countertop bins for collecting food scraps in the kitchen. "We launched collection in August 2024 and by September, when the weather was still hot, some participants were saying that their curbside bins were messy and odorous, and attracting pests," says Kate Emrich. "We worked with Biobag to give households countertop bins and liner bags, which helped resolve the situation. It was important that this pilot test the success and feasibility of a curbside tip model [bin is emptied and put back on the curb], as opposed to CompostNow's standard doorstep clean swap [bin swap] subscription model. While the clean swap works for our subscription service, it's not as scalable or economically feasible for most municipalities."

In July 2025, days before the City was notified that USDA had restored the funding, pilot partners participated in a webinar — open to the public — that was hosted by Commissioner Terry's office. The [webinar](#) presented key takeaways and lessons learned from the residential food scraps collection program.

## Costs & Benefits: Avondale Estates

The City benefited by receiving funding from the grant and support from Commissioner Terry's office to make it possible to offer Avondale Estates' residents an opportunity to divert their food scraps. When the grant funding was suspended, over 100 households decided to continue participating by subscribing to CompostNow's collection service for \$29 per month while the federal funding was frozen. In a July [article](#) about the pilot in the Decaturish, a local news site, Ellen Powell said the City would like to continue composting once the program is completed, but would need to "figure out the funding." CompostNow's David Paull noted in the article that "we provided numbers to the City of Avondale for what it would cost for CompostNow to continue to provide these services at a scaled, entire city level for Avondale, and that ended up being roughly about \$100 a year per household."

## Costs & Benefits: CompostNow

The pilot has been beneficial from CompostNow's perspective, providing an opportunity to learn and test what is involved with offering curbside collection in a municipal program. The company primarily works with municipalities under a memorandum of understanding to set up and service food scraps drop-off sites, which vary in scope from just carts and signs to more elaborate structures. "We've learned this curbside model works, but having sustained funding is key," says Emrich. "The biggest barrier we're finding and where these pilot programs are getting hung up is figuring out a way to fund them long term."



## PPP Lessons Learned

**City of Avondale Estates:** The City of Avondale believes providing residents with curbside collection of food scraps is “possible and feasible” and that the current pilot has been effective in bringing awareness to the value of food scraps recycling and compost. “Proof of that is the number of pilot participants that continued the service after the suspension, even though they had to pay,” says Shannon Powell. “Our partnership with CompostNow has been successful. They are pros and were very efficient in getting the program up and operating smoothly. This speaks to partnering with an existing service provider that has learned what it takes to make this type of service successful.”

**CompostNow:** CompostNow has learned through the City of Avondale pilot, as well as its municipal food scraps drop-off partnerships, that “spelling out what the individual roles for the parties involved are going to be and who holds what responsibilities during the program are critical,” notes Paull. “For us, this has been a necessary point of improvement. On paper, CompostNow is just a collector of material. In reality, much more is involved, e.g., fielding questions from households when our crews are servicing the routes, even though the allocated budget does not include outreach and education. It is also very important, during negotiations with municipalities — especially with pilots — to be clear about what they want to establish and what they are trying to accomplish. This lays the groundwork for successful programs.”

He adds that public-private partnerships to deliver municipal programming will be a critical part of the composting industry’s future. “Local composters are uniquely positioned to be program partners,” Paull emphasized.

*“Our partnership with CompostNow has been successful. They are pros and were very efficient in getting the program up and operating smoothly. This speaks to partnering with an existing service provider that has learned what it takes to make this type of service successful.”*

Shannon Powell, Assistant City Manager,  
City of Avondale Estates

## More Information

[CompostNow website](#)

[CompostNow Avondale Estates Community Composting Program website](#)

[City of Avondale Public Works & Sanitation website](#)

[Food Well Alliance website](#)

[Roots Down website](#)

Webinar: [Behind the Bin: Key Takeaways from Avondale Estates’ Composting Program](#)

[City Awarded Grant to Pilot Curbside Composting](#), April 2024

[City of Avondale Estates Program Paused Press Release](#), April 2025

[Curbside Composting Pilot Resumes with Reinstatement of Federal Funding](#), July 2025

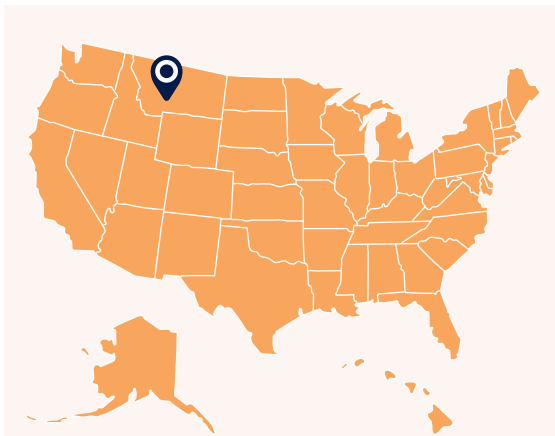
ILSR Webinar: [Scaling Up Mission-Driven Community Composting \(feat. CompostNow\)](#)

ILSR Webinar: [Education & Outreach to Reduce Contamination in Composting \(feat. CompostNow\)](#)



# Bozeman, Montana

## *Bartering Services and Finished Compost for Land Access*



### **MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:**

City of Bozeman, Nicholas (Nick) Ross,  
Director of Transportation & Engineering

### **COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:**

Happy Trash Can Curbside Composting LLC  
(Ryan Green, Co-Owner)

### **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**

Happy Trash Can Curbside Composting LLC (HTC) began offering food scraps collection service to households and commercial businesses in 2016 in Bozeman and surrounding communities. In 2021, HTC relocated its food scraps composting operation to the City of Bozeman's Story Mill Convenience Site and yard trimming composting facility, located on a closed landfill within the city limits. A 3-year basic services agreement was established with the City of Bozeman to operate HTC's food scraps composting facility at the site in exchange for processing yard trimmings collected by the City. The agreement was essentially a barter — HTC did not pay rent for use of the site, and the City did not pay HTC to do the composting. In 2024, the City received the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant of \$1,605,660 to establish residential food scraps collection infrastructure for up to 7,000 households. The EPA grant award states that the curbside program is expected to prevent 2,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent from the landfill each year.

The City issued an RFP for processing the collected food scraps and yard trimmings at the Story Mill Convenience Center. YES Compost (another Bozeman composter and collection service provider) and HTC bid on the contract, which was awarded to HTC based on cost, the company's history of performance, and the ability to scale operations as more households joined the collection program. The contract term is for three years, with the ability to mutually extend it for one-year intervals up to five years.

SG Mobile® GORE® Cover aerated composting systems at  
Story Mill Convenience Site  
Credit: Happy Trash Can





Tarp winder for CORE® Cover aerated composting systems  
Credit: Happy Trash Can



Screening compost at Story Mill Convenience Site  
Credit: Happy Trash Can



SG Mobile® GORE® Cover aerated composting system  
Credit: Happy Trash Can

## Municipal Motivation

The Bozeman City Commission gave a directive to the solid waste office in 2022 to start a weekly residential organics collection service, as historically, only yard trimmings collection was offered seasonally. Organics diversion is included in the City's [climate action plan](#), and, over the longer term, it will help preserve landfill capacity in the region and reduce the number of trips to the landfill. The Commission's decision was made prior to the City applying for the SWIFR grant. The Solid Waste Division is within the Transportation & Engineering Department in Bozeman and is established as an enterprise fund that operates competitively with the private sector. Funds for the Solid Waste Division are not allocated through the general fund. Being awarded a SWIFR grant to cover the capital costs of a residential food scraps collection program significantly lowers the fee for the service to residents.

The City's Solid Waste Division services roughly 13,000 households out of about 25,000 households in the city. A rate study was done to determine pricing that would be affordable for households and cover the cost of solid waste services. Bozeman selected an "a la carte" approach that incentivizes downsizing the trash cart and bundling service with recycling and organics. To be eligible for organics collection in either 35- or 95-gallon totes, households have to also sign up for trash service. The City provides a kitchen countertop bin and certified compostable liner bags. A wide range of food scraps, food-soiled paper, pizza boxes, and yard trimmings are accepted. The fee to opt in for organics collection is \$10 per month, regardless of cart size. An 8-month seasonal option is available. Rollout of the curbside service began in

April 2025. About 1,500 households have opted into organics collection. The City will no longer pick up yard trimmings placed on the curb (previously done seasonally at no charge to the households), which is an incentive to sign up for the cart-based service.

---

*"Our original agreement did not include a land use clause, and the City was able to end our use of the site at any point. The new contract formalizes our use of the land for a set period of time."*

Ryan Green, Co-Owner,  
Happy Trash Can Curbside Composting LLC

---

## Contractual Arrangements

The contract with HTC to compost collected food scraps and yard trimmings from the curbside program is a Professional Services Agreement with more risks and liability for the vendor than the basic services agreement HTC had with the City originally. HTC obtained legal counsel for the negotiations. The Agreement includes an allowance for HTC to operate its composting facility on City property. Payment for HTC's composting services is based on the volume of unscreened finished compost. HTC composts the City's material separately from what it collects and composts directly. A 30-cubic-yard City roll-off container is used as the measuring "device." The City of Bozeman pays HTC \$25 per

cubic yard and retains 20% of the compost for use in its parks and open spaces. Under the contract, HTC can sell the other 80% of the compost it produces and retain the revenues.

“The contract allows us to haul and compost all material we collect to the composting site at no fee, but other haulers are not allowed to use the facility, e.g., to bring yard trimmings directly there for composting,” notes Ryan Green, Co-Owner of HTC. “Our original agreement did not include a land use clause, and the City was able to end our use of the site at any point. The new contract formalizes our use of the land for a set period of time.”

The City of Bozeman holds a landfill permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality for the Story Mill Convenience Site, which also covers a large-scale composting facility permit. HTC is named managing partner on the composting permit.

## Composting Activity

In 2018, HTC collaborated with Sustainable Generation (SG) to serve as a demonstration site for two of the smaller-sized 50-foot-long SG Mobile® GORE® Cover aerated composting systems. The demo illustrated the capability of the system to compost increased tonnages on a similarly sized footprint. When it relocated to the Story Mills Convenience Center, HTC continued use of the SG system, and subsequently added four 100-foot GORE covers, each with capacity to process about 300 to 400 cubic yards of material per batch. The total throughput of the four 100-foot GORE systems is 11,000 cubic yards annually. Separately from the City curbside program, HTC operates a private residential and commercial curbside program. “All incoming material from the City is processed in the 100-foot systems,” explains Green. “The original 50-foot systems are used to compost materials that HTC collects. We keep the two streams separate.”

Composting under the covers is done in two 30-day phases; in between the two, the piles are turned with a 1.5-cubic-yard loader bucket. Recently, HTC purchased a tarp winder on a trailer that is pulled with a loader to put on and take off the tarps. “Those 100-foot GORE covers are heavy, and we had been using a loader and a skid steer on each side to cover and uncover the piles,” says Green. “We can now do in five minutes what used to take two hours.” HTC also upgraded to a 3-cubic-yard loader bucket to improve materials handling efficiency.

Currently, HTC has about 1,150 residential subscribers and about 75 commercial accounts. For residential food scraps collection, HTC has a pickup truck with a trailer equipped to



Pile of incoming food scraps and feedstocks  
Credit: Happy Trash Can

carry 64-gallon totes. Households use 5-gallon buckets to set out food scraps, which HTC empties into the totes. HTC collects commercial food scraps using a box truck with a lift gate. It uses a 10-cubic-yard dump trailer to deliver compost to clients.

## Outreach & Education, Participation, and Contamination

The City of Bozeman’s target is to have 7,000 to 8,000 households sign up for organics collection service. The program is promoted via interviews with news outlets, social media, and direct mailers to households. Route drivers will staple literature about signing up for an organics cart onto the brown yard trimmings bags that households still set out, even though the new program replaces that free service. Ross explains that about half of the 13,000 households signed up for City solid waste services opt in for recycling collection. “It took a while for people to sign up for recycling, and then it grew steadily,” he says. “We believe the same trend will happen with organics collection.”

HTC has the right to reject loads with excessive contamination. The City purchased two automated side-loader collection vehicles, so the drivers do not inspect cart contents before emptying them into the trucks. After tipping at the composting site, HTC works to remove contamination. As of August 2025, for every 5- to 6-cubic-yard loads tipped, there are about five to ten gallons of contamination, according to Green. Incoming loads are monitored closely, and the City plans to do route audits of organics carts to evaluate the contents.



## Compost Markets

Finished compost is screened to half-inch. HTC's retail price is \$70 for a half cubic yard and \$80 for one cubic yard. Compost is also sold for \$3 per gallon or \$60 for a 32-gallon cart. Almost 100% of the compost sold is used on farms and in home and community gardens.

## Costs & Benefits: Bozeman

The SWIFR grant covered all the capital costs to offer residential organics collection. This included \$900,000 for two automated side-loading collection trucks (\$450,000 per truck), \$500,000 for 8,000 collection carts, and funds to cover the purchase of kitchen countertop bins, compostable liner bags, and outreach and education materials. "The City would have had a very short window to recuperate these costs if the solid waste utility had to cover them," explains Ross. "No doubt it would have made the monthly rate for service much higher. Now we have time to plan out future capital investments as equipment needs to be replaced." Two new jobs were expected to be created at the Solid Waste Division for the organics collection services.

## Costs & Benefits: Happy Trash Can

Having an existing relationship with the City of Bozeman helped to facilitate contract negotiations once HTC was awarded the contract. "We had been working with Bozeman for three years under a basic service agreement and wanted to have a contract," says Green. "The RFP created that opportunity. Happy Trash Can gets paid based on the volume of compost made from the City's collected organics, and the negotiations resulted in a higher price for the finished compost, but still allows HTC to maintain ownership of the compost and give a percentage to the City. Ultimately, we lost about 100 household subscribers we were servicing in Bozeman who joined the City program, but had factored in that anticipated loss into our budget." In terms of job creation, HTC expects to hire a full-time composting site operator.

Capital costs for the larger-sized front-end loader bucket were \$5,500 with freight. The cost of the tarp winder and several replacement GORE covers was not shared. "We would much rather invest in new composting equipment than collection trucks and dump trailers," adds Green. "A lot of overhead goes into labor for collection and fleet maintenance, especially because we don't have route density in the region we service."

## PPP Lessons Learned

**City of Bozeman:** Nick Ross found that the City's standard professional services agreement, which is used across all City departments, no matter the service, made it difficult

to negotiate the contract with HTC, as it is a boilerplate document that allows little flexibility. "I would have benefited by having a template for a contract that is focused on public-private partnerships with a community composter," he says. "The level of detail and intricacy in the professional services agreement is beyond the scope that private contractors would be accustomed to. I appreciate the legal nuances around a PPP with a governmental entity in terms of risk and liability, but both our department and HTC had to rely on attorneys for the negotiations."

**Happy Trash Can:** The existing working relationship that HTC had with the City of Bozeman helped to facilitate a mutually beneficial agreement for the PPP. "That relationship is what allows our partnership to shine," notes Green. "Because Bozeman's Solid Waste Division is an enterprise and is self-funded through the fees for their services, it enables the agency to do more subcontracting for services that it isn't skilled to do, in this case, food scraps composting." Its experience with the City of Bozeman is helping HTC lay the groundwork for a second PPP with the City of Livingston, Montana. The company is negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding where it would establish a yard trimmings composting operation at that City's transfer station. HTC would be able to compost food scraps it collects in Livingston, instead of hauling them to Bozeman, which is about 25 miles away.



Bags of collected organics  
Credit: Happy Trash Can



City of Bozeman's organics collection vehicle  
Credit: City of Bozeman

## More Information

[Happy Trash Can website](#)

[City of Bozeman Organics Collection website](#)

[U.S. EPA SWIFR grant announcement](#), September 2023

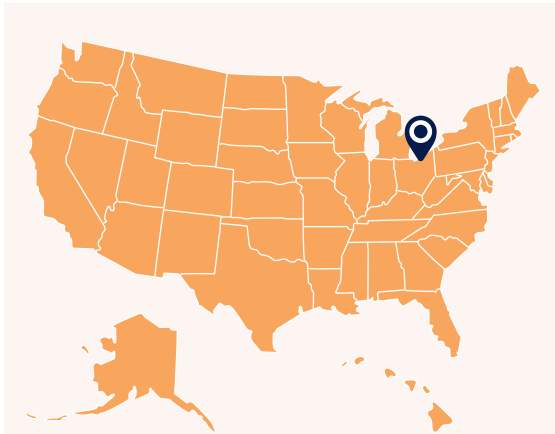
[Bozeman Climate Plan](#)

ILSR Webinar: [Tackling Contamination at Composting Sites \(feat. Happy Trash Can\)](#)



# Cleveland, Ohio

## *Partnerships Open Door to Land Access for Composting*



### **MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:**

Mayor's Office of Sustainability, Sarah O'Keeffe, Director of Sustainability & Climate Justice

### **COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:**

Rust Belt Riders Composting LLC (Daniel Brown and Michael Robinson, Co-Founders)

### **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**

The City of Cleveland, Mayor's Office of Sustainability and Cleveland Metroparks have partnered separately with Rust Belt Riders Composting LLC (Rust Belt Riders) to provide food scraps drop-off services. Founded in 2014, Rust Belt Riders is now a worker-owned cooperative that offers curbside and drop-off food scraps collection to businesses, residents, schools, and other locations in Cleveland and the surrounding area. It uses several area composting facilities to process the food scraps collected. For a number of years, Rust Belt Riders has been seeking property for its own larger-sized composting facility in the City of Cleveland. In 2024, it identified an unused City-owned property that had formerly been a waste transfer station.

In March 2025, the Cleveland City Council authorized the City to enter into a ground lease with Rust Belt Riders for the use and occupancy of the unused six-acre City property. The worker-owned cooperative initially opted to lease the site from the City to be able to continue to partner on grant applications, but financing proved to be challenging without the land as collateral. In August 2025, the Cleveland City Council authorized the City to sell the parcel to Rust Belt Riders for fair market value, less environmental-related costs. The single location will house composting, soil blending, packaging, distribution, feedstock receiving, and a retail space to sell Rust Belt Rider's soil products. The projected project cost to operationalize the site is about \$6.5 million.

In 2024, the Mayor's Office of Sustainability was awarded a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting for Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grant for \$340,961 to help the City expand residential food

Hand sowing plant in nutritious compost  
Credit: Steven Springer, Rust Belt Riders



scraps drop-off locations, increase waste diversion and access to composting services, and provide subsidized monthly subscriptions to composting services to SNAP-eligible households. The City partnered with Rust Belt Riders to establish eight new residential food scraps drop-off sites with the grant funds. The fee to use the drop-off sites is \$12 per household per month. SNAP-eligible households who sign up for one of the 250 free memberships will also be able to use the eight existing Rust Belt Riders' drop-off sites within the City of Cleveland, for a total of 17 SNAP-eligible sites. Materials accepted include a wide range of food scraps, food-soiled paper, and BPI-certified compostable products.

Rust Belt Riders also has a partnership with Cleveland Metroparks to provide food scraps drop-off locations in 32 city parks. The partnership began in 2024. There is no contract between Rust Belt Riders and Metroparks. "The parks are host sites like others we have, so we have a very simple access agreement with Metroparks like we do with all of our other site hosts," explains Daniel Brown.

## Municipal Motivation

The City of Cleveland's [2025 Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP) includes an objective to reduce solid waste sent to landfills by residents and businesses by 50% by 2035 (CAP goal 2, objective 6). A Community Priority in the CAP is to "require all new residential and commercial properties to have the infrastructure for recycling and food waste collection containers, along with their trash containers, and provide guidance retrofitting existing properties to meet these requirements." Having infrastructure in place in the city to collect and process food scraps is a cornerstone of meeting the CAP waste diversion goal and implementing the Community Priority. The Mayor's Office of Sustainability had experience working with Rust Belt Riders through a successful pilot in 2022 to establish a food scraps program for the City-owned, 100-year-old [West Side Market](#), which features a variety of food vendors. A sole-source contract was awarded to Rust Belt Riders; the City paid for the program using a \$60,000 grant awarded to Cleveland Neighborhood Progress by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. [Rid-All Green Partnership](#) (Rid-All), an urban agricultural center and community education hub in Cleveland, composted the collected food scraps.

"The role of government in this space, in my view, is to set up the public policy environment for businesses that want to push the envelope, especially on climate change and also addressing embedded environmental challenges," explains Sarah O'Keeffe. "We want those businesses to survive in our current context. They need to show a return on investment. There is no reason they can't do that. And now, a worker-



Rust Belt Riders team member overseeing production of tilth soil  
Credit: Steven Springer, Rust Belt Riders

*"The role of government in this space, in my view, is to set up the public policy environment for businesses that want to push the envelope, especially on climate change and also addressing embedded environmental challenges. We want those businesses to survive in our current context. They need to show a return on investment. There is no reason they can't do that. And now, a worker-owned enterprise is building a composting facility that will help the City achieve its climate goals. What could be better!"*

Sarah O'Keeffe,  
Director of Sustainability & Climate Justice,  
Mayor's Office of Sustainability

owned enterprise is building a composting facility that will help the City achieve its climate goals. What could be better!" She adds that having an existing relationship via partnerships with businesses like Rust Belt Riders is important: "The chance of something going sideways is diminished due to these relationships."



Operations team member servicing drop-off totter  
Credit: Steven Springer, Rust Belt Riders



Incoming food scraps pile  
Credit: Steven Springer, Rust Belt Riders



Team member transferring collected food waste  
Credit: Steven Springer, Rust Belt Riders

## USDA Grant Logistics

The Mayor's Office of Sustainability's positive experience with Rust Belt Riders and Rid-All for the West Side Market led the City to include their services in the USDA grant application. The new drop-off sites established with the USDA grant funds have been selected to ensure equitable access to drop-off infrastructure, aligning with the City's **15-minute city index** for maximum geographic and population coverage, notes O'Keeffe. The Office of Sustainability collaborated with the City's Department of Urban Analytics & Innovation, using GIS maps with population density and public transit accessibility data to identify locations. Included in those selected are several neighborhood resource and recreation centers and community development corporations. "Our goal is that by the end of the USDA-funded program in 2026, 90% of Cleveland's population will have access in less than a 15-minute walk from a drop-off location," says O'Keeffe.

The grant funds cover expanding the City's existing educational composting training programs and establishing a Community Compost Ambassadors program conducted by the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District, with at least one Ambassador trained and active throughout the grant period in each food scraps drop-off area (17 total). A \$1,400 annual stipend is being paid to resident Compost Ambassadors. The City is managing the public awareness campaigns and is tracking the impact in terms of quantity and quality of public engagement. Rid-All is involved in workforce development, facilitating creation of composting-related green jobs. Rid-All's training program had 12 compost trainees, who processed food scraps dropped off at its urban farm in early 2025. A second cohort will be formed in early 2026.

## Composting Site Development

To arrive at the point of getting the City Council's approval of the lease in spring 2025, Rust Belt Riders appeared before six different Council committees, including city planning, finance, and public works. "I had to go in front of them in a certain order," says Brown. "We've completed the remediation phase of the site and have done geotechnical surveys of the property to determine the weight capacity. The asphalt is very old, and we need to replace it before any construction can get started." The property is zoned appropriately for composting. Rust Belt Riders needs a Type 2 permit from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to accept all types of food scraps. The facility is being sized to process 5,000 tons per year of food scraps.

Compost produced at the new facility will be certified for use in organic agriculture, yielding a higher value per cubic yard, adds Brown. "It's equivalent to selling \$100 worth of compost that we are able to produce for \$10."

Rust Belt Riders is raising money to help cover capital costs for the new facility by issuing a new set of shares that impact investors, individuals, and organizations can buy. "It functions like a debt instrument, but these investors get board representation," explains Michael Robinson. "We are unwavering in our commitment to being a worker-owned enterprise, which is not venture capital friendly." The Cleveland Foundation has given Rust Belt Riders \$750,000 at 3.5% interest, which gives the company a good start. The City of Cleveland is providing \$50,000.





Educational signage at food scraps drop-off site and educational flyer  
Credit: Steven Springer, Rust Belt Riders, City of Cleveland

## Contractual Agreements

Rust Belt Riders' contract with the City of Cleveland expires at the end of the USDA CFWR grant funding period on May 31, 2026. The drop-off site infrastructure deployed will remain in place through the end of 2026.

## Composting Activity

Only preconsumer food scraps will be accepted at the new composting facility, along with wood chips and other carbon amendments. Rust Belt Riders has existing clients who generate preconsumer feedstocks that are very clean, essentially eliminating challenges with contamination. Postconsumer food scraps collected at the drop-off locations are hauled to the Earth 'n Woods composting facility in Peninsula, Ohio.

The property has an 8,000-square-foot building with "four walls and a leaky roof" that will be used for the company's retail store. In Phase I, a pre-constructed steel structure is being built to house an aerated static pile system with reverse aeration to control odors. The steel structure (versus fabric) is necessary in order to put solar panels on the roof. Rust Belt Riders is installing heat recovery equipment supplied by Agrilab Technologies. The recovered heat will be used in a building housing its bagging operations. Curing and screening will take place outdoors.

## Outreach & Education

Both the City of Cleveland and Rust Belt Riders are involved in outreach and education, including social media posts, for the food scraps drop-off locations. Recreation Centers were given large-format posters to promote the program.

The City of Cleveland attended tabling and outreach events. Compost Ambassadors are also a large part of outreach and education, attending events in their neighborhoods. Compost Ambassadors check the site monthly and make sure everything is in working order, and assist neighbors with questions.

## Compost Markets

The City of Cleveland has not had a contract to procure compost from Rust Belt Riders in the past, although it does purchase compost for tree remediation and to green vacant properties.

## Costs & Benefits: City of Cleveland

The City of Cleveland does not have its own infrastructure for food scraps diversion, and relies in part on grants to offer services to residents. Having existing relationships via partnerships with businesses like Rust Belt Riders and nonprofit organizations like Rid-All enables the City to work toward reaching its Climate Action Plan goal of reducing solid waste sent to landfills by residents and businesses by 50% by 2035. According to Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District's [Annual Report](#), the City of Cleveland sent over 133,000 tons to the landfill in 2024. That same year, reports the District, less than 1% (1,124 tons) of organics were recycled.

## Costs & Benefits: Rust Belt Riders

Participation in the USDA CFWR grant builds on Rust Belt Riders' preference to use drop-off sites to collect residential food scraps. Of its approximately 4,000 residential subscribers, 90% are signed up for drop-off and 10% subscribe to curbside service. It also services about 315 commercial food scraps generators, some with multiple locations. "The fact that we still do pick up is a holdover," says Robinson. "Households that subscribe are willing to pay for the convenience at a cost of \$45 per month. If we have a good enough margin, we will continue to offer it."

Subscribers to its drop-off program all pay \$12 per month for access. That includes contracts Rust Belt Riders has with other municipal governments in the region. "The \$12 fee is based on our configuration of service and the total amount of money we need to continue building out the program in other jurisdictions," explains Robinson. "We are treating municipal contracts like our commercial contracts, charging cities by the tote for pickup. Key is to show the economic benefit from this kind of arrangement." He adds that the [City of Shaker Heights](#) received a grant from the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and is able to offer residents food scraps drop-off for free.

The new composting facility is expected to increase the company's efficiency and will create jobs, especially when it is operating at full capacity. "Job growth equates to revenues, so to the extent that the new site brings in more money at full capacity, we could support a total of 50 full-time employees from our current 30," says Brown.

## PPP Lessons Learned

**City of Cleveland:** Public-private partnerships are helping decrease greenhouse gas emissions, a key goal for the City of Cleveland. Among the City's lessons learned are:

- Have initial conversations with potential partners. "You need to connect," says O'Keeffe. "It may be a matchmaking process through philanthropy or a federal, state, or local grant opportunity. People have lots of connections to make receiving that funding a reality. This is important because former industrial cities like Cleveland don't have funds, especially for new things. The City is already taxed with meeting existing obligations."
- Once access to funding is received, be as innovative as possible and achieve a proof point [of success]. That has to be accomplished. "What is really exciting about Rust Belt Riders and the City working together is that we are focused on problem solving and iterating on how to advance goals like circularity and lift up examples in Cleveland that are successful," adds O'Keeffe. "Once we have a couple successful little programs, there is no reason bigger ones can't happen."
- Use data from earlier pilot projects to make the case for future grant funding. In Cleveland's case, data from the pilot at the West Side Market was used in the USDA grant application.
- The City worked closely with Rust Belt Riders on the application, and built the case for "achieving a more equitable composting service for Cleveland residents. "We also emphasized a key circularity goal of creating nature-based solutions," notes O'Keeffe. "The grant highlighted the City partnering with a worker-owned business and an urban farm (Rid-All), employing Clevelanders in good green jobs that are where they live, and siting drop-off bins where there is accessible transit. We imagined a program that has all of these things that layer in goals of the City."
- A strong existing partnership with Rust Belt Riders enabled the conversation with City officials about providing access to land that the City was not using. "We were already partnering, and said, 'Wouldn't it be great to have a place right here to keep this going?'" recalls O'Keeffe. "Dan Brown's

thoughtfulness and insights made it possible to connect all the pieces, plus he and Michael Robinson have been able to navigate the private side of making a composting facility in Cleveland a reality."

**Rust Belt Riders:** Foremost, working with a municipality on land access has been a lesson in patience, notes Brown. "We learned how critical it was for Rust Belt Riders to build relationships with the City for the past decade. It made it possible to tap into the goodwill we created in our discussions and negotiations for the composting site property."

---

*"We learned how critical it was for Rust Belt Riders to build relationships with the City for the past decade. It made it possible to tap into the goodwill we created in our discussions and negotiations for the composting site property."*

Daniel Brown, Co-Founder,  
Rust Belt Riders Composting LLC

---

## More Information

[Rust Belt Riders](#) website

[Rust Belt Riders + City of Cleveland Food Scrap Composting Sign Up](#) website

[Rid-All Green Partnership](#) website

[Cleveland Metroparks](#) website

[City of Cleveland Residential Composting and Community Workforce Development Pilot Program](#), USDA CFWR Project Description

[City of Cleveland Partners with Rust Belt Riders to Launch Pilot Food Scrap Composting Drop-Off Program for Residents](#), November 2024

ILSR Webinar: [Scaling Up Mission-Driven Community Composting \(feat. Rust Belt Riders\)](#)

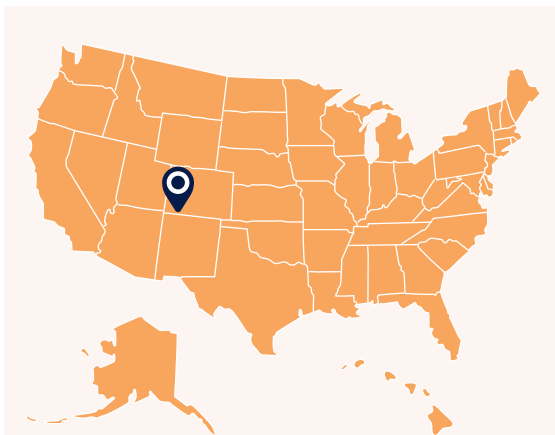
ILSR Podcast: [How Composting Can Create a Regenerative Food System \(feat. Rust Belt Riders\)](#)





# Durango, Colorado

## *No-Cost Contract Enables Partnership*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

City of Durango, Marty Pool, Sustainability Manager

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

Table To Farm Compost (Monique DiGiorgio, Co-Owner, Managing Member)

### Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

In July 2021, Table to Farm Compost entered into a five-year public-private partnership (PPP) with the City of Durango to offer citywide, subscription-based curbside food scraps collection for residents and businesses. Table to Farm Compost (Table to Farm), based in Durango, responded to a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by the City and was awarded the contract for the five-year term, renewed annually. The PPP does not exclude other entities from also offering food scraps collection. Subscriptions are available to residents and businesses on an opt-in basis. There is no funding attached to the partnership, and customers pay a monthly subscription directly to Table to Farm. The City of Durango helps promote Table to Farm's collection service, e.g., with signage on its trash and recycling collection service.

In 2024, the City of Durango signed a separate, paid contract with Table to Farm to collect bagged leaves "on demand" in the fall (September 30 through December 6 for 2025). Households purchase the kraft bags, and there is no fee to participate. In 2024, about 300 households participated, and Table to Farm collected about 2,500 bags.

### Municipal Motivation

The City of Durango does not have its own composting facility, but wanted to give households access to food scraps composting, which makes up about 20% of the residential solid waste stream. "Materials management is one of the key sectors of sustainability work, and we are fortunate to be in a town that has been adopting sustainability measures for a long time," says Marty Pool. "The City knew about Table to Farm Compost and its capability to offer a food scraps collection service, but in order to be able to promote its service directly, we had to enter into a contract agreement."

Truck bed full of food scraps and yard trimmings  
Credit: Table to Farm

In 2022, Table to Farm Compost, in partnership with the City, was awarded a Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) Recycling Recovery and Economic Opportunities (RREO) Grant to conduct a Curbside Compost Market Study that recruited households to participate in the food scraps collection service for free for three months. Households were asked to complete a survey both before and after the service to help understand the reasons for either discontinuing or continuing service for a fee after that timeframe.

Data was collected about perceptions and experiences in composting. “In short, price and service timeframe were two big factors in households opting to discontinue service,” says Monique DiGiorgio. “As a result, Table to Farm Compost started offering every other week service for a reduced price. That was implemented in April 2024, and over 75% of new customers have been choosing this subscription type.” The company used Stop Suite software to transition its collection service to the two subscription types. Customers who sign up for either service are automatically placed on the route, and then the platform sends email and text message reminders, making every other week service especially convenient, she adds.

After significant community support to expand food scraps collection as a citywide service, the Durango City Council unanimously passed Resolution 2025-004 on January 7, 2025, “directing the City Manager to research organic waste management ordinances in other communities, conduct pilot organic waste management programs as case studies for Durango, and subsequently form an organic waste management citizen focus group.” Actions being considered in response to the resolution by the sustainability staff at the City include food scraps drop-off locations; service rebates for low-income households; support for commercial composting through the Visit Durango sustainable tourism funding; and a pilot “pay-as-you-throw” program.

“Our contract with Table To Farm Compost, as it stands right now, is an opt-in model,” explains Pool. “Many of our environmentally-focused community members want to see expanded composting services. We are in the phase where about 15% to 20% of households are opting in and anticipate that over the next couple of years, the amount of people opting in voluntarily will probably plateau. In order to grow participation further, we’ll need to explore a different approach. This could be requiring mandatory service for some customer types, an organic waste ban, incentive or subsidy models — there are really a wide range of options. The directive from City Council is to research what ordinance options are out there in other municipalities, and this will help



Table to Farm truck  
Credit: Table to Farm

*“The directive from City Council is to research what ordinance options are out there in other municipalities, and this will help us determine the best fit for Durango ... Either way, our research will focus on strong community engagement and feedback.”*

Marty Pool, Sustainability Manager,  
City of Durango

us determine the best fit for Durango if we make the shift. We’ve applied for and are receiving technical assistance for the focus group through the State of Colorado [Strategic Technical Expertise for the Public Sector] STEPS program. Our research will focus on strong community engagement and feedback.”

One of the actions — creating a compost service discount for income-qualified residents — was implemented in June 2025. Residents who complete an application and are approved for either the Food Tax Rebate or Utility Refund (or both) will be automatically approved for discounted curbside compost collection from Table to Farm Compost. These programs were already in existence, and tying in discounted compost service was a straightforward process. Once approved, interested residents can sign up for service directly with Table to Farm and enter a special discount code. The program covers 90% of the cost of curbside compost collection service for qualifying residents, applied directly to the monthly Table to Farm subscription.





Solar station charging electric vehicles  
Credit: Table to Farm



City of Durango Resolution 2025-004, and informational mailer about composting program  
Credit: City of Durango

## Composting Activity

Table To Farm's windrow composting site is on four acres at a farm outside of Durango in La Plata County. The company has secured several significant grants, including two additional grants from the CDPHE RREO program (about \$290,000 in total) and one from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Fertilizer Production Expansion Program (about \$2.2 million with about \$1.5 million in matching funds). Much of the grant funds have been used to scale the operation, including applying for and obtaining a Class III CDPHE permit, running electric power to the site for remote temperature monitoring (and to provide back-up power required for our solar panel array), and purchasing a rear-loading collection vehicle and a bagger. The Class III permit allows 18,000 cubic yards of in-process composting material at one time and covers the range of feedstocks accepted, including food scraps, yard trimmings, and woody debris.

Table to Farm has approximately 800 residential customers; subscriptions are \$28 per month for weekly collection and \$18 per month for every other week collection. Fruits, vegetables, wood chips, sawdust, eggshells, nuts, coffee grounds, teabags, unbleached coffee filters, and compostable paper-based dishware are accepted, along with a limited quantity of meat and dairy products. Residential subscribers receive two 7.5-gallon bags of compost a year. The USDA fertilizer grant is enabling Table to Farm to increase sales of compost to farms in the region (it had expanded from 10 to 20 farms by the end of 2024). It also sells finished products at Durango Nursery and supplies other nurseries around the region with bulk and bagged compost. Other buyers include the Colorado Department of Transportation and landscaping companies.

## Outreach & Education

In addition to putting signage on its trash and recycling vehicles, the City sends out about 5,000 mailers per year and includes information in its utility bills and on a dedicated webpage about the program. Promotion is also done at the Durango Farmers Market.

## Costs & Benefits: City of Durango

Other than paying Table to Farm Compost for bagged leaf collection and outreach and education materials, the City does not incur any costs to provide households and businesses access to food scraps collection. A primary benefit is creating a behavior of source separation of food scraps, and notes Pool, "the community and environmental benefits are pretty clear, for example, greenhouse gas emissions avoidance. If a community cares about recycling and investing in recycling, it should be caring about and investing in organic waste management at least on par, if not more." The outcome of the ordinance research and focus group engagement will help to outline the City of Durango's investment in organics diversion in future years.

A potential incentive for the City to invest in food scraps collection is that the Bondad Landfill it uses for disposal (11 miles outside of Durango) may be nearing the end of its life. Bondad is privately operated, and so remaining lifespan information is not readily available, but Pool says he's heard figures in the 7 to 25 year range, depending on permitting for expansion and the rate of waste disposal in the region. In Table to Farm's talking points presented to the City Council before its January 2025 vote on the resolution, DiGiorgio suggested how the City could recoup costs for offering citywide organics recycling services: "With the Bondad

Landfill nearing its capacity, the financial case to increase composting is compelling. Landfills cost about \$1.5 million per cell to expand, while doubling the number of households currently composting in the city limits using a 50/50 cost-share, or \$9 per month, would cost approximately \$173,000. Achieving citywide composting would cost approximately \$500,000. . . . Composting is low-hanging fruit to achieve significant climate change goals locally.”

*“The community and environmental benefits are pretty clear, for example, greenhouse gas emissions avoidance. If a community cares about recycling and investing in recycling, it should be caring about and investing in organic waste management at least on par, if not more.”*

Marty Pool, Sustainability Manager,  
City of Durango

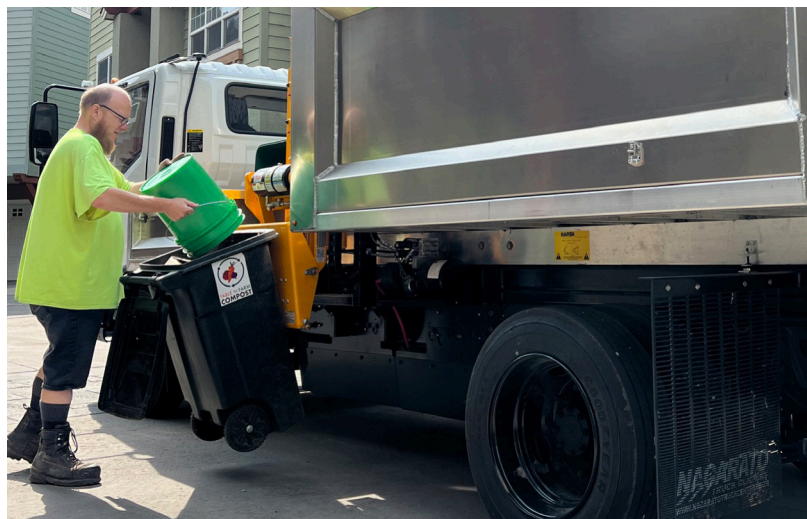
## Costs & Benefits: Table to Farm Compost

DiGiorgio says it has a “great partnership” that allows the City of Durango to work with Table to Farm Compost. “It doesn’t commit the City to providing citywide service or any program funding, but it helps show the City’s support for organics recycling,” she notes. “I hope that by 2026, the Resolution passed by the City Council turns into something meaningful, such as not allowing organics in the trash. It also could lead to an RFP for services that our company can bid on.” DiGiorgio explains that the City will be tracking the development and rollout of Colorado’s extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation, which will guide the structure and funding of statewide recycling services. “Community-wide recycling and composting will place our local government ahead of the curve in this effort to ensure it receives as much statewide support as possible,” she says.

## PPP Lessons Learned

**City of Durango:** The City’s experience with its PPP with Table to Farm Compost has been positive, says Pool, and illustrates how a for-profit business can provide city services — especially ones with social and environmental benefits.

**Table To Farm Compost:** DiGiorgio views the PPP as an instrumental tool in enabling the company to work collaboratively with the City of Durango. The PPP “is a first step towards citywide composting,” she explains. “If we didn’t have that step, all of the work we’ve been doing in Durango would have been harder. For example, the partnership meant that City staff could work with us over the years. Staff provides research, updates, and education to City Council. The PPP has given our company more standing.” She adds that the resolution that passed in January is a great step in demonstrating that the City Council is prioritizing organics recycling.



Team member dumping food scraps bucket into truck bed  
Credit: Table to Farm

## More Information

[Table to Farm website](#)

[City of Durango Compost website](#)

[Resolution to research organic waste management ordinances, and related activities](#)

Table to Farm Compost’s Durango City Council [“Talking Points”](#), 2024

City of Durango [Discounted Compost Service Program](#)

[Scaling Compost Company To Service End Markets](#), BioCycle, November 2024

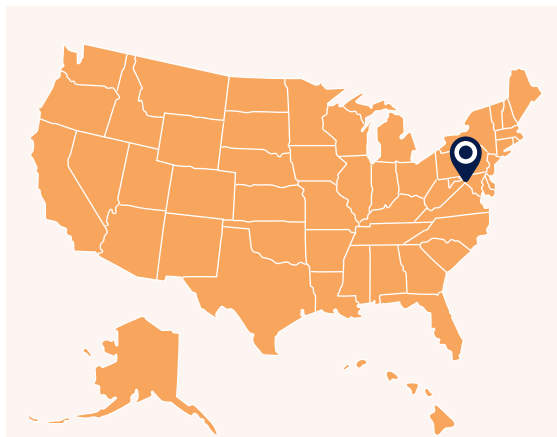
State of Colorado [Strategic Technical Expertise for the Public Sector \(STEPS\)](#) program





# Greenbelt, Maryland

## *Citizen Green Team Drives Local Composting*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

City of Greenbelt, Luisa Robles, Sustainability Coordinator, Public Works

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

Compost Crew (Daniel Israel, Senior Vice-President, Residential & Municipal Programs)

### COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS:

City of Greenbelt's Green Team (Tom Taylor and Hally Ahearn)

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

The City of Greenbelt has worked closely over the years with the City's Green Team, using a PPP model to initiate a variety of community composting programs. The Green Team is a citizen group, supported by the City, which engages the community in sustainability projects and events, and educates city residents on programs, practices, and activities that contribute to a green lifestyle. For example, the Green Team, with assistance from the Greenbelt Department of Public Works, applied for and received a grant from Prince George's County to build a 3-bin hot composting system for food scraps drop-off, along with a shed to store equipment. A Public Works crew installed a cement pad for the 3-bin system and helped assemble it. Citizens registered to use the food scraps drop-off site and then volunteered to help manage the composting process. Volunteers also initiated vermicomposting projects for household food scraps. And for many years, the City has also offered home composting bins at wholesale prices.

These initiatives helped lay the groundwork for a PPP about five years ago between the City of Greenbelt and Compost Crew, a locally owned food scraps collection and recycling company, to set up a food scraps drop-off site at the City's Residential Recycling Center. Allowed food scraps include meat and dairy, as well as BPI-certified compostable bags and flatware. One of the sites receiving food scraps collected by Compost Crew is the Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. In 2023, the City of Greenbelt was awarded a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grant of \$266,753 to conduct a curbside food scraps collection pilot and set up a small composting system on property owned by the Trinity Assembly of God, a local church. Compost Crew

Team member speaking in front of compost outpost  
Credit: City of Greenbelt

was identified in the grant application as the service provider for curbside service and to compost collected food scraps in Compost Crew's proprietary Compost Outpost® aerated static pile (ASP) system. Funding for the pilot program ended in August 2025.

## Municipal Motivation & Pilot Logistics

The motivation for the pilot was to evaluate whether curbside collection would increase residents' access to and participation in food scraps recycling, and evaluate a more localized approach to composting. The USDA CFWR grant funds made it feasible to conduct the pilot. Greenbelt has about 10,500 households. Residents in Greenbelt can select their own hauler for trash and recycling collection. The City provides trash and recycling collection for roughly 2,500 households. Participation in the curbside pilot was offered to all Greenbelt residents; a total of 410 households could be serviced with the grant funds. A one-time fee of \$20 was charged to participating households for delivery of a 7-gallon food scraps collection bin. Households were not charged a monthly collection fee. The first 200 homes to sign up received 18 months of service, the total length of the pilot collection program. The next 120 sign-ups received 12 months of service, and the final cohort of 90 received six months of service. The last sign-up period was February 2025, with collection ending in August. From the start of curbside collection in mid-February 2024 through July 2025, Compost Crew collected over 125 tons of food scraps.

Participation by households signed up for the pilot averaged between 85% to 90% on a weekly basis. In some cases, pilot participants have shared the use of their bins with their neighbors, engaging more households than the 410 sign-ups the grant funds enabled.

Contamination in the food scraps set out in the container has been low, according to Compost Crew. Its staff closely examines each week's recycled food scraps for contamination. After one early Greenbelt collection, the company's Composting Director said: "We usually receive cleaner loads of food scraps on our routes that divert to our municipally-partnered Compost Outposts since we have a direct line of communication with the participants and essentially perform a waste audit each week during decontamination. We provide real-time education and updates to reduce contamination, which results in a safer environment for our staff and higher quality end product."

A survey was sent to pilot participants in April 2025 to collect data on their experiences with the program; 147 responses were received. Among the findings: 98% of participants are very satisfied or satisfied with the program; 73% said



Food scraps drop-off site  
Credit: City of Greenbelt

*"We usually receive cleaner loads of food scraps on our routes that divert to our municipally-partnered Compost Outposts since we have a direct line of communication with the participants and essentially perform a waste audit each week during decontamination. We provide real-time education and updates to reduce contamination, which results in a safer environment for our staff and higher quality end product."*

Kristie Blumer, Senior Director,  
Composting, Compost Crew

the 7-gallon bin to set out food scraps was a good size (25 respondents said it was too big); and 78.2% were very satisfied or satisfied with the level of customer service.

An example of the positive response to the pilot and its potential long-term impact is this remark from one participating household: "We have been on board since the initial test program started last year and have been so happy with every aspect of it. We can compost all of our food scraps and have them picked up. The company conducting the pick-up and the processing has been absolutely amazing . . . We have been spreading the word with our neighbors, working on getting them on board with composting."

Another resident noted: "I LOVE the convenience of curbside composting."





Shipping container at the Compost Outpost®  
Credit: Compost Crew



Greenbelt Mayor Emmett Jordan, Councilmember Jenni Pompei, Councilmember Kristen Weaver, and Compost Crew's Ben Parry at ribbon cutting for the new compost facility.  
Credit: City of Greenbelt



Luisa Robles & Compost Crew's Tim Jenkins holding fresh compost  
Credit: City of Greenbelt

## Contractual Agreements

The City's contract with Compost Crew to service its food scraps drop-off site is ongoing, with the funds built into the Public Works budget. The contract for the curbside pilot and composting operation was negotiated once the City was awarded the USDA CFWR grant. Now that the pilot has ended, the City will be executing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Compost Crew to continue collecting food scraps from the 410 households in the pilot. The City Council approved the continuation in July 2025. The cost per household is a total of \$21.09 per month; the City will cover \$11.09 of that cost, and residents who continue to participate will pay \$10.00 per month.

## Composting Activity

The Compost Outpost at the Trinity Assembly of God church property began operating in February 2024. It has two 20-foot shipping containers equipped with wood floors and a forced aeration system powered by electricity from the church. Each container is divided into two bays, with capacity to compost about 10 tons of food scraps and 30 tons of bulking and carbon-rich materials per month. The ASP container system was approximately \$25,000. The Greenbelt Public Works supplies wood chips and leaves to blend with the incoming food scraps. A 25-foot by 20-foot concrete pad was built to serve as a place to mix food scraps and wood chips prior to loading in the bays with a skid steer provided by Compost Crew. After two to four weeks of active composting in the bays, the material is put in covered curing windrows for two to three months, with the piles turned once a week. The City of Greenbelt purchased the Compost Outpost® equipment as part of the grant agreement, but plans to sell the equipment back to Compost Crew as the pilot agreement ended in August 2025. Compost Crew will continue to process curbside-collected food scraps in Greenbelt at that location.

Approximately 100 cubic yards of screened compost were distributed by August 2025, with an additional 300 cubic yards to be produced and screened as part of the USDA CFWR grant. The compost is being donated to the Greenbelt Community Garden Club, which has been coordinating the distribution. One of the Community Garden Club coordinators, Eric Raun, described the compost value as follows: "The compost was of excellent quality. All the gardeners who I talked to in Henry's Hollow were very pleased and are looking forward to another delivery in the spring of next year. It's great to have a program whereby the community enriches the gardens of Greenbelt."

## Outreach & Education

Compost Crew set up a website for pilot participants to facilitate ordering the food scraps collection bin and to inform participants what materials were accepted in the curbside pilot. The company also maintained a waiting list of interested participants during times when the program was awaiting its next expansion. It provided the City of Greenbelt with educational materials to distribute. The City, with assistance from the Green Team, utilized social media, tabling at events and festivals, and news articles to recruit residents to participate in the curbside pilot. Compost Crew sent emails to participating households over the duration of the pilot with updates and reminders to set out their bins and to let Compost Crew know if they were going out of town.

## Costs & Benefits: Greenbelt

The USDA CFWR grant enabled the City to have a distributed composting site within City limits, shortening the hauling distances between the doorsteps of City of Greenbelt residents and where their food scraps are processed. It also helped lay the groundwork for testing residential food scraps collection as a way to expand access to households that may not have been inclined or able to utilize the drop-off site. Once the free service offered during the pilot ended in

August 2025, the 410 households were offered the \$10-per-month subsidized rate to continue curbside collection. Currently, subsidized collection is limited to 410 households. “Eventually, we might be able to expand, and if people want to pay the full fare of about \$21 per month, we might be able to do 660 homes,” says Luisa Robles. “We’re not there yet.”

## Costs & Benefits: Compost Crew

Working with the City of Greenbelt to establish a pilot-scale residential curbside food scraps collection program laid the groundwork for the opportunity to continue the service in the city. One challenge with municipal program models that initiate the curbside service at no cost to the households is then converting the program to a fee-for-service model, notes Daniel Israel. “It’s important to have a plan in place from the beginning to transition from a free service during a pilot to a paid service following the pilot,” he says. “If residents pay nothing or very little for food scraps collection, and then their option is to pay the list rate for a company like Compost Crew (at \$32 per month), the attrition rate will likely be high. If households are asked to pay a small amount during the pilot — with a subsidy provided by the grant funds — they are more likely to continue with the service. For many people, an investment under \$10 per month is a small amount for the service they are getting.” The new monthly subsidized fee of \$10 per month falls into that range.

## PPP Lessons Learned

The City of Greenbelt’s existing contract with Compost Crew for the municipal food scraps drop-off site provided experience in collaborating with the company for the pilot. Further, the fact that Compost Crew had a modular composting system that could be utilized for the USDA-funded pilot helped to get the necessary infrastructure into place. “We all took a lot of pride in our communications with residents and engaging them to participate,” notes Robles. “Our team worked well with Compost Crew’s team. It was nice having a vendor take care of collection logistics and the composting.”

Robles encourages other municipalities to start with backyard composting programs and a food scraps drop-off site — steps that are easier to set up. “Just start shaking trees and make people aware of composting, and then come in with a program,” she suggests. “All of the hot composting and worm bin efforts the City and the Green Team made were a foot in the door to public engagement and outreach. And key is to get the City Council interested in putting money into food scraps composting. People want it, and it benefits all.”

*“Just start shaking trees and make people aware of composting, and then come in with a program. All of the hot composting and worm bin efforts the City and the Green Team made were a foot in the door to public engagement and outreach. And key is to get the City Council interested in putting money into food scraps composting. People want it, and it benefits all.”*

Luisa Robles, Sustainability Coordinator,  
Public Works, City of Greenbelt

## More Information

[Compost Crew](#) website

[Compost Crew Composting in Greenbelt](#) website

[Greenbelt Community Garden Club](#) website

Compost Crew, [Greenbelt Goes Green](#), May 2024

[City of Greenbelt’s Green Team](#) website

[Recycling Food Scraps and Composting in Greenbelt](#), GreenbeltOnline, January 2021

[Food Scraps Collection Again Extended, Open for Signups](#), Greenbelt News Review, September 2025

[Community of Greenbelt Post-Grant Composting Options](#), February 2025 presentation to City Council

City Council Work Session Agenda - [Solid Waste Rate Modification Proposal](#)

ILSR Webinar: [Government Support for Community Composting Part 3: Cities and Counties with Public-Private Partnerships \(feat. City of Greenbelt\)](#)

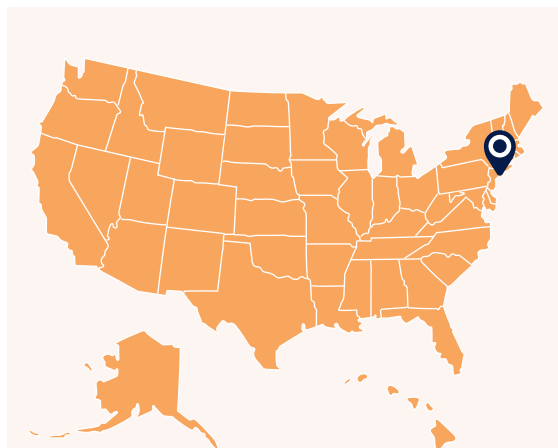
ILSR Webinar: [Scaling Up Mission-Driven Community Composting \(feat. Compost Crew\)](#)





# Hoboken, New Jersey

## *Small Pilot Grows to Drop-Off Network and Curbside Subscription Services*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEES:

City of Hoboken Office of Climate Action and Innovation, Jennifer Gonzalez, Director/Chief Sustainability Officer; Marilyn Baer, Communications Manager

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

Community Compost Co. (Eileen Banyra, President/CEO)

### Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

Community Compost Co., founded in 2013, services multiple municipalities with food scraps drop-off services in northern New Jersey and the Hudson Valley in New York State. The company, which has a registered food scraps composting site in Kerhonkson, New York, pioneered municipal food scraps drop-off in the City of Hoboken in 2014. It began by collecting residential food scraps at farmers' markets, then evolved to drop-off spots (drop spots) in City parks. In 2015, Community Compost Co., in partnership with the City, started door-to-door collection in Hoboken for residents and commercial businesses. About 250 households currently subscribe to curbside collection. The City of Hoboken has provided support for the program, including an operations space and truck parking at the Department of Public Works yard.

Community Compost Co. renewed its Service Agreement with the City of Hoboken in February 2025 to collect and haul residential and commercial food scraps from the City's 14 drop spots and curbside routes. The agreement includes providing the City with five cubic yards of bulk finished compost at no charge. Community Compost Co. bases the volume to be delivered on the contract size and type of compost product requested.

### Municipal Motivation

The City tested the waters for residential food scraps collection when Eileen Banyra approached them about trying out drop spots at two farmers' markets in Hoboken. "We then set up drop spots in five commonly visited places in the city," says Banyra. "There wasn't much participation, but the City of Hoboken was willing to continue trying

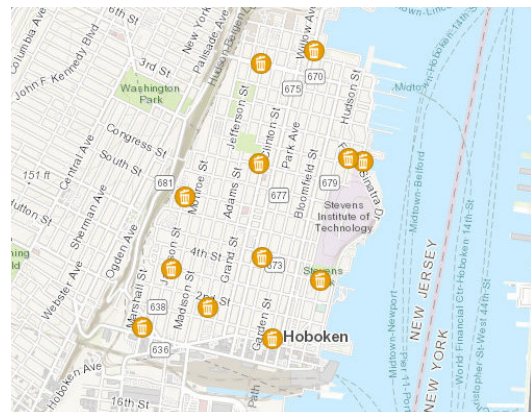
Mayor Bhalla and Community Compost Co. team members highlighting bags of compost  
Credit: Community Compost Co.



Hoboken composting drop-off site  
Credit: City of Hoboken



Hoboken food scraps hauler container  
Credit: Community Compost Co.



Map of Hoboken drop-off sites  
Credit: City of Hoboken

different approaches, including drop spots in City parks as well as assist with the creation of a door-to-door collection service for households and businesses. A main reason the City contracted with Community Compost Co. in those early years was it was looking to be a greener City, and we were the only company around promoting a food scraps collection service.”

Jennifer Gonzalez explains that the City of Hoboken has continuously sought to scale up its composting efforts to divert organic waste since the program began. “As the fourth most densely populated city in the country without space for a municipal composting facility, we need to haul our organic waste to a disposal facility, and unfortunately, we are limited by the availability of licensed composting facilities in New Jersey,” she says. “Solid waste collection (hauling) and disposal is a significant line in the annual municipal budget. Organics, and more specifically food scraps, are the most prevalent waste fraction in Hoboken’s garbage stream. The City is always seeking ways to improve both fiscal and environmental sustainability, including through organics recycling.” An audit completed in 2024 for the City of Hoboken’s Zero Waste Plan found that organics constituted 45% of the overall waste characterized, and 76% of this fraction was food scraps.

Because the drop spots set up in 2015 were not widely used by residents, Community Compost Co. discontinued them. The drop spot program resumed in 2019 and quickly expanded with the public’s growing environmental awareness. In 2018, the City partnered with the company to implement a nine-month commercial organics collection pilot. Under its contract with the City, Community Compost Co. agreed to accept one 20-cubic-yard container of materials a week, which the City would haul to the company’s composting facility, along with the residential food scraps collected. “That contract included a clause about contamination,” explains Banyra. “Loads with greater than 3% contamination were

rejected and photo documentation was provided. Levels of contamination between 1% and <3% had a set fee per load, plus an hourly labor charge if it took our staff more than one hour to remove contamination. It is important to include a clause like that in municipal and commercial contracts.” The City found that the time and labor expense to haul collected food scraps to Kerhonksen was too costly, and discontinued hauling after the pilot ended. It then contracted with Community Compost Co. to do the collection and hauling.

*“Solid waste collection (hauling) and disposal is a significant line in the annual municipal budget. Organics, and more specifically food scraps, are the most prevalent waste fraction in Hoboken’s garbage stream. The City is always seeking ways to improve both fiscal and environmental sustainability, including through organics recycling.”*

Jennifer Gonzalez, Director,  
City of Hoboken Office of Climate Action and Innovation

In 2024, the City of Hoboken released its Zero Waste Plan, designed to “achieve zero waste and move the City towards a more circular future,” states the City’s website. The four core categories in the plan are garbage and recycling, organics, reuse and repair, and education. Initiatives in the organics category include requiring businesses to collect food scraps, developing a network to connect food donors and recipients, and advocating for a Hudson County (New Jersey) composting facility. (Hoboken is located in Hudson County.) Community Compost Co. assisted the City in its





Infographic on disposal of vegetable ties and flyer on residential composting initiative  
Credit: City of Hoboken

application for a U.S. EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant (SWIFR) in 2024; the company was named as the key partner for organics recycling. However, the City was notified in July 2025 that it would not receive a grant. “We are continuing to seek grant funding to scale up the composting program,” notes Gonzalez.

Currently, there are 14 free drop spots in Hoboken that are serviced under the agreement with Community Compost Co. Twelve of the locations have two 48-gallon totes that are serviced twice a week; the other two have two totes and are serviced weekly. Drop spot locations include City Hall, seven City parks, a community garden, and several public spaces (e.g., a plaza).

## Contractual Agreements

The 2025 Agreement has a “not to exceed” amount that covers hauling of collected food scraps to Kerhonkson one to two times per week, servicing the 14 drop spots, monthly education and outreach information sessions, and pallets of bagged compost equal to 50 1-cubic-foot bags per pallet.

## Composting Activity

Composting is done in aerated static piles; the facility’s registration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation allows Community Compost Co. to compost up to 5,000 cubic yards (or 2,500 wet tons) of source-separated organics a year, including preconsumer and postconsumer food scraps. Plans are underway to develop a second site in Middletown, New York, which would shorten the transport distance to 60 miles each way from Hoboken versus the current 95 miles. “The new site will help us expand our distributed ‘waste to resource’ model, while reducing overall transportation and environmental costs for all parties,” notes Banyra. “It also offers an overall

improvement to the flow of goods and services to the region. We are seeking local approvals and, if successful, are looking to open the new site in 2026.”

## Outreach & Education

The City actively promotes the composting program and “recycling right” via its [website](#), social media, and print advertising on public waste receptacles.

In its municipal partnerships, Community Compost Co. charges a fee for outreach and education. In the case of Hoboken, given the longevity of the program, outreach to the public goes beyond promotion of the drop spots and curbside collection service to trainings on various types of composting options, including backyard composting and vermicomposting, soil ecology and compost utilization, and best practices for drop spot management.

## Compost Markets

Households that subscribe to curbside collection in Hoboken can receive two deliveries of bagged compost a year if they opt into that offer. Bulk compost given back to the City of Hoboken is used in community gardens and public spaces.

## Costs & Benefits: City of Hoboken

The City has been able to offer residents and businesses food scraps collection through its partnership with Community Compost Co. Over the years, program logistics have been fine-tuned, creating a solid foundation to increase organics recycling under the City’s Zero Waste Plan.

## Costs & Benefits: Community Compost Co.

What started as a pioneer program in 2014 has evolved into a mature residential and commercial food scraps collection “institution” in Hoboken. The 14 drop spots that are free to use are accessible to all households in Hoboken. “We make more money on our door-to-door service for residents and businesses, but access to food scraps collection for all is core to our mission,” says Banyra. “The challenge with a free service, however, is you can’t come back from that in terms of shifting to a paid system. We suggested that if a fee was to be charged, that it be included with the garbage bill and represented as a utility bill or shown as a line item on the tax bill so that people really knew the cost of removal of waste and organics. Understanding costs is a significant consideration when creating municipal programs for food scraps diversion.”



Vehicle unloading food scraps at compost site

Credit: Community Compost Co.

Another consideration is access to land for local, small composting sites, closing the loop within the city limits. The SWIFR grant application that Hoboken submitted included composting at innovation parks that the City is creating to manage stormwater and mitigate flooding. For example, its ResilienCity Park transformed an asphalt-covered former industrial site into 5 acres of public open space that encompasses not only athletic spaces and a playground but also green infrastructure to filter and store stormwater to “alleviate the City’s infrastructure system and adjacent nuisance flooding,” according to the City. Currently, there are three resiliency parks, and two of those have food scraps drop spots.

## PPP Lessons Learned

**City of Hoboken:** For the City of Hoboken, having an asset like Community Compost Co. has been essential to the success of its residential and business food scraps collection programs. “Partnerships are essential for innovation in municipal operations,” says Gonzalez. “Community Compost Co. was an instrumental partner in establishing Hoboken’s residential compost collection program and supports the City’s organic recycling efforts by helping fill the void created by limited licensed composting facilities in New Jersey. The City of Hoboken has physical space constraints that prevent the City from establishing its own organic recycling program, and the City’s Zero Waste consultant, Eunomia, determined at a high level that outsourcing waste collection is more cost-effective than bringing those operations in-house.”

Lessons learned/programmatic experiences that the City of Hoboken gained working with a company like Community Compost Co. are to “start small, evaluate progress regularly, and be flexible to make changes to evolve the program,” adds Gonzalez. “We have made various program improvements over the years as recommended by Community Compost Co., ranging from physical changes (e.g., better sheds and signage for the compost drop sites) to digital changes (e.g., a registration system to provide the locks to the drop sites and ‘what to compost’ education.”

**Community Compost Co.:** Banyra also emphasizes how the longevity of the partnership has facilitated incorporating lessons learned into each new contract the City negotiates with Community Compost Co. Having a municipal policy in place to incentivize food scraps diversion when negotiating public-private partnerships would be a benefit to community composters, she adds. “The policy anchors a program because it can take a few years to get people to buy into the practice until it becomes more natural.”

An important public-private partnership lesson learned for Banyra has been getting buy-in for a program from elected officials. “They have to be in the discussions from the get-go,” she explains. “Your job is to sell them the importance of the program and get them to make funds available to invest in it. Suggest the municipality start with a pilot. Offer a sample program to gauge interest. For example, if the municipality wants a drop spot, tell them to get 20 people interested in using it before you commit. Also, make the jurisdiction pay for some consulting time to set up the pilot and tell them if a contract is negotiated, they will get 50% of the money spent back.”

Several other lessons learned are:

- Initiate community involvement early and often and identify who will be your advocates.
- Discuss a “scaling trajectory” and what steps are needed by both parties to scale a program, maintain it, etc.
- Encourage the municipality to allow or require that a certain percentage of the food scraps collected are composted within the city limits to demonstrate the value of compost and to create a “real-time,” living circularity model.

## More Information

[Community Compost Co. website](#)

[City of Hoboken Compost \(Organics Recycling\) website](#)

[City of Hoboken Zero Waste Plan](#), April 2024

[City of Hoboken Opens New Jersey’s Largest Resiliency Park](#), June 2023

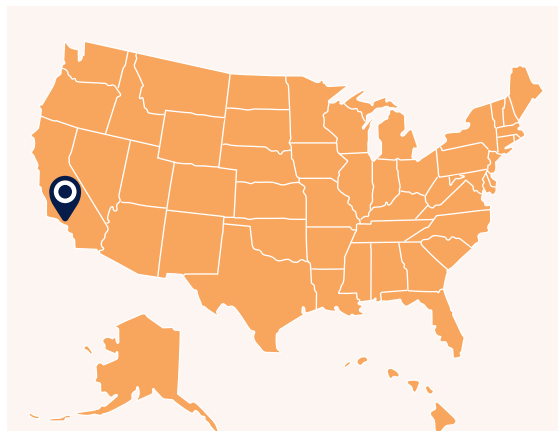
ILSR Webinar: [Government Support for Community Composting Part 2: Food Scrap Collectors & Composters with Municipal Contracts \(feat. Community Compost Co.\)](#)





# Los Angeles, California

## *City Taps Community Composter Network and Infrastructure*



### **MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:**

Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment, James Roska, Environmental Engineer, Solid Resources Support Services Division

### **COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:**

LA Compost (Michael Martinez, Founder and former Executive Director; Gina Vollono, Senior Operations & Special Projects Manager; Maggie Smart McCabe, Compost Hubs Program Manager; and Ryan Jackson, Executive Director)

Community Compost Day LA group photo  
Credit: LA Compost

### **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**

The Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) Department, in collaboration with LA Compost, applied for and received two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting for Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grants. LA Compost, founded in 2013, manages food scraps drop-off sites and composting hubs in the City of Los Angeles and other jurisdictions in Los Angeles County. It uses a model of decentralized community composting hubs that are “maintained and enjoyed by activated community members.”

The first grant, for \$85,800 (2021-2023), was used to expand LA Compost’s existing farmers’ market drop-off sites from two locations to five additional farmers’ markets in the city. The grant also funded the construction of a Regional Compost Hub in Griffith Park, which is operated by LA Compost under an Agreement with the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks (LARAP) Department. Food scraps collected from Los Angeles farmers’ markets are composted at this Compost Hub. LASAN collaborated with LARAP to create the Hub. The USDA grant funds supported the development of one additional Regional Compost Hub, which was completed and became operational after the grant period. Funds from the City’s Board of Public Works were used to supplement the first USDA grant for an additional ten farmers’ market locations and three Regional Compost Hubs. The total funding from the first USDA grant and the City’s matched funding was equivalent to \$990,000 for this first agreement.

The second grant, awarded in 2024 for \$400,000 and ending in 2026, builds on the drop-off and Regional Compost Hub programs created via



the 2021 USDA CFWR grant. The grant funds are enabling LASAN and LA Compost to collaborate in supporting the existing locations and adding five farmers' markets and one Regional Hub, for a total of 20 farmers' market drop-off sites and six Regional Compost Hub sites. This brings the total to 26 food scraps reduction and composting locations in the City of Los Angeles. The markets are open multiple days during the week in addition to weekends.



Community members at farmers' market drop-off  
Credit: LA Compost

*“LASAN has leaned very heavily on LA Compost to do outreach and education at the markets, and it has been very effective... One of the benefits of working with a community partner is that they have an existing and expanding rapport in the communities they are servicing. The City goes to community events and neighborhood council meetings, but LA Compost has its own relationships with community members.”*

James Roska, Environmental Engineer,  
Solid Resources Support Services Division,  
Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment

## Municipal Motivation

Since LA Compost was founded in 2013, the nonprofit organization has steadily and successfully built awareness about composting, use of compost, and why food scraps need to be diverted from the landfill. Its established presence in many neighborhoods in the City of Los Angeles (and elsewhere in Los Angeles County) made LA Compost an obvious partner in the City's USDA CFWR grant applications. “LASAN has leaned very heavily on LA Compost to do outreach and education at the markets, and it has been very effective,” notes James Roska.

To comply with the requirements of California's [SB 1383 law](#), the Short-Term Climate Pollutant Reduction Act, in 2022 LASAN launched OrganicsLA, a curbside organics recycling program. Households already had a green cart for yard trimmings and were instructed to add all of their food scraps and soiled paper to the carts. By January 2023, LASAN had expanded organics collection to all 750,000 single-family residents and multi-family units up to four units in the city. The City offered residents a free kitchen pail for their food scraps. The pails were made available at distribution sites for pre-registered households, and in the summer of 2023, LASAN began dropping them off directly to residents.

LA Compost also helped the City distribute kitchen pails at the farmers' markets. “Being a distribution point helped a lot with community outreach for OrganicsLA,” explains Maggie Smart McCabe at LA Compost. “People didn't have a grasp of what food scraps composting was, so engaging them at the farmers' markets was very helpful to the City.” Adds Roska: “The LA Compost drop-off sites at the farmers' markets were a natural point of contact to engage with residents about food scraps composting.”

Multifamily buildings are required to contract directly with a hauler to collect food scraps from their tenants. For buildings that are not yet compliant, the ability for residents to bring their food scraps to the drop-off locations is also a benefit to the City. In addition to locations at the markets, LA Compost has a drop-off spot at a large community garden that it operates.

In September 2021, LARAP and LA Compost officially launched the Griffith Park Regional Compost Hub; it has since been operational for food scraps processing, community education, and volunteer opportunities for community members. In addition to Griffith, two more Regional Compost Hubs have launched (Sepulveda Garden Center in the San Fernando Valley and the Audubon Center at Ernest E Debs Regional Park in Northeast LA), with three more on the way. “Having the additional capacity will enable us to be more





Playa Vista Farmers' Market drop-off  
Credit: LA Compost



Community member dropping off food scraps at Culver City farmer's market, Credit: LA Compost



LA Compost Founder, Michael Martinez, turning a compost pile  
Credit: LA Compost

directly involved with managing food recovery donations that are not edible," notes Gina Vollono at LA Compost. "At the farmers' markets, we assist with capturing edible food for community kitchens, and can start to divert food items that are no longer edible. It is an interesting opportunity for LA Compost."

## Contract Agreements

LASAN uses a Letter of Agreement as its contracting mechanism. Funds for the work LA Compost does under the two USDA grants are paid by LASAN, which in turn is reimbursed by the granting agency. Contracting with community-based organizations like LA Compost for services outside of grant funds "depends on what money is available for a budget year and the City's interest and ability to execute it," notes Roska.

LA Compost has a separate contract with LARAP, signed in 2021. It was originally for a two-year term, but in 2023, it was extended for one additional year. In its request to the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners in April 2023 to extend the contract, LARAP noted that since the Hub launched in September 2021, "roughly 8,000 pounds of organic material per week were diverted at the Compost Hub, generating roughly 800 pounds of finished compost per month. In the first year of the Compost Hub, LA Compost was able to divert 415,986 pounds of organic material, equaling 371.95 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO<sub>2</sub>e) diverted from the atmosphere ... Since the Compost Hub opened, LA Compost has served a weekly average of 365 households at these collection locations."

LA Compost's contract with LARAP is essentially a "Right of Entry" agreement to access the parks, rather than having a lease for each Hub. LARAP provides keys to unlock the park gates. In addition, the contract includes a one- to two-year trial period where LA Compost needs to prove it is a good steward, not causing litter, noise, odors, or attracting vectors, and being open during hours that suit the neighborhood where the Hub is located. "Once we prove we are good partners and neighbors, then LARAP executes a 10-year Right of Entry agreement," explains Michael Martinez, founder and former Executive Director of LA Compost. "The key is to not get complaints and to create an understanding of the role of composting in City parks."

He adds that none of the parcels of parkland identified as Compost Hubs are duplicative. "One could be 0.25 acres for a small aerated static pile system, and another could be 8,000 square feet that could accommodate 3-bin systems as well as serve as a demonstration site for other methods of composting. Ultimately, our goal is to have the Compost Hubs equally distributed around the city. Certain areas, like South Central and Southeast Los Angeles, are not as park-heavy, but we still want to create something inclusive."

## Composting Activity

LA Compost uses passively aerated static piles, turned windrows, and 3-bin hot composting methods to process food scraps at its 14 Compost Hubs (separate from the Regional Compost Hubs) located at community gardens and urban farms, schools, parks, and parking lots in Los Angeles and surrounding communities. None are on municipally-

owned land. LA Compost leads site maintenance at most of the Hubs; it also provides resources, tools, and is available to conduct training. Food scraps accepted are vegetative only, along with food-soiled paper and egg shells.

Over the years, LA Compost has procured four electric bucket loaders to use at its composting sites. Sustainable Generation, a compost system vendor, donated a small GORE system to trial at one of the locations. Currently, the organization has a high-roof Sprinter van, several smaller vans, and a stake-bed truck with a lift gate; none are ideal as its farmers' markets program expands.

## Outreach & Education

LASAN has a [webpage](#) for food scraps drop-off at the farmers' markets and will do outreach via social media when an event is happening or when a new farmers' market opens, says Roska. Outreach is done in partnership with LA Compost. At community events, outreach about the drop-off program at the farmers' markets is directed to multifamily households whose buildings might not offer food scraps collection.

LA Compost offers a wide range of outreach and education related to composting. For instance, its [Community Soil Health](#) initiative offers accessible educational programming and technical resources on using sensory observation, microscopy, and other basic lab tests to study compost and soil. They are connecting composting to soil science and community health through offerings such as hands-on soil health workshops, [Magic Soil Bus](#) youth programming, and educational guides (such as the [Soil Health Discovery Guide](#) and [Soil + Soul Healing Toolkit: Compost Issue](#)).

## Compost Markets

Most of the compost produced at LA Compost's Hubs goes back to its members (individuals who sign up and volunteer at its composting sites) on distribution days for use in their gardens, at schools, and in green spaces. "We also give out compost samples in small bags at the farmers' markets, for example, at each change of season, e.g., spring equinox, winter solstice," says Smart McCabe. "We also have people coming to the markets if they missed one of our regular distribution days."

## Costs & Benefits: Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment

LA Compost's assistance in distributing kitchen countertop pails for the City's curbside program was a significant benefit to LASAN. "We were distributing the pails at Sanitation's facilities, public libraries, and other municipal buildings,"



Educational guide by LA Compost, Instructional flyer for food scraps drop-off, Flyer for new food scraps drop-off location at El Nido Farmers' Market  
Credit: LA Compost

explains Roska. "We spoke with LA Compost about helping to get more pails out. As our partner managing the drop-off programs, they were willing to distribute them at the farmers' markets, along with our educational materials." More broadly, he adds, "one of the benefits of working with a community partner is that they have an existing and expanding rapport in the communities they are servicing. The City goes to community events and neighborhood council meetings, but LA Compost has its own relationships with community members."

Cost savings resulting from the public-private partnership are difficult to quantify, says Roska. The City traditionally looks at the costs associated with collection and tipping at disposal or processing facilities, and the savings gained. "We see cost savings in the community engagement and educational aspects, but those are harder to quantify," he notes. "For example, do we base it on the number of interactions with residents? What we do know is that these communal interactions bring more awareness in general about the environment and sustainability. That is the way the City sees benefits. We are supporting a local nonprofit and keeping the work — and job creation — local. Grant funding enables more pilot-scale programs to expand. In our case, having community-based organizations makes it possible for the City to collaborate on grant applications."

And the proof is in the food scraps collected and the compost produced. From October 2022 to December 2024, 610,000 pounds of food scraps were dropped off at the City's farmers' markets.



## Costs & Benefits: LA Compost

Starting small and “growing to where LA Compost has become legitimate in the City’s eyes” is a huge accomplishment that the organization has achieved, says Vollono. “I’ve witnessed the ripple effect and product of partnerships that make it possible for people to participate. It is amazing to watch people in suits show up to help turn a pile!”

In addition, notes Smart McCabe, LA Compost is one of the few organizations that creates opportunities for people to get involved with and maintain their local parks. “A lot of people who haven’t grown up near a park are able to get involved with maintaining a park,” she says. “We have created a very good foundation to literally bring people together and build soil.”

From an operations perspective, staff and overhead are by far LA Compost’s largest costs. In 2018, the organization had six employees; today it has close to 30, with approximately 1,500 members. Funding from grants provides roughly 70% of its operating capital. “We’ve grown a lot, mostly due to partnerships and municipal funding,” says Vollono. In 2024, LA Compost collected and diverted a little over 2,000 tons, including food scraps, mulch, sawdust, and horse stable bedding.

## PPP Lessons Learned

**LASAN:** The public-private partnership with LA Compost has been enabled by the grant funds, notes Roska. “We don’t have a standing line item to do these kinds of partnerships. The grant funds are very helpful to kickstart the process.” He adds that LASAN’s situation is somewhat unique because it had been in discussions with LA Compost about collaborations for many years and was aware of the work it does — increasing local composting and working with community gardens. “For a successful public-private partnership, it’s necessary to find the right partner with the ability to conduct the work as well as have a vision and scope of work that aligns with each other’s goals so it is sustainable for all,” he adds. “Once the proper partner is identified and an agreement gets put in place making it official, the collaboration that ensues highlights each other’s skills and capacities. The collaborative effort helps all parties succeed at a citywide level and at a hyperlocal level.”

**LA Compost:** LA Compost is establishing public-private partnerships with other municipalities in Los Angeles County, including the City of Glendale and the City of Culver City. “The proposals offer different options to meet each City’s goals,” says Martinez. “In Glendale, we received a three-year contract to create and manage three community-sized

compost hubs and provide staff at the City’s farmers’ market for food scraps drop-off. The contract also has funding for outreach and education. In another instance, we are only doing staffing for farmers’ markets.”

He adds that the LARAP Right-to-Entry model could be duplicated in other municipalities as a tool for land access for small composting operations. LA Compost has been in conversations with CalRecycle, the state agency that sets regulations for food scrap composting operations, about creating a permit tier for community/park-size sites. Currently, the **allowance** is limited to less than 100 cubic yards of materials for composting on-site at any one time within a 750-square-foot area.

---

*“We are supporting a local nonprofit and keeping the work — and job creation — local. Grant funding enables more pilot-scale programs to expand...having community-based organizations makes it possible for the City to collaborate on grant applications.”*

James Roska, Environmental Engineer,  
Solid Resources Support Services Division,  
Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment

---

## More Information

[LA Compost website](#)

[LA Compost Farmers’ Market Collections website](#)

[LASAN Farmers’ Market Drop-Off website](#)

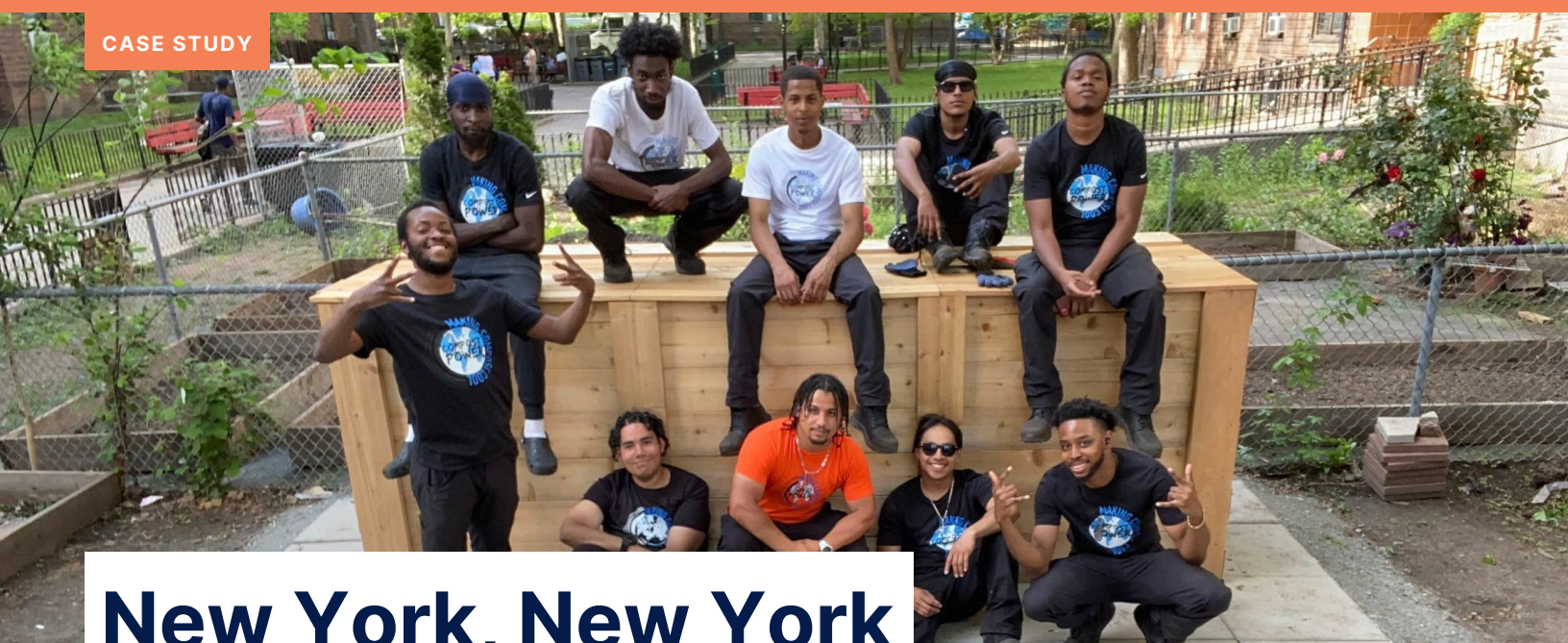
[Growing Communities Through Compost In The City of Los Angeles](#), USDA CFWR Project Description

ILSR Podcast: [The Learning Is In the Doing \(feat. LA Compost\)](#)

ILSR Webinar: [Using & Selling Compost from Community Sites \(feat. LA Compost\)](#)

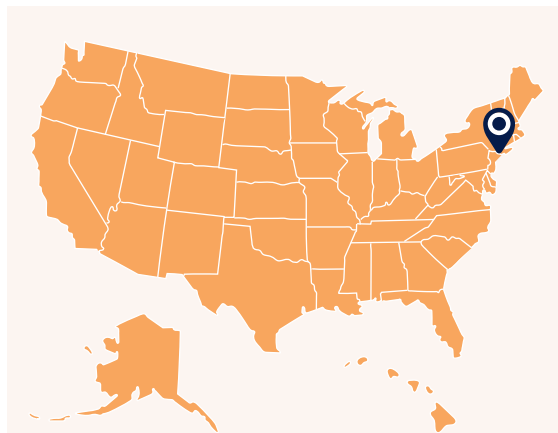
ILSR Webinar: [Scaling Up Local Circular Composting \(feat. LA Compost\)](#)

[Compost and Soil Microscopy Mini-Course](#)



# New York, New York

## Public Housing Project Creates Jobs, Supports Gardens, and Reduces Rat Problems



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEES:

New York City Housing Authority, Juliette Spertus, Associate Urban Designer, and Louisa Denison, Programs and Policy Advisor (both in NYCHA's Sustainability Department)

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

Compost Power (Domingo Morales, CEO, Founder)

### Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) manages 335 properties with a total of 2,212 resident buildings and about 361,000 residents in all five boroughs of New York City. The average income of NYCHA residents is \$25,605, according to the Authority. In 2021, NYCHA published a Sustainability Agenda that included the collection and processing of organics in partnership with several urban farms on its properties, increasing residents' access to organics collection, adopting a design for circularity, and improving gardens and soils with compost generated on site.

To fund its work related to organics recycling — specifically on-site composting of residents' food scraps and leaves and yard trimmings from NYCHA building grounds — the Authority applied for and received two grants, one from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) for \$195,000, and the other from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Composting and Food Waste Reduction's (CFWR) cooperative agreement program for \$398,904. Both grants include a public-private partnership with Green City Force (GCF), a green workforce development nonprofit, and Compost Power, an incubated organization of GCF solely focused on composting in environmental justice communities. GCF created and manages six **Eco-Hubs** (urban farms) on NYCHA grounds, and Compost Power does the composting, food scraps collection, and outreach and education.

### Municipal Motivation

According to NYCHA, about 600 tons per day of waste are generated across its campuses, of which an estimated 200 tons per day are

Domingo Morales and Compost Power crew in front of 3-bin system  
Credit: Compost Power





Crew members with garden compost site sign  
Credit: Compost Power



Crew engaging in composting process  
Credit: Compost Power

organics. The Authority has one to two grounds staff per campus, which makes it a challenge to add the responsibility to manage an on-site composting system. However, many of its residential properties have land available for community gardens and urban farms, where on-site composting of food scraps, leaves, and wood chips can be done, creating a source of nutrients and organic matter for the farms and gardens. Rodent habitats in the gardens are an ongoing challenge for residents.

NYCHA's successful relationship with GCF to establish the Eco-Hubs laid the groundwork to help create composting capacity at some building campuses, utilizing Compost Power as the "boots on the ground" for food scraps collection and composting. There are six composting sites partnered with GCF's Eco-Hubs, along with two operating independently on NYCHA campuses.

## Grant-Funded Programs

**NYS DEC:** The NYS DEC grant was awarded to NYCHA in 2022 to fund a two-year pilot to collect and process food scraps at two NYCHA developments — the Polo Grounds in Upper Manhattan and the Patterson Houses in the South Bronx. The goal was to provide convenient food scraps collection to more than 8,000 residents, pilot a new model for 3-bin composting not located at an Eco-Hub, generate compost for residents and the building grounds, and reduce the rodent population at pilot sites. Funds covered Compost Power's staff time for collection and composting, as well as expanding the drop-off schedule from three-hour windows weekly with staff to 24 hours, seven days a week (staffed during some windows), helping maintain a consistent flow of materials.

Approvals with each building's Property Management and tenant association leaders were obtained. Materials for the 3-bin system cost about \$11,000 per site, and included pavers and mesh for rodent proofing and totes for food scraps collection. Five young adults were trained on how to build a 3-bin system using hand and power tools.

Compost Power collected data on food scraps captured using a ticker and a scale; the measured data includes temperature and the weights of both food scraps and finished compost. NYCHA and Compost Power teams met monthly to review the data and discuss any counteractions or ideas for improvement. For example, after extensive testing, Compost Power decided to accept meat and dairy. This matched what the Department of Sanitation's drop-off "smart bins" were collecting, allowing the program to compete and facilitating participation. From January 2023 through December 2024, more than 47,000 pounds (>23.5 tons) were processed, or roughly 19,000 pounds per year. About 25,000 pounds of leaves were collected. Compost Power recorded over 2,800 resident interactions. More than 12,000 pounds of finished compost were distributed. Compost Power's crew measured contamination. A total of 440 rat tunnels were collapsed.

Food scraps collection at Patterson Houses started slowly in 2023, e.g., 166 pounds in the first quarter, and increased during the summer and fall quarters (1,416 pounds and 2,378 pounds, respectively). "The team continued with determined engagement, even walking alongside passersby to let them know about the food scraps drop-off site," notes Louisa Denison.



Food scraps pile  
Credit: Compost Power

**USDA/CFWR:** The CFWR grant — which runs from March 2025 to February 2027 — builds on the infrastructure and outreach and education accomplished through the NYS DEC grant: continuing to expand access to food scraps drop-off to an estimated 11,400 NYCHA residents and providing additional NYCHA community gardeners and urban farmers with finished compost and technical assistance. Compost Power set up four additional satellite food scraps collection points near the Polo Grounds and Patterson Houses. It uses an electric tricycle to transport the food scraps back to the composting sites. Grant funds are also being used to procure leaf mulching equipment and a wood chipper to improve the efficiency of processing landscape materials, significantly boosting compost production. “A key focus is soil quality improvement and increased capacity to manage leaves and tree trimmings on-site,” says Louisa Denison.

As the grant progresses, the scope of work will be further enhanced by an additional position, a dedicated Compost Power Compost Liaison, who will coordinate the distribution of the finished compost processed at Compost Power to NYCHA community gardens and urban farms as well as NYCHA grounds, in order to reduce the use of fertilizers. Finally, this project will deepen the Authority’s research on the effects of compost and leaf mulching on soil fertility and stormwater management at NYCHA sites, assessing the benefits in terms of soil health and flood risk reduction.

## Contract Agreements

Green City Force and NYCHA have a license agreement for use of the property for its Eco-Hubs and Compost Power’s composting sites, essentially a “barter” for use of the land in exchange for the services GCF and Compost Power

provide. In 2021, NYCHA issued a Request for Proposals for stakeholder engagement services; contracts were awarded to several groups, including GCF for outreach and engagement initiatives. NYCHA is subject to five-year contract limits, so will need to issue a new RFP for services in 2026.

The public-private partnerships with GCF and Compost Power made it possible for NYCHA to apply for the USDA CFWR grant, explains Spertus. “Without our contract with GCF, as well as the licensing agreement, we would not have been qualified to apply,” she says. “Those cover all NYCHA sites and the broad list of activities conducted by GCF and Compost Power, and we were able to reflect that in the USDA application.”

## Composting Activity

At both the Polo Grounds and Patterson NYCHA campuses, Compost Power installed a 16-foot by 16-foot “patio” or base for the 3-bin composting systems built with two-foot pavers. “That is the first step in rat proofing,” notes Domingo Morales. “We also created space for three 20-foot long by 6-foot wide windrows to process the leaves and brush coming from the campuses. Compost coming out of the bins can be added to these windrows to cure if it isn’t needed right away for the gardens.” Wood chips and other carbon sources are stored in corrals, which are more visually pleasing to residents passing by.

Morales’ advice when composting food scraps in public spaces (e.g., parks, housing campuses, urban farms) is to start by composting only leaves and residuals from the gardens. “Stick with those materials in the beginning to create the first batch of compost,” he says. “That keeps the microbes native to the ‘community.’ Then add food scraps. Key is to break down the high-carbon, really dry materials enough to mix in with the food scraps and cover them.”

Compost Power is able to compost a portion of the leaves that come down during the fall at its composting sites. The remainder are collected by the NYC Department of Sanitation. At the Polo Grounds, almost 80% of the leaves are composted on-site. The compost is being used to remediate a slope on the campus.

To enable composting of all food scraps, leaves, and yard trimmings generated on a NYCHA campus, a combination of human power and machines will be needed, adds Morales. “There are different campuses where a solar-powered in-vessel system could complement human-powered composting,” he says.



## Outreach & Education

Through funding from the grants, Compost Power takes the lead on outreach and education to residents, the tenant associations, the building staff, and the grounds workers. “Don’t think about installing a composting site without connecting with the residents and the leaders of the tenant associations,” notes Morales. “They are the leaders of the community and approve of new gardens, where to place e-bike charging stations, and anything else that is public-facing on the campus. Their meetings are usually later at night. Attending is our first investment in the community, and we start by listening and then gauge how much we should say early on. We’ll bring fliers and explain what Compost Power does if asked. Because we and GCF hire NYCHA residents, that is an automatic plus. Our end goal is to be a problem solver, for example, help with eradicating rat tunnels. In some cases, we never get to building a composting site, but we can address the problem of rats in their gardens.”

If it gets a green light, “we will pour 100% into figuring out how to fund it, learn where management would like us to put the site, and then, most importantly, where the tenant association would like us to be,” he adds. “Even though our sites have similar layouts, each looks different because the residents get involved.” Once the process gets underway, Compost Power staff attend community events, hand out flyers, teach residents about composting, and involve them in deciding what the banner at the site should say and look like. When the site is ready to accept food scraps, Morales recommends staffing the drop-off for a few weeks — at a minimum, five days a week — and then switching to it being open 24/7 as many residents can’t come in the windows when it is staffed.

Morales emphasizes that success doesn’t mean processing a lot of organics, at least in the early days and months. “Be prepared to play the long game,” he says. “For some residents, it takes time before they are willing to participate.” Household participation at some sites is 15% to 20%; at two of its sites, Compost Power is getting close to 25% to 30% participation.

## Compost Markets

The finished compost is used at the resident community gardens and the Eco-Hub farms. A portion is used on the grounds.

## Costs & Benefits: NYCHA

Access to composting located on NYCHA’s campus is a significant benefit during the fall when the leaves are coming down. “The sites create the capacity to reduce hauling and



Crew member loading bags of carbon-rich materials  
Credit: Compost Power

*“The sites create the capacity to reduce hauling and make sure organic material stays on the campuses. This presents an opportunity for the property management, waste management, and sustainability departments to collaborate and promote the organics diversion programs on NYCHA campuses.”*

Louisa Denison, Program Associate,  
New York City Housing Authority Sustainability Department

make sure organic material stays on the campuses,” notes Denison. “This presents an opportunity for the property management, waste management, and sustainability departments to collaborate and promote the organics diversion programs on NYCHA campuses.”

Another key benefit is that regular, repeated engagement builds the trust and visibility to scale up food scrap diversion. Residents get to know staff when they are at the site processing compost or picking up scraps by e-bike multiple times a week.

A template and lesson learned from the DEC grant — and which may be unique to NYCHA — is putting a composting site on a NYCHA campus that is in a cluster of NYCHA properties, adds Spertus. “Compost Power staff utilizes the cluster to collect food scraps from the nearby campus buildings,” she says. “One processing site can serve multiple campuses.”

## Costs & Benefits: Compost Power

Morales concurs with Spertus' perspective: "We don't want to build a processing site on every campus. The key is how to efficiently serve many campuses and how to do that with as little budget as possible."

With an on-site composting operation in an urban setting, Morales recommends "going extra on the patio in terms of thickness, and using cedar wood for the bins." He adds that "it takes a lot" to work through all the red tape at NYCHA: "I'm getting used to it. As long as we are thorough and dot the 'i's' and cross the 't's,' the red tape becomes easier to manage. We want to serve residents, create jobs, and reduce waste. This is a lot easier at NYCHA because of its 10-year sustainability agenda — and composting is on that agenda."

When asked about how he calculates Compost Power's cost per diverted ton, Morales points out that the calculation is a bit different for his organization because community impact has to be factored in. "These calculations need to incorporate how many residents you interact with, behavior changes, trainings, and overall support to ensure success happens," he says.

## PPP Lessons Learned

**NYCHA:** A key metric for a successful public-private partnership is factoring in how much time initiatives take to launch and create valuable learnings. "We ran a six-month organics recycling pilot with an in-vessel unit, and it wasn't nearly enough time to get everything up and running and learn," says Spertus. "That is why with the DEC grant, we were insistent on it being two years, and then we were able to extend it further with a funding match."

Another lesson learned is creating meaningful partnerships with all the other internal stakeholders who are key to a project's success. "In NYCHA's case, that means engaging with the Property and Waste Management Departments," explains Denison. "Our public-private partnership sits in the middle of that space, and brings together elements of each department's areas of responsibility. For example, we aligned on the benefit of pest management, especially rats. And we collaborated on finding unique ways to spread the word and increase resident participation."

**Compost Power:** The public-private partnership creates the foundation for GCF and Compost Power to do what they do best, emphasizes Morales: "GCF does the farming and Compost Power does the composting. We use these two programs to train young adults and feed residents."

*"We want to serve residents, create jobs, and reduce waste. This is a lot easier at NYCHA because of its 10-year sustainability agenda — and composting is on that agenda."*

Domingo Morales, CEO, Founder,  
Compost Power

His advice to other community composters is to identify institutions that have a sustainability agenda as well as existing capacity — in NYCHA's case, land — and research how to integrate composting services into that agenda. "Network and talk to people to identify how to plug into helping the institution achieve its goals," says Morales. "Be in tune with what is going on and how to tailor solutions. Bounce ideas off each other and create a strong and sustainable relationship. Once the partnership is underway, only ask for help when it is completely necessary. The municipal partners need to see that you can get things done without bugging them too much."

He adds that in NYCHA's case, it has been important for Compost Power to work in step with the Authority's unionized labor force. "We invested time and effort to figure out how to do our work without stepping on their toes," explains Morales. "For example, with the Supervisor of Grounds, we ask if it is okay to cut the grass around the gardens. If they say no, we walk away. We've learned how to help without being viewed as a threat to union jobs."

## More Information

[Compost Power website](#)

[NYCHA Food Waste Diversion And Composting Project, USDA CFWR Project Description](#)

[Green City Force website](#)

Green City Force Resilient Eco-Hubs [presentation](#)

[NYCHA's Sustainability Agenda website](#)

ILSR Podcast: [Building Waste Equity at NYC Public Housing \(ft. Compost Power\)](#)

[Rodent Reduction Rubric by Compost Power](#)

ILSR Webinar: [Keep Compost Local: A Roadmap for Public-Private Partnerships \(feat. Compost Power and NYCHA\)](#)





# Norman, Oklahoma

## *Climate Commitment and Compost Procurement Underpin Food Scraps Diversion*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

Norman, Oklahoma, Michele Loudenback, City of Norman Environmental and Sustainability Manager

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

Fertile Ground Cooperative (Terry Craghead, Founder & CEO)

Fertile Ground Cooperative headquarters  
Credit: Fertile Ground

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

The City of Norman contracts with Fertile Ground Cooperative (Fertile Ground) to collect food scraps from its municipal buildings that are clustered in a complex. The City also procures compost from Fertile Ground to top-dress lawns with compost as part of its Blue Neighborhood Program to protect the watershed. Fertile Ground applies the compost. Fertile Ground is the sub-awardee of a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grant awarded to the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), a regional planning organization. The grant is for a two-year residential food scraps collection pilot that created 20 drop-off sites in various locations in Central Oklahoma. Three are located in Norman and open to the public.

### Municipal Motivation

The City of Norman joined the Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement in 2005. Its plan includes food scraps and yard trimmings recycling. At the time, the City's franchise agreement for residential trash and recycling collection would not allow it to have a separate food scraps collection contract. Commercial entities were not covered, and a local coffee shop signed up with Fertile Ground for food scraps collection. When the City ended the contract and brought recycling in-house, it opened up the opportunity for food scraps collection. The City executed a contract with Fertile Ground in 2025 to collect food scraps from various locations in its municipal building complex.





Operations team member servicing organics toter  
Credit: Fertile Ground



A pile of incoming food scraps and other feedstocks  
Credit: Fertile Ground



Team member creating ground cover with fresh compost  
Credit: Fertile Ground

## Composting Activity

Fertile Ground Cooperative **was founded** in 2011 by Terry Craghead after helping to start a small community urban farm. The cooperative provides recycling and composting services for residential and commercial customers in Oklahoma City and the surrounding region. It operates two turned windrow composting facilities behind its warehouse in Oklahoma City on a roughly 1.5-acre asphalt pad (previously a parking lot): a yard trimmings composting site with a solid waste permit and an adjacent food scraps composting site that operates under an Oklahoma Department of Agriculture permit. The windrows are turned weekly using a skid steer and telehandler. Total capacity of both sites is between 5,000 and 6,000 tons per year; the quantity received is closer to 2,000 tons per year.

## Economic Development Investment

An angel investor purchased the warehouse property under a lease-to-own agreement. The **Alliance for Economic Development** – which coordinates land, incentives, and economic tools to attract companies and developers and works closely with the City of Oklahoma City – provided a grant to repair the warehouse's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system; create signage; grade the compost yard; and purchase a conveyor to move materials around the yard.

The zoning where the warehouse is located allows for some level of composting activity, so no rezoning of the property was necessary. However, the property is in a neighborhood with a City park, and Fertile Ground Cooperative needed to get approval from the City's Parks & Recreation Department to conduct composting activities. That permission was received.

## Compost Markets

Fertile Ground primarily sells its compost to backyard gardeners. The City of Norman launched a **Blue Neighborhoods** pilot project in 2023 that is designed to encourage and incentivize residents to adopt "blue" home and lawn care practices to help improve stormwater quality and reduce pollutants flowing to Lake Thunderbird. One of the practices is top-dressing lawns with compost supplied and applied by Fertile Ground. The City of Norman pays half of the cost for the compost application, and the resident pays the other half. As of August 2025, close to 50 lawns have been top-dressed, using about 67 cubic yards of compost. The City continued the program after the pilot ended.

## Costs & Benefits: City of Norman

Fertile Ground's fee for food scraps collection at its municipal complex was low enough that the City of Norman did not need to issue a request for proposals (nor was another food scraps hauler available in the city). The contract was renewed in January 2025; the initial duration of the service agreement is 36 months, and then automatically renews for a consecutive 36-month term unless terminated in writing by one of the entities with 60 days' notice. Fertile Ground charges the City of Norman \$189 per month to collect its food scraps; there was a one-time setup fee of \$175. The City has a large collection cart in one location; smaller bins are in multiple locations around the complex and are emptied into the larger cart.

The City of Norman is incentivized to divert food scraps to help achieve its climate goals and to lay the groundwork for



expanded food scraps collection to save on trash hauling and landfill tip fees. Eventually, the City would like to upgrade its yard trimmings composting site in order to process food scraps at the facility.

## Costs & Benefits: Fertile Ground Cooperative

Fertile Ground is building route density for servicing customers like the City of Norman; it has a preexisting commercial organics collection route, therefore adding the City makes the route more profitable. “Our average monthly cost is roughly \$135 per customer,” explains Terry Craghead. “The bigger picture for Fertile Ground is that we are building a relationship with the City, so that if it decides to offer food scraps collection services to other City-owned facilities, or if they want to start offering residential food scraps collection service for Norman residents, we have a relationship.”

## Fertile Ground Funding

Fertile Ground was awarded \$366,000 – of the total CFWR \$399,999.79 grant to ACOG – to establish and service the residential food scraps drop-off sites, promote and market the program to households in Central Oklahoma, and to upgrade its food scraps composting facility in Oklahoma City. The drop-off **program** launched in September 2024 and is free to use; 14 sites have been established in Oklahoma City, three are in the City of Edmond, and three are in Norman (two at businesses and one at the City’s Recycling Drop-Off Center). A wide range of food scraps, soiled paper, household plants, and 100%-BPI certified compostable products are accepted. To use a drop-off site, households need to register, watch an informational video, and take a quiz. They are then given a code to access the bins. To date, close to 400 people have logged in using the QR code. Fertile Ground measures the quantities received at each site; between September 2024, when the drop-off locations opened, and mid-April 2025, 7.2 tons of food scraps have been collected. Locations that are heavily used provide valuable information on markets to target for more participants. Carrying out the collection and composting, and outreach and education elements of the CFWR grant has resulted in one new full-time employee and 50% of an existing Fertile Ground employee’s time.

Once the pilot ends, Fertile Ground’s goal would be for a local government entity(ies) to host the drop-off sites and continue servicing the locations with food scraps collection and composting. Grant funding may be needed to support the initiative.



Fertile ground collection receptacle with educational signage  
Credit: Fertile Ground



Drop-off program flyer  
Credit: Fertile Ground

*“The bigger picture for Fertile Ground is that we are building a relationship with the City, so that if it decides to offer food scraps collection services to other City-owned facilities, or if they want to start offering residential food scraps collection service for Norman residents, we have a relationship.”*

Terry Craghead, Founder & CEO,  
Fertile Ground

## PPP Lessons Learned:

- Fertile Ground has been able to utilize the ACOG’s and City of Norman’s climate and sustainability goals to advance food scraps diversion. This is counter to the cooperative’s experience of trying to contract with municipal governments to offer recycling collection services where none currently exists.
- Ideally, a government entity(ies) would support continuance of the grant-funded pilot food scraps drop-off sites, given the infrastructure for collection is in place and outreach and education have been developed and are being conducted.
- Future program development is threatened by elimination of federal grant funding for food-scrap-related initiatives. As of August 2025, Fertile Ground’s CFWR grant was still active.



Team members holding educational signage and compost  
Credit: Fertile Ground

## More Information

[Fertile Ground Cooperative](#) website

[City of Norman Food and Yard Waste](#) website

[Fertile Ground Drop-Off Program](#) website

[Central Oklahoma Community Composting Pilot Program](#), USDA CFWR Project Description

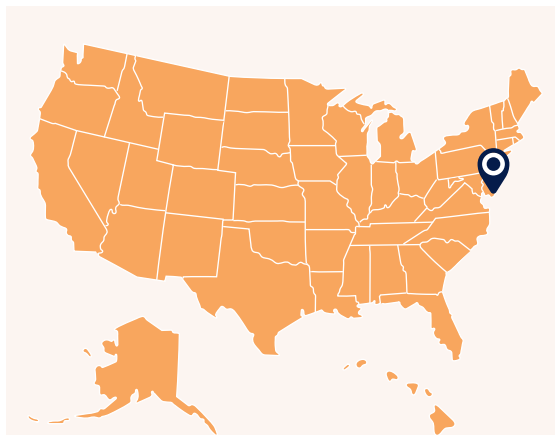
ILSR Podcast: [“They Can’t Compete with Community”: How One Oklahoma Composter is Building Alternatives to Big Waste \(feat. Fertile Ground Cooperative\)](#)





# Ocean City, Maryland

## *Avoided Disposal Costs Help Cover Expenses*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

Ocean City, Maryland, Kim Mueller, Director of Sales, Ocean City Convention Center

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTERS:

Go Green OC (Josh Chamberlain, Founder and Executive Director) and Ocean Compost LLC (Garvey Heiderman, Founder)

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

In 2021, the Town of Ocean City established an agreement with Ocean Compost LLC to pilot the collection of food scraps from several restaurants and compost them at a nearby farm. The Town agreed to pay Ocean Compost the same per-ton fee it pays to tip its waste at the Reworld (formerly Covanta) incinerator in Chester, Pennsylvania — a tip fee of over \$90 per ton. Following the pilot, the agreement has been renewed annually. Collection is done by Ocean Compost, which currently services about 25 restaurants along with the Ocean City Convention Center and its outdoor events. Go Green OC provides volunteers, education, and assists with onboarding new restaurants. Ocean Compost handles equipment and the relationship with the Town. Once food scraps are collected, they are weighed at the Town's transfer station prior to transport to the composting site in Bishopville, Maryland. Ocean City then compensates Ocean Compost for the food scraps collected. The Town started receiving several cubic yards of compost in 2025 for use in its landscaping.

### Municipal Motivation

The Town of Ocean City — a resort city on the Atlantic coast that swells to become the second-largest city in Maryland during its peak season, from June through September — services residents and businesses with trash collection. When it switched from landfilling collected solid waste to incineration, the Town ended its curbside recycling program, which was met with some pushback from residents, businesses, and environmental advocates. Go Green OC, an environmental nonprofit, started collecting food scraps in Ocean City in 2018, and has gradually increased the number of businesses serviced. The City Council has been supportive of the initiative via the per-ton-diverted compensation. Garvey Heiderman, owner of The Hobbit Restaurant in Ocean City, was the first to source-

Go Green OC team tabling in front of their box truck  
Credit: Go Green OC



separate food scraps for composting in 2018. When Heiderman and Josh Chamberlain, Executive Director of Go Green OC, approached the Ocean City Council about initiating the food scraps collection pilot in 2021, they learned that an agreement with the City had to be with a for-profit entity, not a nonprofit like Go Green OC. As a result, Heiderman formed Ocean Compost LLC. The agreement between the Town and Ocean Compost is capped at 250 tons per year for now, says Heiderman. “If we ever expect to exceed that, we will have another conversation with the Town at that time.”

The Ocean City Convention Center, which is owned by the Town of Ocean City and managed in partnership with the Maryland Stadium Authority, has been collaborating with Go Green OC and Ocean Compost to provide food scraps collection at the Convention Center, and organics and recycling services for special events such as OC Bikefest and beach concerts. “Our partnership with Go Green OC and Ocean Compost is built on trust, shared values, and a mutual commitment to making Ocean City a model for sustainable event destinations,” explains Kim Mueller, Director of Sales at the Ocean City Convention Center. “From the very beginning, our goal has been to create something that not only diverts waste but also inspires our community, visitors, and event clients to see environmental responsibility as an essential part of our culture. Even without a formal contract, our collaboration is rooted in open communication, aligned goals, and a clear understanding of the positive impact we want to achieve together. This is not a short-term initiative — it’s a long-term commitment to growing our composting program, expanding zero-waste services, and showing that environmental stewardship and economic vitality go hand-in-hand in Ocean City.”

In 2024, the Convention Center diverted about five tons of food scraps and compostable food-contact packaging. “We have converted nearly all products to compostable in preparation for beginning to host zero waste events,” notes Chamberlin.

## Composting Activity

Ocean Compost accepts a wide range of food scraps, along with soiled paper, pizza boxes, and certified compostable foodservice ware. A box truck with a lift gate has capacity for 34 32-gallon carts, which are used for collection. The company leases about one acre on a farm in Bishopville, where it uses aerated static piles for composting. Wood chips are mixed in as part of the composting recipe. The site is permitted by the Maryland Department of the Environment as a Tier 2 Small facility (this regulatory tier allows processing of <10,000 cubic yards per year of food scraps and yard trimmings). The permitted capacity is 500 tons per year of

*“Our partnership with Go Green OC and Ocean Compost is built on trust, shared values, and a mutual commitment to making Ocean City a model for sustainable event destinations. From the very beginning, our goal has been to create something that not only diverts waste but also inspires our community, visitors, and event clients to see environmental responsibility as an essential part of our culture.”*

Kim Mueller, Director of Sales,  
Ocean City Convention Center



Sign at Convention Center  
Credit: Go Green OC



Cart at participating restaurant  
Credit: Go Green OC



Volunteers dumping collected food scraps  
Credit: Go Green OC



material. The facility has one full-time employee and over 20 volunteers who perform various feedstock receiving and composting-related tasks at the farm two days a week for about one to three hours. “We are currently processing about 150 tons per year of feedstocks and could easily double that on our current footprint,” says Chamberlain of Go Green OC. “We usually have an average of five volunteers at one time, rotating in and out. Some have been with us for three years. The volunteers are saving us tens of thousands of dollars a year on labor, making our program feasible.”

Since 2018, **over 1,000,000 pounds** of food scraps have been diverted to composting from participating restaurants, the convention center, and outdoor events. Finished compost is screened once a year using rented equipment.

## Outreach & Education

Ocean City’s year-round population is around 8,000; it swells up to 300,000 during the peak season. Many restaurants start closing in November and December, and reopen in March, so participation in food scraps collection is seasonal. Go Green OC does all the outreach and education for the restaurant food scraps collection program. At the Convention Center, Chamberlain does source-separation training for Sodexo, the foodservice contractor, and Center employees. Go Green OC provides the signage.

For events, the nonprofit partners with the Convention Center and promoters to highlight the greening of the events. Go Green OC works with a third-party recycler to collect items such as aluminum cans, cardboard, and plastic bottles. Because the Town does not offer recycling, being a provider of that service — along with food scraps collection — garners media attention, especially during the events. At the four concert events during the year, Go Green OC sets up food scrap collection stations around the food tent, which are staffed by volunteers. It also collects all back-of-house food prep scraps and food that has been served but uneaten from event caterers. Surfriders, a nonprofit, manages event recycling.

## Compost Markets

The compost is given away for free in exchange for donations to Go Green OC. End users include home gardeners, a local flower grower, and a small farmer.

## Costs & Benefits: Ocean City

The Town of Ocean City does not incur any costs for its agreement with Ocean Compost, LLC as it is simply redirecting the fee it would pay at the incinerator to Ocean Compost. The Town’s involvement in food scraps diversion is highlighted on the city’s tourism website under the sustainability [webpage](#). The ability to offer event greening services at its Convention Center is another benefit.

## Costs & Benefits: Go Green OC and Ocean Compost LLC

The per-ton payments from the Town of Ocean City support Go Green OC’s food scrap collection services, as well as help cover operating costs at the composting site. The revenue is not adequate to support labor costs incurred for the composting facility; thus, volunteers are integral to the current success of the operation. Go Green OC does have a contract with the Convention Center to provide food scraps collection services.

## PPP Lessons Learned

The willingness of the Ocean City Council and the Town’s solid waste department to pay Ocean Compost LLC the same per-ton price it would pay at the incinerator serves as a useful model of an off-ramp for a jurisdiction to move away from disposal and incineration towards diversion. This is especially relevant where the incinerator or landfill is reaching the end of its service life and incentivizes the jurisdiction to support the development of local infrastructure for food scraps recycling. In addition, the [incinerator in Chester, Pennsylvania](#), has long been known as one of the nation’s worst cases of environmental racism.

## More Information

[Go Green OC website](#)

[Ocean City Convention Center Sustainability webpage](#)

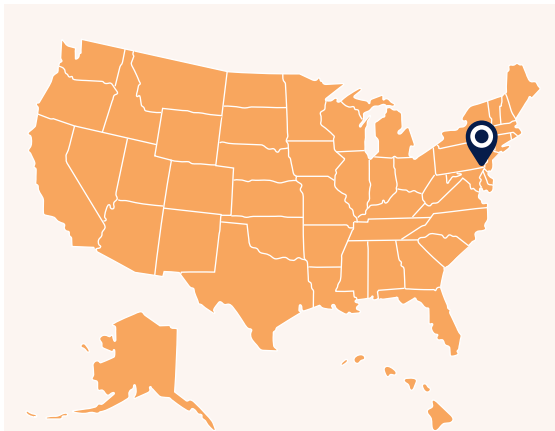
Video: [Sustainability in Ocean City, Maryland](#)

[Ocean City composting program reaches 1M milestone](#), OC Today-Dispatch, May 2025



# Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## *City Parks & Rec Barters Land Access for Services / Dept. of Prisons Spurs Job Training*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEES:

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Natalie Walker, Sustainability Director, and Philadelphia Department of Prisons, Laura Cassidy, Sustainability Manager, Operations

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

Bennett Compost (Tim Bennett, Founder, and Jen Mastalerz, Partner)

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

In August 2020, Bennett Compost — founded in Philadelphia in 2009 — signed a long-term contract with the City of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department (Parks & Rec) to locate its composting operation at a Parks & Rec maintenance facility on Rising Sun Avenue in northeast Philadelphia. In exchange, Bennett Compost would collect and compost food scraps from Parks & Rec youth after-school and summer programs, as well as from older adult centers.

In 2021, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, the Philadelphia Department of Prisons (PDP) awarded a shorter-term contract to Bennett Compost to collect and compost food scraps from its prison complex. That initial contract opened the door to subsequent contracts with the PDP, e.g., to staff and manage the prison complex's orchard and greenhouse operations and related vocational training programs.

### Municipal Motivation

**Parks & Rec:** The Department did not have the capacity to collect and compost food scraps from its recreation centers, nor did it have the funds to pay for collection. It operates the City of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park Organic Recycling Center to compost yard trimmings. The facility is not permitted to accept food scraps generated off-site. However, Parks & Rec had an underutilized maintenance facility (referenced in this case study as Rising Sun Ave.) that it could make available via a public-private partnership (PPP) with Bennett Compost. The company was in need of a headquarters building and more space to compost, paving the way for the PPP.

Sifter sending processed compost into piles  
Credit: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation





Learning about composting at Bridesburg Afterschool Program  
Credit: Joe O'Connor, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation



Team member dumping trimmings from collection bag  
Credit: Julian Moore-Griffin, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

**Department of Prisons:** The PDP **established** an on-site, captive composting facility in 2013 to process food scraps from some of the correctional buildings in its complex. Prison staff and incarcerated persons managed and operated the program. The COVID-19 lockdown suspended staff and incarcerated persons' participation in the project, and the PDP issued a contract (\$35,000) to Bennett Compost to continue food scraps collection and composting. A subsequent RFP to manage the orchard and greenhouse in the complex and provide vocational training was awarded to Bennett Compost after several existing contractors withdrew their involvement.

## Composting Activity and Permitting

Bennett Compost assisted Parks & Rec in applying for a G-17 small-scale food scraps composting **permit** from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to process food scraps at the Rising Sun Ave. site. The permit was several years in the making and was finally awarded to Parks & Rec in September 2022, enabling Bennett to begin composting. The permit allows for composting of no more than 500 tons (or 1,000 cubic yards) per year of source-separated preconsumer and postconsumer food scraps. About half of the capital improvements to the site (\$55,000 for paving portions of the site and \$10,000 for moving existing fences) were covered by a grant to Philadelphia Parks & Rec from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Bennett Compost used its own funds to purchase a skid steer loader and build the concrete block bays for processing.

Bennett Compost mixes incoming food scraps with wood chips from tree trimmers and bedding from the Philadelphia Zoo, as well as with partially composted leaves as needed.

Feedstocks are put in aerated bunkers and covered with screened overs and a tarp (the tarp is required on active piles by the G-17 permit). After curing, compost is screened. The facility has a blending and bagging operation, as well as a vermicomposting system.

Bennett Compost also assisted PDP with its application for a G-17 permit that enables PDP to accept residential food scraps from the neighborhoods near the prison complex. PDP, with Bennett's assistance, is siting drop-off bins for residents to use. PDP's composting site has the capacity to manage food scraps from a prison population of 8,000+. As of August 2025, the complex has about 3,500 incarcerated persons. The G-17 permit enables PDP to use its infrastructure to compost food scraps from the surrounding community.

## Contract Documents

**Parks & Recreation:** The initial term of the contract signed with Bennett Compost in 2020 was one year, with the option to extend the term by up to three additional one-year terms. In 2024, the Philadelphia City Council approved an extension to this contract, allowing for additional renewal terms, extending the contract for up to 10 years total. Under the contract, Bennett Compost collects and composts food scraps from Parks & Rec facilities, including the Recreation Centers, older adult centers, and other facilities operated by Parks & Rec. The contracted services are essentially a barter — Parks & Rec does not pay Bennett for food scraps collection, and Bennett does not pay Parks & Rec for use of the Rising Sun Ave. property.

Parks & Rec was awarded an EPA grant to retrofit its yard trimmings composting facility to accept food scraps and

intended to issue an RFP for management services. The grant contract had not been signed prior to the change in administration and, therefore, was canceled by EPA in early 2025.

**Department of Prisons:** PDP awarded its initial contract to Bennet Compost in 2020. In 2021, PDP issued an RFP for management of its orchard and greenhouse programs, as well as a vocational training component developed for incarcerated persons. Bennett was willing to diversify the services it offers and bid on and was awarded the contract. In early June 2025, the PDP issued an RFP to maintain its composting site, transport food scraps from corrections buildings to the composting facility, work with both staff and incarcerated persons to assist in performing the composting services, and provide instruction to those involved in the composting program. Further, the RFP included assisting PDP to identify locations for food scraps drop-off sites in the neighborhood surrounding the prison complex and transporting food scraps to the complex for composting. The value of the contract is up to \$91,000; the term is for one year, and may be renewed for up to four one-year periods (the initial year and any renewal periods). Bennett Compost was preliminarily awarded the contract as of July 17, 2025.

## Outreach & Education

The PPPs with Bennett Compost do not formally engage the company to do outreach and education, as both are programs internal to their departments. Parks & Rec received U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grant funds to support a full-time employee who provided training and technical assistance at Parks & Rec's recreation and adult centers, including engagement around source separation and diversion of food scraps. After the grant term ended, Parks & Rec hired a full-time Environmental Education Planner to continue this work.

While not part of its contract with PDP, Bennett Compost is assisting with outreach and engagement to residents in the neighborhoods near the prison complex who will have access to food scraps drop-off bins. Notes Tim Bennett: "Helping with outreach and education may not be in our contract, but for Bennett Compost, we want the project to succeed. It is a collaborative partnership. When submitting a proposal and if selected, during any negotiations, you want to be careful to assess everything that is included in a contract and determine what is and is not within scope from an operational and financial perspective. Once in, however, we don't want to question if what is needed to be done is in or out of the contract. At that point, everything is geared to being successful, so there will be more contracts in the future."



Former Mayor of Philadelphia, Jim Kenney, at Bennett Compost's ribbon cutting ceremony  
Credit: Julian Moore-Griffin, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

*"Helping with outreach and education may not be in our contract, but for Bennett Compost, we want the project to succeed. It is a collaborative partnership. When submitting a proposal and if selected, during any negotiations, you want to be careful to assess everything that is included in a contract and determine what is and is not within scope from an operational and financial perspective. Once in, however, we don't want to question if what is needed to be done is in or out of the contract. At that point, everything is geared to being successful, so there will be more contracts in the future."*

Tim Bennett, Founder,  
Bennett Compost



## Compost Markets

As part of the agreement with Parks & Rec, the Department receives a minimum of 75 cubic yards of finished compost delivered by Bennett Compost each spring to distribute among its network of community gardens and orchards. Subscribers to Bennett's food scrap collection service receive two free 5-gallon bags of compost each year. The remaining compost is sold in reusable 5-gallon sand bags (retail price is \$10 per bag) or sold in bulk. All compost produced at the PDP facility is utilized on-site or donated.

## Costs & Benefits: Parks & Recreation

Parks & Rec has received grants from the U.S. EPA and USDA to fund its composting initiatives, enabling the Department to support the work with Bennett Compost. At this point, Parks & Rec does not have a budget to expand food scraps composting. In terms of benefits, the PPP with Bennett Compost enables Parks & Rec to divert food scraps from its facilities.

## Costs & Benefits: Department of Prisons

Determining financial costs and benefits with its PPPs is challenging because all costs of operations are part of a centralized budget. In terms of an environmental and social cost-benefit analysis, however, the benefits are significant: landfill methane avoidance, as food waste made up a large portion of the complex's trash stream prior to composting; production of compost used in PDP's orchards and greenhouses, with produce used in its cafeterias and donated to area food banks; and vocational training.

## Costs & Benefits: Bennett Compost

The contract with Parks & Rec is essentially a barter that enabled Bennett Compost to have an expanded and permitted composting site and a building to house its headquarters, which includes bin and bucket storage, blending and bagging, and vermicomposting. A second site and any additional ones established would be for processing done under a paid, contractual agreement. "In our case, the first Parks & Rec PPP was more beneficial to us as a community composter in terms of needed infrastructure," explains Tim Bennett. "The second and third, e.g., with any city agency wanting to divert food scraps, is only valuable to the extent that we get paid. Parks & Rec brought us an underutilized site and a window into municipal operations and bureaucratic steps. Bennett Compost brought our expertise for collection and composting."

He adds that with PDP, the company has gone through the RFP process multiple times. To be eligible, Bennett



Filling bag of compost at Fairmount Park Organic Recycling Center  
Credit: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

Compost has to meet insurance and reporting requirements, which vary depending on the size of the contract. The paperwork is extensive and can be challenging. In general, the primary asset that the City of Philadelphia has is its land, he says. "What they want in exchange isn't clear." Bennett has authored a six-part article series for *Grid* about how Philadelphia can use its assets to do more food scraps composting (links below).

The [June 2025](#) article in *Grid* describes how the City of Philadelphia could model a curbside pilot after the District of Columbia's residential curbside food scraps collection pilot. "Partnering with private companies would allow the City to test out the program without committing to the upfront expenses of purchasing additional trucks and hiring additional staff. . . . The City should engage with multiple compost companies to provide the service. These companies should be responsible for providing education and outreach to residents and paid based on the number of households actually participating."

## Funding

Parks and Rec's funding has been almost exclusively through federal grants. The PDP's funding is through the Department's operational budget; it did receive federal (EPA) funding for its first pilot. Bennett Compost finances its operations through its revenues.

## PPP Lessons Learned

**Parks & Rec:** The PPP with Bennett Compost is viewed by Parks & Rec as a pilot that could be replicated, creating a network of decentralized sites to process food scraps. While the pilot has been successful, Bennett Compost has maxed out the composting capacity available at the Rising Sun Ave.

facility; therefore, Parks & Rec has been in conversations with other City agencies about replicating aspects of this PPP model for food scraps management. Another possible avenue is to utilize a PPP that Parks & Rec has with Cambium Carbon, a for-profit company, as a template. Cambium is contracted to help manage woody debris from street trees and parks at the Parks & Rec's yard trimmings composting site. Cambium subcontracts to Power Corps PHL, which operates a mill and markets and sells the lumber. Power Corps also does workforce development. A portion of the proceeds go back to Parks & Rec for urban forestry initiatives; the Department also gets a discounted rate on materials purchased from the operation. "This is an entirely different PPP model than the one Parks & Rec has with Bennett Compost, but it could serve as a model for how Parks & Rec could issue an RFP for managing food scraps at the yard trimmings facility if it decided to go down that road," notes Natalie Walker.

**Philadelphia Department of Prisons:** Keys to successful PPPs are having a fundamental trust between the partners and open lines of communication, notes Laura Cassidy. In PDP's case, Bennett Compost is "easy to work with collaboratively and goes the extra steps, doing a little more than needs to be done." Given the bureaucracy within which the composting initiatives are housed, assistance with navigating within the system, e.g., for billing, is important to successful PPPs.

**Bennett Compost:** PPPs are good to have, but are not essential to the continued growth of Bennett Compost. The company believes that from a residential organics perspective, PPPs with community composters are key because these local companies can deliver services most efficiently and for less cost than larger waste management companies. Among the lessons learned are:

- Community composters' subject matter expertise is an asset to bring to the table in PPPs. This includes collection logistics and fleet selection, composting a putrescible feedstock like food scraps, outreach and education techniques, compost marketing, and more.
- Municipal champions are invaluable to assisting with navigating bureaucracies, red tape, and related roadblocks.
- Complex partnership agreements open doors for creative problem-solving and solutions, such as budgeting and profit-sharing for compost sales. "Complex partnerships require thoughtfulness that often leads to better results," explains Bennett. "When things are simple from the beginning, there is less incentive for both parties to deviate or think creatively, as both parties understand and agree on what makes sense."

## More Information

**Bennett Compost** website

**Bennett Compost Initiatives** website

Philadelphia Department of Prison's **June 2025 Bid Solicitation** for composting services

**Power of Sustainability to Change Inmates' Lives**, Biocycle, May 2019

**The Philadelphia Composting Story**, BioCycle, January 2025

**Philadelphia Prisons Department Launches Community Composting**, BioCycle, July 2025

**New York, Boston and D.C. are doing it — it's time for Philly to offer scalable solutions for food waste disposal**, Grid Magazine, March 2025

**Sharing the burden of organics collection could help composting programs get off the ground**, Grid Magazine, April 2025

**Is expansion of community composting — access and capacity — the answer to Philly's food waste conundrum?**, Grid Magazine, May 2025

**Washington, D.C.'s compost pick-up pilot is small but promising. Philadelphia should do something similar**, Grid Magazine, June 2025

**Small to mid-sized processing facilities would multiply Philly's composting capacity**, Grid Magazine, July 2025

**Organizing and collective pressure can keep Philly's compost momentum going**, Grid Magazine, August 2025

**Parks and recreation is teaming up with a local composting company to collection food scraps from 1 million meals served annually to children**, Green Philly, June 2023

ILSR Webinar: **Government Support for Community Composting Part 3: Cities and Counties with Public-Private Partnerships (feat. Philadelphia Parks & Recreation)**

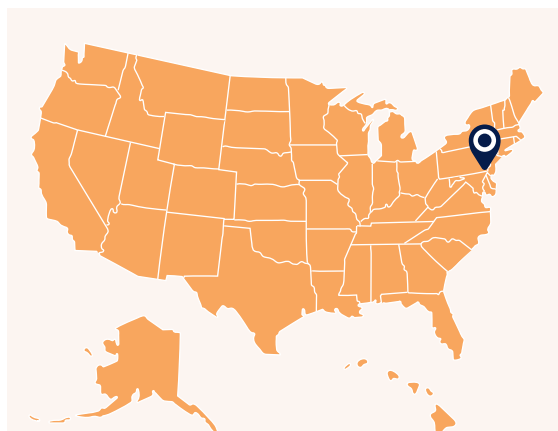
ILSR Webinar: **Keep Compost Local: A Roadmap for Public-Private Partnerships (feat. Bennett Compost and Philadelphia Dept. of Prisons)**





# Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## *Volunteer Network Expands Access to Composting and Community Engagement*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

Philadelphia Parks and Recreation,  
Andrew Kirkpatrick, Urban Greening  
Coordinator, Farm Philly

### Program Overview

Philadelphia launched its **Community Compost Network (CCN)** in 2019 as a **partnership** between the City's Office of Sustainability and Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks & Rec) under its Farm Philly program. Originally inspired by the DC Department of Parks and Recreation **Community Compost Cooperative Network**, Park & Rec's Director of Urban Agriculture, Ash Richards, developed the program further, and it continues to evolve beyond the original concept. The CCN currently consists of 20 sites across Philadelphia – a mix of community gardens, farms, and schools – where residents are invited to compost their food scraps and yard trimmings. The program began with 11 sites in 2019, added a second cohort of nine sites in 2024, and accepted applications for up to ten additional sites in 2025.

Farm Philly provides each site with a 3-bin composting system, educational materials, hands-on and virtual training, and tools and supplies at no cost. Since the beginning of the program, Farm Philly has collaborated with **PowerCorpsPHL**, a youth workforce development initiative, to construct the composting bins and the **Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR)** for support with program design and composting educational materials and training. A list of existing CCN sites can be found on Farm Philly's website.

### Municipal Motivation

In 2016, Philadelphia's then mayor, Jim Kenney, signed the **Zero Waste and Litter Executive Order**, committing Philly to the goal of becoming 90% zero waste and diverting nearly all waste from incinerators and landfills by 2035. Kenney's Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet determined

Volunteers dumping and mixing organic materials  
Credit: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation



Philadelphia's Food Policy Advisory Council tours DC compost sites  
Credit: Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Office

that efforts curtailing food waste, such as composting, would be the most impactful way to begin meeting that goal. According to Farm Philly, the CCN “provides a grassroots approach to reducing waste [and] is having a direct impact on neighborhoods and landfills, and is making a new resource from which residents can benefit. Residents in the Network are actively reducing the amount of waste going to landfill, and directly contributing to the City’s litter free and recycling goals.”

**According to Parks & Rec**, reducing wasted food is its primary waste reduction target, and the CCN now plays an important role in creating more equitable access to composting in the city. The City does not currently have a curbside organics collection program, though there is an interesting historical precedent: from the 1930s to the 1990s, Philadelphia collected **tens of thousands of tons** of food scraps from residents each year and paid farmers in New Jersey to feed them to their pigs. At the time the CCN launched, food scrap composting options were limited: a small number of private collection services were operating (such as **Bennett Compost** and **Circle Compost**), and non-farm onsite composting was not yet a permitted activity. Pennsylvania has since created a new permit tier to allow for small-scale composting of source-separated organics via **General Permit WMGMO17**. Now the CCN is part of a broader composting ecosystem that features exemplary **public-private partnerships**.

## Composting Activity

CCN sites use a 3-bin composting system called the Compost Knox that was designed by Urban Farm Plans (which no longer exists). The system, which consists of three 4-foot

modular cubes, was originally designed for the DC DPR Community Composting Cooperative Network to withstand “abuse,” such as youth climbing on the bins, and to deter rodents.

CCN sites sign a simple Memorandum of Understanding with the City that outlines expectations for program participants and roles and responsibilities for each party. Sites then receive necessary supplies, including thermometers, wheelbarrows, shovels, and ongoing support from Farm Philly. Participants must “be willing to accept food scraps at their site and/or local neighborhood and assemble a dedicated team of volunteers committed to expanding this grassroots network.” Each site determines how it wants to manage members and accept and process food waste on-site: some sites are only open to members, while others are open for drop-off on a regular schedule.

## Outreach

According to its website: “Farm Philly seeks enthusiastic partners interested in collaborating with residents to provide a valuable public resource to their neighborhoods.” Sites must apply to qualify for participation in the CCN, but applications are open to any publicly accessible spaces, including community gardens, farms, parks, places of worship, schools, and recreation centers. In the 2025 expansion of the CCN program, Farm Philly is prioritizing neighborhoods not currently served by a CCN site in an effort to achieve equitable distribution of program resources.

The initial idea for the CCN grew out of a **compost design competition** hosted by the Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council (FPAC) Zero Waste Subcommittee in 2017. Its **solicitation** gave designers a tall order with the prospect of a \$500 reward. Successful entrants needed to create a system that is enclosed, affordable, rodent- and weather-proof, easy to build and maintain, and scaled to accommodate a neighborhood’s waste. Despite 20 submissions, none of the designs were deemed appropriate. Members of the FPAC instead selected Urban Farm Plan’s Compost Knox, a design they had seen during a tour of the DC DPR Community Composting Cooperative Network the year prior.

## Education

Before the CCN program began, various City agencies and staff learned about local composting models and sought lessons learned from other cities. Philadelphia FPAC toured the DC DPR Community Compost Cooperative in 2016. PPR has consulted with ILSR at various points in their development of the CCN program. ILSR has provided program design support and a variety of composting training and education resources, including hands-on and virtual training, site signage templates,





Compost bins under construction  
Credit: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation



Compost bins under construction  
Credit: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation



Volunteers mixing organics  
Credit: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

a site agreement template, and other resources to assist sites training their own participants. Farm Philly now partners with Bennett Compost for hands-on training.

The importance of exposing prospective CCN site managers to basic training on composting best management practices has been a priority of the program since it began. In 2019, ILSR led a two-day in-depth, hands-on composting training for 20 individuals representing the 11 organizations that made up the CCN's first cohort. The training covered the fundamentals of composting recipe development and compost pile building and management. Participants were asked to brainstorm and plan how they would compost at their specific sites. To re-engage these sites after the pandemic, ILSR hosted virtual technical support sessions, and Bennett Compost provided local hands-on training. Now, participants are provided with access to ILSR's [Community Composting 101 Online Certificate Course](#) in addition to local hands-on workshops.

To further support local composting in the city, Philadelphia released its [Philadelphia Community Compost Manual](#). The manual was written in collaboration with local composters and ILSR, with ILSR providing editing support and contributing key sections. It provides an accessible way for community groups, community gardens, or a collective of residents to take on environmental justice and waste in their neighborhoods by creating their own community-led composting sites.

## Compost Markets

The CCN sites collect food scraps and turn them into compost for use in gardens, parks, and green spaces.

## Costs & Benefits

Each 3-bin system costs roughly \$1,500 in materials, plus \$750 for additional tools and equipment. PowerCorps is contracted for \$2,000 per bin to build and deliver to each site.

Farm Philly has one full-time staff position dedicated to CCN. Aside from this full-time personnel, the program costs approximately \$6,000 per year to run the workshop and other related programs and meetings. Ideally, any city looking to start a compost program would budget for volunteer stipends to ensure long-term sustainability of the program and acknowledge the public benefit these sites provide.

In [the City's announcement](#) of the 2024 expansion of the CCN program, it lists the following benefits of community composting: waste reduction, soil enrichment, street cleanliness, citywide impact, and accessibility.

## Funding

Grants from private funders and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture initially funded the CCN. ILSR's technical assistance was funded by various grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 3.

## Lessons Learned

Keys to success include:

- Having support from other local government agencies and building on momentum
- Learning from another municipality (DC DPR)
- Partnership for building bins via PowerCorps
- Partnership to support program design and education via ILSR

Some other lessons learned:

- Consider bin design to address repairs
- A plan is needed for more grant funding to purchase supplies
- Determine how to provide sites with adequate carbon (such as creating a leaf bank or delivering loads of wood chips)
- Raise money to cover ground preparation for bin systems. The bins that were placed directly on the bare earth had problems with settling over time when they were fully loaded. Farm Philly now requires all sites to have either gravel or concrete pads in place before bins are delivered.
- Visit all sites and meet with partners
  - Survey each site: Assess conditions and support each site so that they can follow program requirements
  - Provide repairs as needed with Farm Philly's contractor
- Work with partners to formulate action plans to get sites reactivated
  - Conduct monthly meetings/check-ins with each site
  - Support recruiting volunteers
  - Support succession planning when leadership changes
  - Support with community engagement to involve nearby neighbors
  - Support to build out partnerships with other community stakeholders and/or local businesses
  - Provide signage if needed, and ensure each site has signage
- If the site is struggling, but wishes to remain a partner, consider a six-month back-on-track period. Assess with each site if they have the capacity to run the community operation, or if they need support opening it up to local residents (e.g. sites should delegate this operation if they don't have the capacity to run it)
- If the site is unresponsive or no longer wishes to participate, create a plan to remove compost bins and decommission the site from the CCN
- Host workshops and refreshers, based on sites' interest and partner capacity
- Host floating meetings at sites to build peer-to-peer relationships
- Host the annual CCN gathering (summer)
- Require sites to designate a dedicated site manager and at least two compost captains
  - This will help reinforce accountability around data collection and record management
- Work with partners to refine membership models to ensure public access
  - Request each site update the status of public participation (e.g., is the site open to the public for drop-offs, how and when, or composting on site)
  - Mandatory community drop-off day if they are providing public access
    - Assess with Cohort 1 the cadence of this drop-off (e.g., once a week, 1 hour per week, etc.)
- Establish a calendar of quarterly meetings to convene sites, share feedback, and recognize and celebrate achievements
- Establish a pilot program for the delivery of compost and wood chips at the beginning of the season

## More Information

**Community Compost Network** website

**PowerCorpsPHL** website

**Bennett Compost** website

**Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Community Compost Network is Growing – Apply Now!**, July 2025

**Philly Launches Community Composting Network with Help from ILSR**, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, November 2019

**Composting in the City**, The Philadelphia Citizen, November 2019

**To vanquish food waste, a competition aims to design and compost**, WHYY, August 2018

**FPAC's Community Compost System Design**, December 2016

**Mayor Signs Executive Order Creating Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet**, December 2016

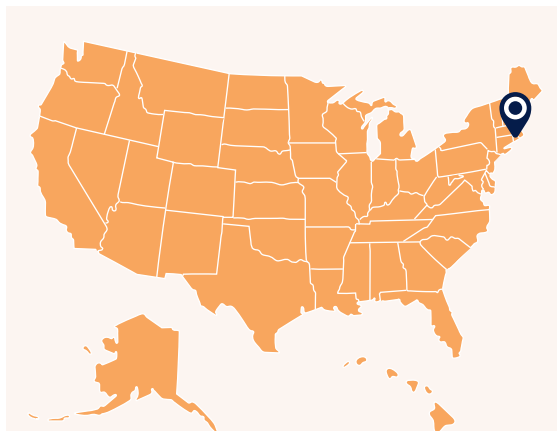
Video: **PowerCorps building 3-bin systems**





# Providence, Rhode Island

## *Cutting City Disposal Costs with Local Food Scrap Recyclers*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

City of Providence, Kevin Proft,  
Deputy Director of Sustainability

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTERS:

Harvest Cycle/Groundwork RI (Ella Kilpatrick  
Kotner, Director of Compost Programs) and  
The Community Compost Depot (Michael  
Bradlee, Executive Director)

Groundwork RI job training students turn compost at the  
Ring Street Garden  
Credit: Groundwork RI

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

The City of Providence received two federal grants to support the creation of infrastructure for food scraps collection and composting. In both cases, the City subcontracted with existing food scraps service providers in Providence, including Harvest Cycle (an initiative of Groundwork RI) and The Community Compost Depot. Other subcontractors include the Center for EcoTechnology (CET) to provide technical assistance for food scraps diversion to businesses and institutions in the city, and Remix Organics, to expand local capacity for commercial food scraps hauling.

The **first grant**, awarded in 2023, is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant for \$3.3 million for three years (2024-2027) to support infrastructure expansions for food scraps diversion and to expand and enhance the City of Providence's municipal recycling collection. The **second grant** is a \$285,850 (including local cash match) U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grant awarded to the City in September 2024 to six service providers to increase food scraps diversion from residents, schools, and businesses. Harvest Cycle, The Community Compost Depot, and CET are among the six service providers. Table 1 shows the awards to the participants in both grants.

### Municipal Motivation

An underlying motivation for the City of Providence to expand food scraps diversion is the cost of trash disposal when it exceeds the yearly cap established by the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation,

**Table 1. EPA and USDA grant awards in City of Providence**

| Awardee                                       | SWIFR (\$)             | USDA CFWR (\$)        |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>City of Providence Grant Award (total)</b> | \$3,348,186            | \$285,850             |
| <b>City Recycling Projects</b>                | \$2,470,586            | n/a                   |
| <b>ReMix Organics</b>                         | \$423,600              | n/a                   |
| <b>Groundworks RI</b>                         | \$204,000 <sup>1</sup> | \$28,919 <sup>1</sup> |
| <b>Center for EcoTechnology</b>               | \$250,000              | \$24,760              |
| <b>Zero Waste Providence</b>                  | n/a                    | \$84,540              |
| <b>RI School Recycling Project</b>            | n/a                    | \$73,550 <sup>1</sup> |
| <b>Providence Gardenworks</b>                 | n/a                    | \$54,200 <sup>2</sup> |
| <b>Community Compost Depot</b>                | n/a                    | \$19,881 <sup>1</sup> |

<sup>1</sup> Expand food scraps diversion programs

<sup>2</sup> Provide compost bins, supplies, and mentorship to community

which owns and operates the state's only landfill. For example, according to a May 29, 2024 [article](#) in the *Providence Eye*, "Providence's 2023 solid waste cap was 62,496 tons. Under the cap, the City pays \$58.50 per ton to dispose of its waste. Once the City reaches its cap, the disposal rate increases to \$115 per ton. In 2023, Providence surpassed the cap by 11,151 tons. Then, there's the \$250 fee for each contaminated recycling load that's rejected at the MRF [materials recovery facility], which then goes to the landfill and adds to the City's total waste tally. All in, that's around \$4,938,381 in disposal fees [in 2023]."

Kevin Proft, the City's Deputy Sustainability Director, explains that "the best way to get under the cap is to recycle more — and have a cleaner recycling stream since recyclables don't count against the cap. We tend to hit the cap three months before the end of the year. Even reducing that by one month would yield a huge savings. Another way the City would see savings would be to reduce food waste in [the] trash stream." For its SWIFR and CFWR grant applications, the City's approach was to tap into and bolster existing services that businesses and nonprofits offer in Providence already. "Aside from seasonal yard waste collection, the only food scraps diversion offering the City has is discounted backyard composting bins," he adds. "But in terms of increasing the number of small food scraps composting sites and drop-off locations, we're supporting Groundwork RI and The Community Compost Depot."

Harvest Cycle has been operating since 2018. It uses bicycles to collect food scraps from residences and small businesses in Providence and composts the scraps at a community



Harvest Cycle hauler Tyson collecting food scraps

Credit: Connie Grosch

garden as well as several other smaller sites, including a library. The main composting site, which is exempt from Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) permitting, is restricted to processing under 25 cubic yards of material at one time and limiting food scraps accepted to vegetative only. Revenues to support Harvest Cycle's day-to-day operations come from food scrap collection fees. Harvest Cycle also manages 15 out of the 18 drop-off sites currently operating in the city. It has about 850 subscribers in total, split fairly evenly between pick up and drop off. "We collect about 12 to 13 tons per month of food scraps, and only have capacity to process about 10 to 15% of that," explains Ella Kilpatrick Kotner. "Most of it is taken by ReMix to a food-waste-only anaerobic digester (Rhode Island Bioenergy Facility, LLC) in Johnston. Funds awarded to us by the City from the SWIFR grant are for Groundwork RI's new composting facility, the West End Compost Hub. They will be used mostly for site work, utilities, and building foundations."





Drop-off site at the Igliozzi Recreation Center  
Credit: Groundwork RI



Harvest Cycle processing staff Tete sifting compost  
Credit: Groundwork RI



Groundwork RI youth staff processing compost at the Ring Street Garden  
Credit: Groundwork RI

The new composting site is on a brownfield, which has required more extensive remediation than originally anticipated. Before the final capping of the site, all utilities and stormwater collection infrastructure must be installed. Groundwork RI was anticipating additional funds for the composting site from an \$18 million EPA Community Change Grant awarded to the Rhode Island Food Policy Council in 2024. In May 2025, the EPA informed the Council that its grant had been terminated. “We were relying on those funds to complete construction of the facility and install a custom-built Earth Flow in-vessel system from Green Mountain Technologies,” adds Kilpatrick Kotner. “The mixing system, which includes an auger, mounting bar, and positive aeration blowers, has been purchased and we are building the concrete stem walls that are about 4 feet high that the auger track will sit on top of. The upper part of the structure will be like a greenhouse with aluminum trusses and polycarbonate siding. There will be roll-up doors on the ends, so it will be fully enclosed. Anticipated capacity is for four to six tons per week of food scraps, which required us to get a medium-scale leaf, yard and/or putrescible waste composting operations **permit** from RIDEM.”

Harvest Cycle is using the USDA CFWR grant funds to open six new food scraps drop-off sites and rebuild some of the 3-bin composting systems currently in use. The Community Compost Depot is also using the USDA grant funds it received for distributed food scraps drop-off and composting. “We have been assisting with identifying sites for the drop-off locations,” says Proft. “Under this grant, it may be the first time that municipal properties — in this case, two City recreation centers — will be used.”

## Composting Activity

Harvest Cycle’s three small composting operations are paired with drop-off sites, so that the food scraps collected at each can be processed on site. Two of the operations are at community gardens; one is at a library, which is not on municipal property. A mixture of Harvest Cycle staff, Groundwork RI youth staff, and volunteers provides the processing labor at these sites. The largest of the three sites has eight 1.5-cubic-yard bins to process the food scraps, which are mixed with wood chips, leaves, and yard trimmings. USDA CFWR grant funds were used to rebuild the bins at that site. The smaller sites have 3-bin systems; each bin has 1.5 cubic yards of capacity.

The Community Compost Depot uses insulated 90-gallon aerated bins to compost food scraps it receives via its drop-off sites. The composting area is behind a florist in a greenhouse formerly used to grow plants. It composts about 100 cubic yards per year and is exempt from RIDEM permitting.

## Outreach and Education

The City of Providence awarded \$84,540 of the USDA CFWR grant funds to Zero Waste Providence (ZWP) to educate and engage the community on the benefits of composting and waste reduction. ZWP focuses on creating opportunities for “members of the Providence community to participate in more sustainable lifestyles and economies,” states its website. For the USDA grant, it is conducting outreach at community events, farmers markets, local libraries, and recreation centers, as well as going door to door in the neighborhoods around drop-off sites, while training residents to assist and





Carla and Victor from Zero Waste Providence doing outreach at the Smith Hill Block Party. Victor is a graduate of Garden Time's Green Reentry Job Training program.  
Credit: Groundwork RI



Harvest Cycle Director Ella doing outreach at Smith Hill Block Party  
Credit: Carla Doughty

*“The City would not be able to afford, given budget constraints, initiating and managing its own food scraps collection program. Therefore, the City’s ability to apply for grant funds that can be passed through to existing service providers has made access to food scraps diversion more available for City residents.”*

Kevin Proft, Deputy Director of Sustainability,  
City of Providence

providing stipends to those doing the outreach. “We found, when writing the USDA CFWR grant application and doing some community engagement about which organizations can do what, that the community-based organizations doing the organics recycling and urban farming don’t have staff to do outreach and marketing,” notes Proft. “That led the City to tap ZWP to create the opportunity for people to learn about the food scraps diversion services available in Providence.”

ZWP has primarily been partnering with **Garden Time, Inc.** for the outreach and education tasks, hiring graduates of Garden Time’s Green Reentry program to connect with hundreds of households in underserved neighborhoods (largely within federally identified environmental justice zones) and educate them about practical, localized composting options. The USDA grant funds, along with funds from **ILSR’s Composting for Community Mini-Grant**, have been used to pay the stipends for part-time outreach staff.

Harvest Cycle utilizes word of mouth, signage on its bike trailers, outreach at farmers’ markets, and Groundworks RI’s website to publicize its food scraps drop-off and collection services.

## Compost Markets

Harvest Cycle uses a portion of the compost it produces in the gardens where composting is done; most is given to subscribers whose food scraps were collected and to other urban growers in the community. Subscribers can have compost delivered in burlap sacks or pick it up at one of the composting sites. Once the West End Compost Hub is up and operating, Harvest Cycle anticipates it will also start selling compost.

The Community Compost Depot holds compost giveaway events to distribute the compost it makes.

## Costs & Benefits: The City

The City of Providence does not have money invested in food scraps collection and composting, other than about \$45,000 worth of staff time that is needed to administer the federal grants. “It was challenging to get our grant recipients under contract and up and running, which included various City procurement processes,” says Proft. “Now, there is less work on a daily basis, though we still meet regularly with subrecipients and spend time on grant-related tasks, including reporting.” He adds that the City would not be able to afford, given budget constraints, initiating and managing its own food scraps collection program. Therefore, the City’s ability to apply for grant funds that can be passed through to existing service providers has made access to food scraps diversion more available for City residents.”



## Costs & Benefits: Harvest Cycle

As a nonprofit organization, Groundwork RI has the ability to apply for grants to fund Harvest Cycle's operations. "If we wanted to offer the services we do without the grants, we would have to charge more for food scraps collection subscriptions," explains Kilpatrick Kotner. "That could limit our ability to make our services accessible to more members of the community." Prior to funding via the USDA and SWIFR grants, the City supported community composting on the [composting page](#) of its website, and on occasion, wrote about the organizations offering collection and composting in its newsletter, she adds.

Collaborating more closely with the City of Providence helped Harvest Cycle navigate zoning requirements for its new composting facility. The site is in a mixed-use industrial zone and there was no explicit language about composting as a permitted use. Harvest Cycle requested, in writing, that the Zoning office explicitly state that composting is a permitted use of the site, which was done, helping to foster a relationship between the two entities.

Another significant benefit of Harvest Cycle's operations is job creation. In addition to Kilpatrick Kotner, the organization employs three bike haulers and a part-time person who focuses on processing. Its youth program provides additional composting assistance. Two to three youth leaders (ages 18 to early 20s) are involved in processing on a full-time basis. Up to 15 youth staff are involved between summer and school-year programming. These youth are high schoolers aged 15 to 18. In addition, 12 to 15 youth are employed by Groundwork RI for eight weeks in the summer and work on a variety of urban stewardship programs, including composting. A smaller group of six to eight remains employed during the school year; composting is a larger portion of the work that they do during that time. Groundwork RI's youth program (Green Team) hires youth primarily from "federally recognized disadvantaged communities" in Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls, explains Kilpatrick Kotner. Green Team members are primarily youth of color from low-income families.

One former Green Team member is now a full-time staff member with Groundwork RI and runs the Pawtucket/Central Falls youth program. He spent several years on the Green Team during the summer and school year, and gained a lot of composting experience at several of Harvest Cycle's processing sites. In summer 2024, Groundwork RI installed a 3-bin composting system at the Galego Community Farm, located at the Galego Court public housing complex in Pawtucket. Throughout 2025, food scraps have been collected from the residents of Galego Court and processed

at the garden. The Groundwork RI employee and his youth staff do door-to-door outreach to residents, distribute buckets, collect food scraps, and process on-site. The compost is used in the garden.

## Private-Public Partnership (PPP) Lessons Learned

The City of Providence anchored its successful EPA and USDA grant applications on utilizing — and expanding — the capacities of existing food scraps diversion service providers in the city. In its applications, it was able to illustrate how infrastructure dollars could be spent to divert food scraps from disposal, reduce methane emissions, and benefit underserved environmental justice communities.

Grant recipients were awarded funds to make capital investments that had been out of reach; e.g., to purchase collection vehicles and build out composting infrastructure. The PPPs also illustrate the role that community composters play in laying the groundwork for food scraps recycling infrastructure that the municipality can leverage with its access to public funding.

## More Information

[Harvest Cycle Compost](#) website

[Zero Waste Providence](#) website

[The Community Compost Depot](#) website

[Garden Time](#) website

[City of Providence Compost](#) website

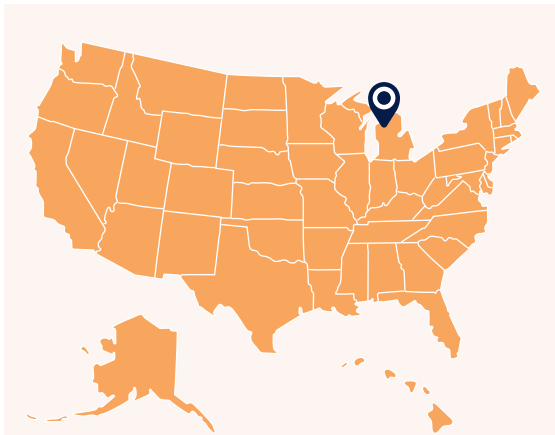
ILSR Podcast: [The Transformative Power of Dirt: Green Reentry Through Composting with Victor Perez and Carla Doughty](#)

ILSR Webinar: [Keep Compost Local: A Roadmap for Public-Private Partnerships \(feat. Harvest Cycle/ Groundwork RI\)](#)



# Traverse City, Michigan

## *Testing Small On-Site Food Scraps Composting*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

Frank Dituri, Director, Department of Public Services, City of Traverse City

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTER:

Carter's Compost (Megan Alexander, Owner)

### NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION:

SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers (Sarna Salzman, Executive Director)

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

The City of Traverse City received the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grant to pilot a small on-site food scraps composting system on City property. It used grant funds to purchase an in-vessel composter. The City contracts with Carter's Compost to offer food scraps collection. In exchange, the community composter can bring collected food scraps to the City's site. The City contracts with SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers (SEEDS), a community-based nonprofit, to support project management and reporting, perform quarterly maintenance of the composting unit, and cure and distribute the compost produced in the in-vessel system. The maintenance and operational tasks, depending on what needs to be done, are split among the three partners.

### Municipal Motivation

SEEDS, which has partnered with Traverse City on various projects over the years, informed the City about the USDA grant opportunity and assisted the City staff and the City's grant writer in completing the application. Traverse City's motivation was to use the grant to build community awareness about composting food scraps and to pilot test the management of a food scrap composting program in addition to strengthening its long-standing yard trimmings composting services. This was also seen as part of the City's larger efforts toward decarbonization. As part of its in-kind match, City staff time (Communications and Public Services Department staff) has been allocated to facilitate the installation and maintenance of the composting equipment and also to provide a regular supply of wood chips for mixing with food scraps. Traverse City utilized property adjacent to its Public Services' vehicle garage to house the in-vessel composting unit. City staff chose the temporary location to provide the best visibility and opportunity for public awareness.

Volunteers from Father Fred Foundation in partnership with SEEDS staff on the SEEDS Farm to spread finished compost for growing produce  
Credit: SEEDS





Painted in-vessel compost system  
Credit: City of Traverse City



Carter's Compost collection buckets  
Credit: Carter's Compost



SEEDS and Carter's Compost celebrate installation of in-vessel compost system  
Credit: SEEDS

## Composting Activity

Carter's Compost operates a residential and commercial food scraps collection and composting service in the Traverse City region. Residents subscribe to curbside service for a fee, or can select a "pay as you throw" option at designated drop-off locations on a seasonal basis. Commercial clients pay a per-cart pick-up fee. The company established four hyper-local composting locations in the city (one at a children's garden and several on farms). It also uses the City's in-vessel composting site, which opened in September 2024. Compost produced at the hyper-local sites is given back to subscribers.

Using the USDA grant funds (total of \$255,396), Traverse City purchased a 20-cubic-yard Earth Flow™ in-vessel composter to meet the City's goal of processing 100 tons per year of food scraps (equivalent to 11 64-gallon carts per week) for \$136,360 (all-inclusive in-vessel system, shipping and handling, installation, basic training) and \$69,536 for site prep (concrete pad, electric, sorting table, and shed). Carter's Compost tips food scraps from its collection routes into the vessel, adds wood chips, and oversees the operation of the unit, including monitoring temperatures and moisture, and removing contamination. SEEDS transports output from the unit to a curing site on its property.

## Outreach & Education

The Traverse City Communications Division leads the outreach and education efforts for the two-year pilot project. The focus is on community education, capitalizing on the visibility of the composting site to residents (it is across the street from the public library) as well as well-marked signage

along the neighboring sidewalk and bike trail. For example, a "Pumpkin Smash" event was held at the site last fall, which drew a lot of families to the event, providing an opportunity for education about the benefits of food scraps composting.

## Compost Markets

After curing by SEEDS, the nonprofit distributes the compost from the pilot to City-authorized projects, which include a municipal park and community donation gardens (where community members grow fresh produce to share with those in need, often through food rescue organizations).

## Costs & Benefits: Traverse City

Other than staff time that is used to meet the City's USDA grant's in-kind match (\$68,032), Traverse City is conducting the pilot at no cost to itself. The primary benefit, according to the Director of Public Services, is to successfully demonstrate hyper-local food scraps composting, leading to more interest in scaled-up collection and composting operations, whether by the City, the County, a third party, or a multi-stakeholder partnership. He adds that the City does not currently have in-house expertise to engage households to participate in food scraps separation and collection, nor the capacity to develop its own collection program. However, it does have a robust yard trimmings collection and composting program. After the grant term ends, the program can continue until the site is needed for other purposes. At that point, Traverse City's plan is to have the composting vessel relocated to a non-City site, notes Frank Dituri, "Our goal is that this project inspires others to further the effort."

Dituri represents the City on a tri-county committee that is developing a Materials Management Plan (MMP), which involves developing organics recycling infrastructure. Creation of the MMP is required by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE), replacing the traditional solid waste management plan that focuses more on disposal.

## Costs & Benefits: Carter's Compost and SEEDS

While the City contracts with Carter's Compost to collect food scraps to be processed in the in-vessel unit, it is a zero-dollar value contract; Carter's Compost's revenues only come from its subscribers. Carter's Compost is able to invoice the City for some of the costs it incurs to help operate the in-vessel composter. Those costs are paid through the grant. In the future, the company recommends that the City's budget include a line item to pay for this type of contracted service. A significant benefit of the pilot project is increased residential and commercial awareness of the value in source-separating food scraps for composting, resulting in gaining new subscribers.

SEEDS received \$39,700 from the USDA CFWR grant funds to provide project management support, quarterly scheduled maintenance of the in-vessel unit, compost distribution, and support for community engagement and outreach. SEEDS' executive director Sarna Salzman notes that the pilot was designed to help Traverse City "launch the conversation" about food scraps collection and composting, "creating the literacy and the comfort" for broader program adoption in the future. Salzman is an environmental representative on the same tri-county MMP committee and currently serves as its chair.

## Funding

This public-private partnership is only possible due to the award of the USDA CFWR grant. Carter's Compost recently received a \$57,018 grant from EGLE to purchase a cargo van with a lift gate, enabling the company to increase food scraps collection volume from 21,000 pounds per year to over 200,000 pounds per year, according to EGLE. SEEDS also uses grant funding to carry out many of its initiatives.

## PPP Lessons Learned

- The City's intentions were clear from the get-go that the pilot was intended to build awareness about local composting of food scraps and to support a more robust regional solution — but not to necessarily become the regional solution itself. Notes Dituri, "The primary lesson learned is that starting small and raising awareness will lead to a growing desire to promote further organic waste processing and reduction, fueling the entire community to engage."
- The private/nonprofit entities in the PPP view the outcome of the pilot as foundational to building out more permanent, decentralized composting infrastructure in and around Traverse City.
- Maintenance challenges with a mechanical composting unit — including waiting for replacement parts — need to be built into the operating model in these types of PPP contracts.
- Develop standard operating procedures for small- to medium-sized food scraps composting systems and programs (e.g., system operation, outreach and education, budget line items), which can be carried forward in future PPPs.

*"The primary lesson learned is that starting small and raising awareness will lead to a growing desire to promote further organic waste processing and reduction, fueling the entire community to engage."*

Frank Dituri, Director,  
Department of Public Services, City of Traverse City

## More Information

[Carter's Compost](#) website

[SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers](#) website

USDA Compost & Food Waste Reduction [grant scope and budget](#)

[Grand Traverse County Materials Management](#) website

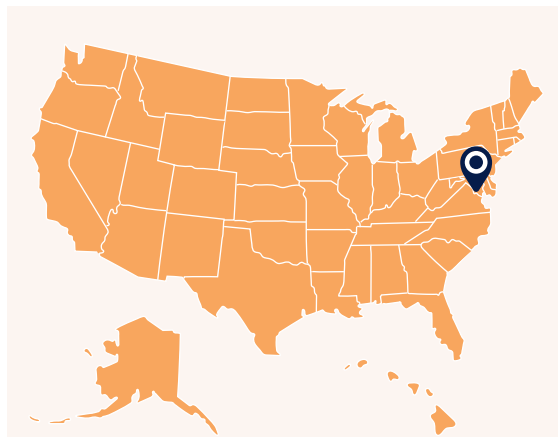
[Northwest Michigan Materials Management Planning](#) website





# Washington, D.C.

## *From Farmers' Markets to Curbside Collection*



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEES:

District of Columbia Department of Public Works, Rachel Manning, Program Analyst, Office of Waste Diversion, and Ashlea Smith, Program Analyst, Office of Waste Diversion

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTERS:

Compost Crew (Dan Israel, Senior Vice-President, Residential & Municipal Programs) and Compost Cab

### Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

The District of Columbia (the District) has public-private partnerships with two Washington, D.C. area community composters, Compost Crew and Agricity (doing business as Compost Cab). In 2022, the DC Department of Public Works (DC DPW) awarded a contract to Compost Crew to provide collection for the District's residential curbside pilot — now an established food scraps collection program.

Separately, Compost Cab has a contract with DC DPW to collect food scraps dropped off at the District's new "smart bin" locations. The food scraps smart bins are accessed via the MetroKEY app or an easy-to-remember key code available on DC DPW's [website](#). Servicing of the smart bins was rolled into Compost Cab's existing contract to operate the free food scraps drop-off events (12 in total: 11 year-round and one seasonal) at select farmers' markets and community sites citywide.

### Municipal Motivation & Program Evolution

The District's [Zero Waste DC Plan](#) includes 2040 goals for an 18% citywide reduction in the solid waste stream, a citywide waste diversion rate of 80%, and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 1.38 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. Diverting food scraps from disposal is part of the Zero Waste DC Plan. Currently, solid waste from the District is hauled to an incinerator in Lorton, Virginia; a portion is landfilled in regional landfills.

Initiatives to manage food scraps include:

- Promotion of home composting (both hot composting and worm composting)

Co-branded truck for pilot curbside collections program  
Credit: DC Department of Public Works

- The Community Composting Cooperative Network organized by the DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- Two programs coordinated by the DC DPW
  - The citywide Food Waste Drop-Off Programs comprising the weekend food scraps drop-off events and the 24/7 accessible food scraps smart bins
  - Residential Food Waste Collection Program, which services 9,000 households as of August 2025

Accepted materials are harmonized among DC DPW's food scraps programs. DC DPW's food scraps drop-off and collection programs accept a wide range of food scraps and food-soiled paper. In 2024, the DC DPW Office of Waste Diversion decided to include meat, bones, and dairy in the food scraps accepted at its drop-off locations to help with consistency across the drop-off and collection programs.

"There was a period in 2023 when the curbside pilot started, but we hadn't made the switch to accepting all food scraps at the drop-off sites," explains Rachel Manning. "That was due to the contracts we had for drop-off. When those expired, we were able to add in meat, dairy, and bones [into our new arrangement]."

About \$4.3 million was budgeted for one-time funding of a 12-month curbside pilot for 9,000 single-family households, which includes dwellings with up to three units. The program is free to participate for residents. Collection services began in August 2023. An equal number of slots for pilot participants was created across the eight wards of the District. As part of the pilot, households received a 5-gallon screw-top collection bucket, a countertop caddy, and a supply of BPI-certified compostable bags.

After the 12-month pilot ended, the program transitioned to the Compost DC Food Waste Collection Program (FWCP), i.e., it was no longer a pilot. The FY2025 District budget allocated roughly \$3 million to support the program. Currently, new participants are added as residents move or opt out of the program. DC DPW is transitioning to larger 7-gallon containers in response to participant and operational feedback.

"Operationally, it was a challenge in terms of routing efficiency for collection in all eight wards," says Manning. "We worked together with Compost Crew using stopSuite routing software, based on a five-day basis." Each ward of the District was divided into four or five days, so there is a driver in each ward on most collection days. Some of the wards with smaller numbers of participants only have collection two to three days a week. Compost Crew provides the Office of

*"We needed to determine operationally what would work best from the District's perspective — including what the District would need to invest to provide the same service that a contractor would do. While DC DPW had the ability to do the pilot in-house, the cost was so large, and we ran the risk of buying trucks and other collection equipment for a program that may or may not succeed."*

Rachel Manning, Program Analyst,  
Office of Waste Diversion,  
District of Columbia Department of Public Works

Waste Diversion with monthly reports for each ward that tally the tonnage collected, the number of set-outs, and the level of contamination. "Since collection started in 2023, 65% of households on any given day have their bins out," she adds.

## Contractual Arrangements

In 2017, as DC DPW was rolling out the drop-off program at select farmers' markets citywide, it conducted a feasibility study to evaluate options for a curbside pilot. "The purpose of the feasibility study was to learn what a residential curbside collection program might look like," says Manning. "It took a number of years between that study and when we were able to get funding in the FY2023 budget to seek a contractor for collection services for a one-year pilot project. We needed to determine operationally what would work best from the District's perspective — including what the District would need to invest to provide the same service that a contractor would do. While DC DPW had the ability to do the pilot in-house, the cost was so large, and we ran the risk of buying trucks and other collection equipment for a program that may or may not succeed."

The initial contract for the pilot in 2023 was for one year. The City issued an [Invitation for Bid](#), and, in July 2023, awarded the contract to Compost Crew with Compost Cab as a subcontractor. The next contract was for a one-year sole-source contract to continue services with the existing contractor (Compost Crew), issued in July 2024. Both contracts were signed later than the issue date because contracts larger than \$1 million require the District Council's approval.



Compost Crew's initial contract to provide collection services for the curbside pilot was a one-year contract for a not-to-exceed amount of \$4.27 million. "This number represents the maximum value of the contract," explains Dan Israel of Compost Crew. "Initially, the RFP was for 12,000 homes, but the District did not reach the participation limits in some wards, so the overall total was closer to 9,000 homes." The contract included assembly and distribution of the starter kits (5-gallon bucket, kitchen caddy, educational materials, compostable bags), weekly collection (about \$3.6 million of the total amount), hauling and tipping the collected organics at the Prince George's County Organics Composting facility in Maryland, and provision of one 5-pound bag of compost to participating households. Compost Crew created 5-pound bags of Farm Feast, its own finished compost, to meet this requirement.

In spring 2025, DC DPW issued an RFP for collection services for the FWCP. It includes one base year term plus four option years for renewal. The City expects to award the contract in fall 2025.

As for food scraps drop-off (including collection from smart bins), DC DPW's contract with Compost Cab is one base year plus four option years. The contract is currently in the base year, with a value of about \$613,000. "Contractually, for the smart bins, Compost Cab has to service them at least twice a week," notes Ashlea Smith. "The bins are equipped with optical sensors that determine the height of materials in the bin. When the height reaches a certain point, which indicates a certain fullness level, an alert is sent to our office and the contractor to service it."

Manning adds that the District has the right to renew or discontinue these contracts through written notice to the contractor at least 30 days before the end of the base year or each option year up to four option years. After the four option years, the contract must be re-solicited (i.e., the contract is for a maximum of five years).

## Public Policies to Support Infrastructure

To provide some guarantee of infrastructure permanence for food scraps diversion, the City Council has passed several acts over the years. For example, the **Compost Drop-Off Program Act** of 2016 created the District's Food Waste Drop-Off program. The Act directed the DC DPW to establish one drop-off site in each ward to operate year-round. In 2018, the City Council amended the Sustainable Solid Waste Management Amendment Act of 2014 — which required the District to develop a plan to achieve an 80% diversion rate from incineration and landfilling — by passing the **Home Composting Incentives Amendment Act**. The Act includes

rebates to "encourage residential property owners and lessees to purchase and use a home composting system." The rebate is up to \$75 per residence. However, this program is currently paused due to limited programmatic staff capacity to oversee the rebates.

Currently, the District does not have requirements for residential food scraps recycling, although that is written into the Zero Waste DC Plan to be acted upon, notes Smith. The District's largest commercial generators of food scraps had to begin separating their food scraps for recycling, **starting** in January 2023. While not currently on the books, "a disposal ban on food scraps in the regular trash could trigger a requirement that would apply to all sectors, including residential," says Smith.



Compost drop-off site  
Credit: DC Department of Public Works



Food scrap smart bin  
Credit: DC Department of Public Works



Food waste bins with instructions  
Credit: DC Department of Public Works



7-gallon food waste collection bin  
Credit: DC Department of Public Works



"Oops" tag to flag contamination, DC Food Waste Collection welcome packet  
Credit: DC Department of Public Works

## Composting Activity

The food scraps collected at drop-off locations, as well as most of the curbside material collected by Compost Crew, are composted at the Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. The facility, which processes over 50,000 tons per year of material, utilizes the GORE engineered cover system for composting food scraps blended with yard trimmings. It is operated by Maryland Environmental Services (MES) under a contract with Prince George's County.

## Outreach & Education

The Office of Waste Diversion is managing all communications for its food scraps diversion programs, including curbside collection. Questions are answered via a city Call Center and in detailed FAQs on the [collection](#) and [drop-off](#) webpages.

"The only education Compost Crew is responsible for is using 'oops' tags for contamination in the curbside container," explains Manning. "The drivers will put an oops sticker on a bin." In other municipal programs that Compost Crew services (see Greenbelt, Maryland, case study), the company conducts the outreach and education to households. "Having the municipality as the 'middle person' between the vendor and the household can be a challenge, especially if the outreach has been limited," notes Dan Israel. "Messaging to households has to be [done] continually."

DC DPW reaches out to households that are not setting out their containers via "reengagement emails." Households that don't participate after the additional outreach are automatically opted out of the program. "Bin recovery with that is a challenge," says Manning.

## Costs & Benefits: District of Columbia

The DC DPW provides trash and collection service to approximately 105,000 households in the District; therefore, the curbside program is available to less than 10% of those who could be eligible. Buildings with four or more units comprise about 75% of the housing stock in the District, thus the overwhelming majority of residents are not eligible for curbside service, notes Smith. "That gap is one of the reasons that led the Office of Waste Diversion to roll out the smart bins this year," she says. "There are a total of 31 around the District."

Since the pilot year, the Mayor's budget has included funding to continue the curbside service to 9,000 households. "Last fiscal year [FY2025], it was a line item for about \$3 million," says Manning. "That amount enables us to maintain the program for 9,000 households. For FY2026, Mayor Bowser's budget includes an additional \$2.3 million to expand the program to a total of 12,000 households. How much curbside service ultimately expands is in question at this point. The goal is ultimately to provide service to as many of the 105,000 households eligible to participate."

The curbside program collects an average of 90 tons of food scraps per month. About 30 tons per month is collected at the food scraps drop-off events (e.g., farmers' markets); the smart bin collection averages 25 tons per month.

Currently, partnering with a community composter that knows what it is doing and can easily expand its business model is working for the District, given the number of households currently enrolled. "We are supporting local business and contributing to green job creation," she adds. "A point could



be reached where it makes economic sense for the District to invest in its own collection equipment and related labor, salaries, and benefits if the annual costs would be less than paying a contractor. This is something the District might consider in the future.”

## Costs & Benefits: Compost Crew

Compost Crew’s primary revenue is from servicing municipal contracts like the one in Washington, D.C. Its primary cost is labor. “That’s the biggest cost,” says Israel. “Typically, we have two team members on each route to improve efficiency. There also are the costs of the trucks, their maintenance and fuel, and meeting municipal insurance requirements. In the case of the District contract, all the supplies to get the program started, e.g., the curbside containers and kitchen caddies, were paid for by the District.”

## PPP Lessons Learned

**DC DPW:** For the Office of Waste Diversion, the availability of service providers like Compost Crew and Compost Cab — as well as infrastructure in the region to process the food scraps — reduces the risk of providing residents with food scrap recycling. “We are grateful to have community partners that are just as invested in a positive outcome as we are,” says Manning.

The Office of Waste Diversion recognizes the need to invest more in outreach and education. However, outreach conducted for the new smart bins in the District — which included flyers, use of social media, and press interviews — has resulted in 5,500 sign-ups by August 2025.

On the municipal side, a piece of advice that Manning and Smith offer to others looking to establish a PPP is to “make sure you have dedicated program staff to support the endeavor. You cannot rely on the private partner to do the work — you must be actively involved.”

**Compost Crew:** Because of the required investment to service the District’s curbside pilot, Compost Crew would prefer longer-term contracts with some degree of certainty that the contract will be renewed. It places considerable risk on the company to hire more staff and add collection vehicles if a contract is only for one year of service. “One- to two-year contracts with several option years for continuing the service would provide enough of a commitment,” explains Israel. “Some jurisdictions are restricted by the types of contracts they can sign, but having multiple years makes it a less risky proposition.”



Compost Crew collection crew on route  
Credit: DC Department of Public Works

## More Information

[Compost Crew website](#)

[DC DPW Food Waste Collection website](#)

[DC DPW Food Waste Drop-Off website](#)

[Zero Waste DC Plan](#)

[Relevant DC Laws & Regulations](#)

ILSR Webinar: [Government Support for Community Composting Part 2: Food Scrap Collectors & Composters with Municipal Contracts \(feat. Compost Crew and Compost Cab\)](#)

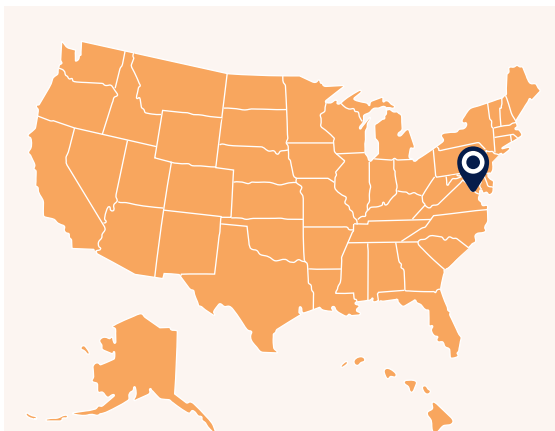
ILSR Webinar: [Scaling Up Mission-Driven Community Composting \(feat. Compost Crew\)](#)





# Washington, D.C.

## City Parks & Rec Fosters Volunteer Composting Network



### MUNICIPALITY AND INTERVIEWEE:

DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR),  
Joshua Singer, Community Garden Specialist

### Program Overview

The DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) supports a **Community Compost Cooperative Network**, which encompasses 56 sites spanning each of the District of Columbia's eight wards. In addition to 36 sites located at DPR gardens, one is at a national park, six are at schools, and 13 are located at partner gardens. Each garden is run as a cooperative, and individuals using the site join by taking a brief training and agreeing to contribute. The program is largely run and managed by volunteers. Each site has one to three volunteer managers, who train their co-op members, organize work days as needed, and are responsible for quality control. Each co-op site can accommodate around 100 active composters or one ton of food scraps per month. There are currently about 1,000 people composting around 20 tons per month. Materials accepted are primarily fruit and vegetable scraps, garden trimmings, and small amounts of bread and shredded paper.

The program began in 2013. It started with a few years at one garden. DPR spent several years on community outreach, building community trust, and developing a cooperative model to avoid volunteer burnout.

The program has inspired similar community compost networks in other cities, such as Philadelphia's **Community Compost Network**.

### Municipal Motivation

When the program began, DPR was having to buy soil amendments. At the same time, the haphazard way that garden members were piling up their gardening trimmings was creating rodent habitats. By enclosing the

3-bin system on new gravel pad built by Eagle Scout  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance



composting process and producing onsite compost, DPR was able to solve two problems at once.

## Composting Activity

Each site uses a 3-bin composting system called the Compost Knox that was designed by Urban Farm Plans (which no longer exists). The system was designed to withstand “abuse,” such as youth climbing on the bins. Each bin, which is a 4-foot cube, is locked with a combination lock to prevent passersby from throwing trash in them. Those interested in joining the program agree to volunteer at least one hour per month for at least nine months of the year and have to participate in a short training session to learn the do’s and don’ts of composting. Once completed, the co-op managers provide the combination lock numbers, and the co-op members earn the right to drop off their food scraps at their convenience. The co-op managers organize workdays such as to 1) flip material from bin one to bin two or three, or 2) screen finished compost.

## Outreach and Education

Many of the Community Compost Cooperative Network’s site managers have been recruited from the DC Urban Gardeners (DUG) network, a volunteer organization promoting urban agriculture, food justice, and sustainability resources for the greater DC area. For many years, as the program was starting up, DPR offered a 30-hour **Urban Master Composter Certificate Course**.

Each bin has a metal sign affixed to it explaining what it is and how to get involved. DPR also set up a listserv specifically for site managers to communicate with each other.

For onboarding new members of each cooperative site, DPR created a training guide for managers. The guide covers steps such as the importance of oxygen, moisture, and mixing food scraps with “browns” (mostly fall leaves and wood chips). It also covers site orientation and how to compost in a 3-bin system.

DPR maintains a website on the program along with an **interactive map** to facilitate finding a site. Each site on the map lists the address and how to contact the site manager.

## Compost Markets

All the sites are co-located with gardens, so gardeners, who do not have to be members of the compost cooperative, can use the finished compost. Co-op members can take compost for home use.



Volunteer day at compost co-op site  
Credit: DC Department of Parks and Recreation



Volunteers watering piles  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance



Volunteers sifting finished compost on volunteer day  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance

## Costs & Benefits: D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation

Each 3-bin system costs about \$1,200 for materials. Some of the bins were constructed by a contractor (at \$5,000 each) and some were built by volunteers on community bin build days. Tumbler sifters cost \$50 in materials to construct. DPR hired a contractor to build some of these for \$500 each. Not every site has a tumbler sifter. The only paid staff is Joshua Singer, who works a fraction of his time on the program.

The benefits to the District have included: building a culture of compost know-how at the neighborhood and school level (along with a culture of shared responsibility), reducing rodent issues at gardens, enhancing local soils for local food production, and facilitating community volunteerism and connection.

## Funding

A Sustainable DC grant of \$25,000 enabled the purchase of the wood to build 20 of the 3-bin systems. Those were built with volunteers. Then DPR secured more funding and was able to build about half of the additional bins with contractors and about half with volunteers. One school raised \$1,000 with its Parent-Teacher Association (DPR paid for the tools).



Volunteers building pile  
Credit: Institute for Local Self-Reliance

## Lessons Learned

Keys to success include:

- Having a champion in local government
- Conducting community outreach
- Finding a contractor to design and build the systems
- Implementing the cooperative model (e.g., volunteer managers who train members, who in turn agree to work certain hours per year)
- Creating “something that can manage itself and not fall apart the moment we turn our back”
- Setting a culture of shared responsibility
- Offering Urban Master Composter training classes

Additional lessons learned:

- Improve the bin design or consider other types of garden-scale systems (often the wood slats in the Compost Knox become warped, creating gaps that allow unwanted critters to get in)
- Plan for more grant funding to purchase tumbler sifters and supplies
- Ideally, have a full-time position managing the program
- Figure out how to provide sites with adequate carbon (such as creating a leaf bank or delivering loads of wood chips)
- Raise money to cover ground preparation for bin systems. Almost all bins are placed directly on the bare earth, which leads to sinking when fully loaded. Plan for and install gravel pads or asphalt/concrete under each bin.

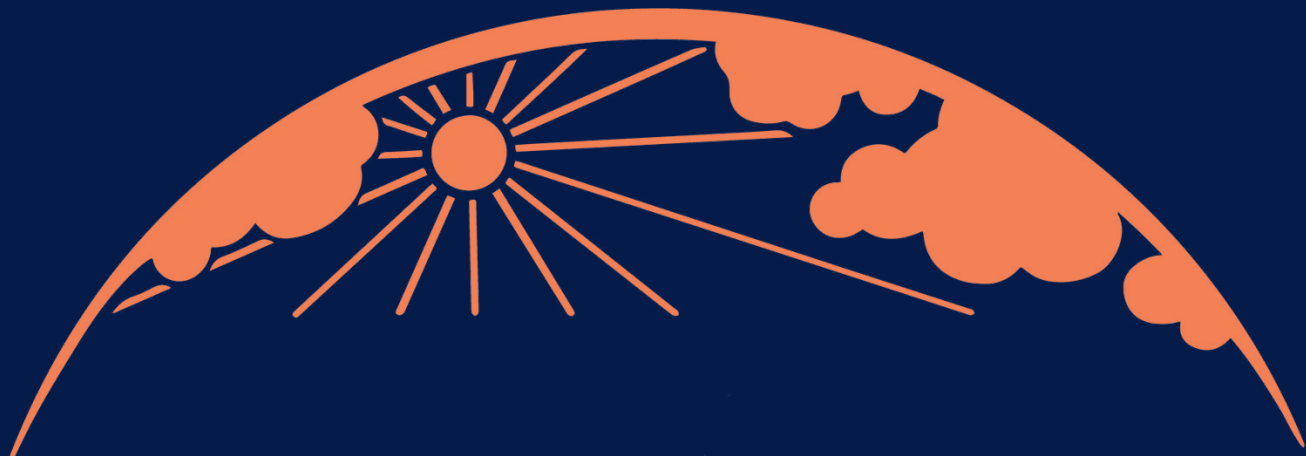
## More Information

[Community Compost Cooperative Network](#) website

Philadelphia’s [Community Compost Network](#) website

DC DPR Compost Cooperative [Interactive Map](#)





Appendix B:

# 2024 Community Composter Mini-Census Results

January 2026



By Julia Spector,  
Diana Harden,  
Brenda Platt

**ILSR** INSTITUTE FOR  
**Local Self-Reliance**

# Table of Contents

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| <b>Rationale</b> ..... | <b>134</b> |
|------------------------|------------|

|                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| <b>Participants</b> ..... | <b>135</b> |
|---------------------------|------------|

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Map of U.S. operations ..... | 136 |
|------------------------------|-----|

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| States represented ..... | 136 |
|--------------------------|-----|

|                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Year Program Began</b> ..... | <b>137</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------|

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| <b>Scaling</b> ..... | <b>138</b> |
|----------------------|------------|

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Operations</b> ..... | <b>139</b> |
|-------------------------|------------|

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Services provided ..... | 139 |
|-------------------------|-----|

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Collection services ..... | 139 |
|---------------------------|-----|

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Materials accepted ..... | 140 |
|--------------------------|-----|

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| <b>Diversion</b> ..... | <b>141</b> |
|------------------------|------------|

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Organic materials ..... | 141 |
|-------------------------|-----|

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Food scraps ..... | 141 |
|-------------------|-----|

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Community Impact</b> ..... | <b>142</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------|

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Job creation ..... | 142 |
|--------------------|-----|

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Volunteers ..... | 143 |
|------------------|-----|

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Clients served ..... | 143 |
|----------------------|-----|

|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| <b>Finances</b> ..... | <b>144</b> |
|-----------------------|------------|

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Revenue sources ..... | 144 |
|-----------------------|-----|

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Earned income ..... | 145 |
|---------------------|-----|

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Profit & Loss ..... | 145 |
|---------------------|-----|

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Total revenue ..... | 145 |
|---------------------|-----|

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Funding needs ..... | 146 |
|---------------------|-----|

|                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Government Support</b> ..... | <b>147</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------|

|                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| <b>Contamination</b> ..... | <b>148</b> |
|----------------------------|------------|

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Contamination rates ..... | 148 |
|---------------------------|-----|

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Contamination scoring ..... | 148 |
|-----------------------------|-----|

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Mitigation ..... | 149 |
|------------------|-----|

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Measurement ..... | 150 |
|-------------------|-----|

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Conclusion</b> ..... | <b>151</b> |
|-------------------------|------------|



# About the Institute for Local Self-Reliance

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) is a national non-profit research and technical assistance organization that, since 1974, has championed local self-reliance, a strategy that underscores the need for humanly scaled institutions and economies and the widest possible distribution of ownership.

ILSR's Composting for Community Initiative promotes distributed and decentralized composting in order to maximize the benefits of composting for local communities. Composting cuts food loss, enhances soils, and protects the climate. When it takes place locally, composting can create local jobs, support local food production, and address equity issues, along with realizing other co-benefits. Through our research, networks, and resources, we are documenting the viability of local and community-oriented composting; meeting the needs for training, guidance on best management practices, business models, model policies and programs; and highlighting the key role of local government.

As a part of this work, ILSR hosts a network of community-oriented composters, the Community Composter Coalition, which is building the movement by connecting early adopters, spreading lessons learned, and inspiring new operations.

[ilsr.org](https://ilsr.org)

# Why a Community Composter Census?



Community composters are composting operations that center their local community in their work and services, primarily through keeping the composting process local and distributed, but also through providing community engagement programs and opportunities. Community composting operations differ in many ways from the large, centralized operations often dominating the focus of the composting sector, and, therefore, they are inadequately represented by data on the industry as a whole. The goal of conducting a “census” on community composters is to get a snapshot of this distinct and often under-represented slice of the composting sector, as well as to serve as a baseline for measuring future growth and documenting the benefits and challenges of community composting. The “census” does not capture every community composting activity or project, but references a substantial subset of examples within the space that have completed the voluntary survey.

ILSR released its first “census” survey, *A Growing Movement: 2022 Community Composter Census*,<sup>1</sup> in March 2023. A shorter version of the census, referred to as the “2023 Mini-Census,” examines data from calendar year 2023. The “2024 Mini-Census” is the most recent survey analyzing data from calendar year 2024. This report captures results from the 2024 Mini-Census and compares them to the 2023 Mini-Census and 2022 Census when possible. The results presented are from the 2024 Mini-Census, unless otherwise specified.



# Participants

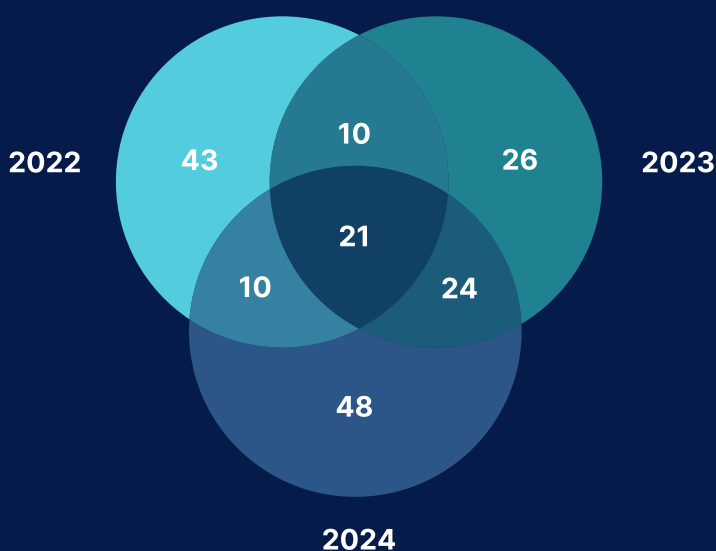
In 2025, ILSR sent the 2024 Mini-Census to over 350 members of the Community Composter Coalition<sup>2</sup> (CCC) who were based in the United States, as well as to an additional vetted target outreach list of over 130 other U.S.-based community composters. **One hundred and three community composters responded.**

The 2023 Mini-Census was sent out in 2024 to over 300 members of the CCC and an additional vetted target outreach list of over 130 other community composters; 81 community composters based in the U.S. responded. The 2022 Census was sent out in 2022 to 204 members of the CCC and an additional vetted target outreach list of over 155 other community composters; 84 community composters based in the U.S. responded. In total, 182 unique respondents answered one or more of the surveys. Although we received survey responses from community composters in Canada, China, Mexico, and New Zealand, this report focuses solely on operations based in the U.S.

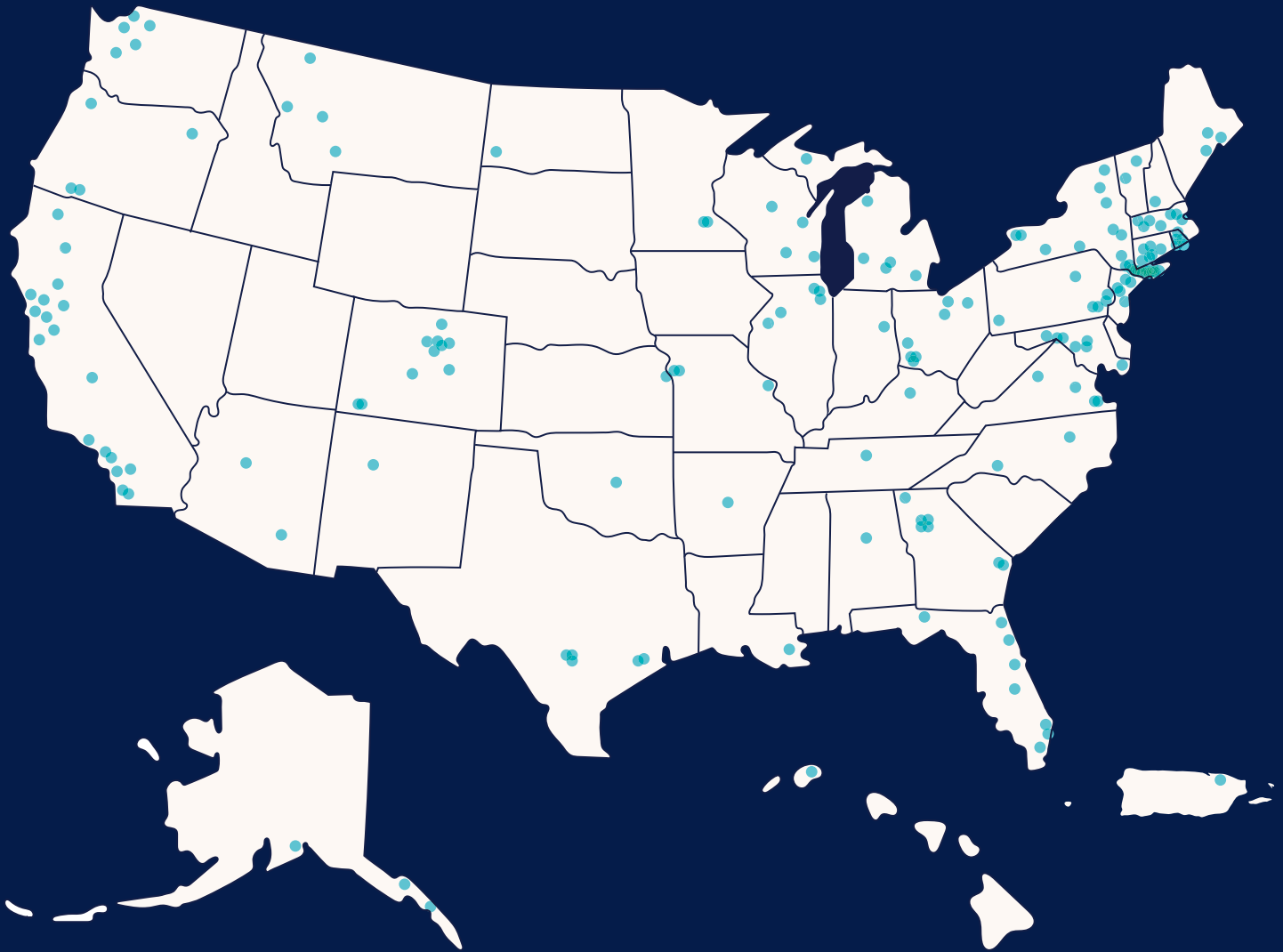
Forty-five participants responded to both the 2023 and 2024 Mini-Censuses. They are referred to in this report as “repeat respondents,” and the changes in their responses are highlighted when relevant.

Responses were voluntary, which may have impacted the type of respondents (for example, they may reflect a pool of community composters with more spare time and resources than average). Not all questions were required, so when the data is based on fewer than the total number of respondents, the number of responses is noted. Some questions compare data from all three years of the survey. Given that participants represent a wide variety of operation types, this report describes the distribution of data in addition to traditional summary statistics like averages.

Respondents by Year

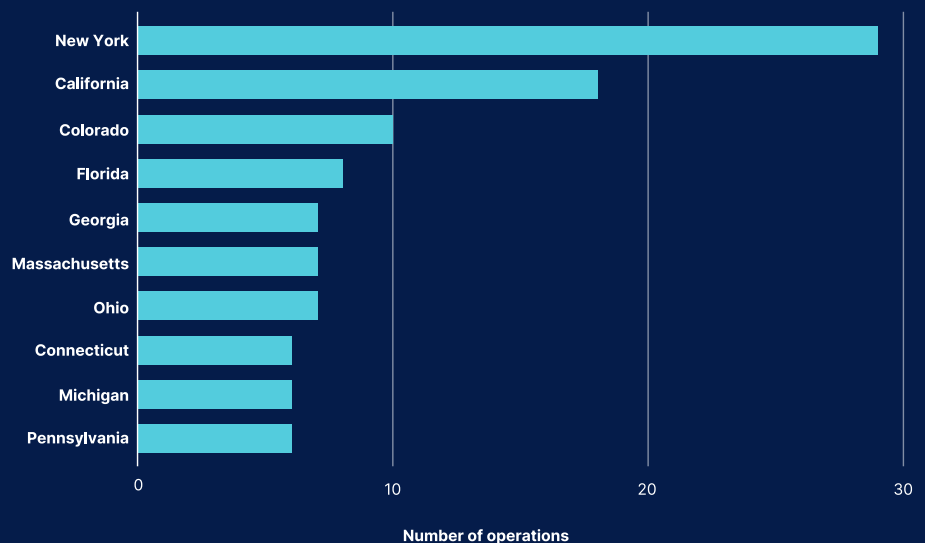


## Map of U.S. Operations (2022, 2023, or 2024)



### Top 10 States Represented (2022, 2023, or 2024)

Community composters responding to the 2022, 2023, or 2024 surveys represent **39 states**, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. By far the most common state represented is New York, followed by California.





# Year Program Began

A majority of programs surveyed from all three years started after 2018, and 90% started after 2010. The oldest composting program from all three surveys dates back to 1988, and the most recent program started in 2025.

## Year Compost Program Began

Average new operations  
per year 1988-2010:

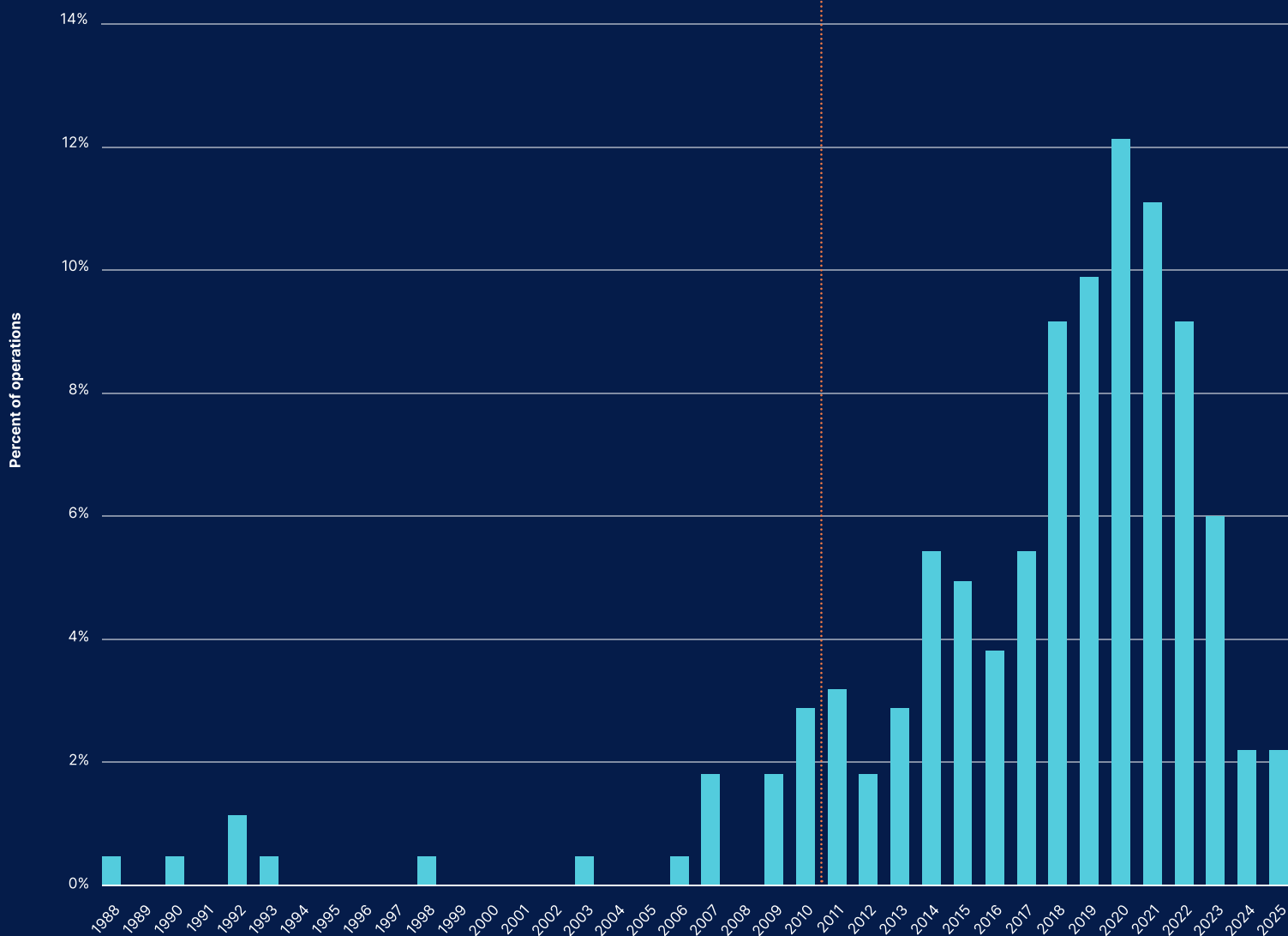


1

Average new operations  
per year 2011-2025:



11

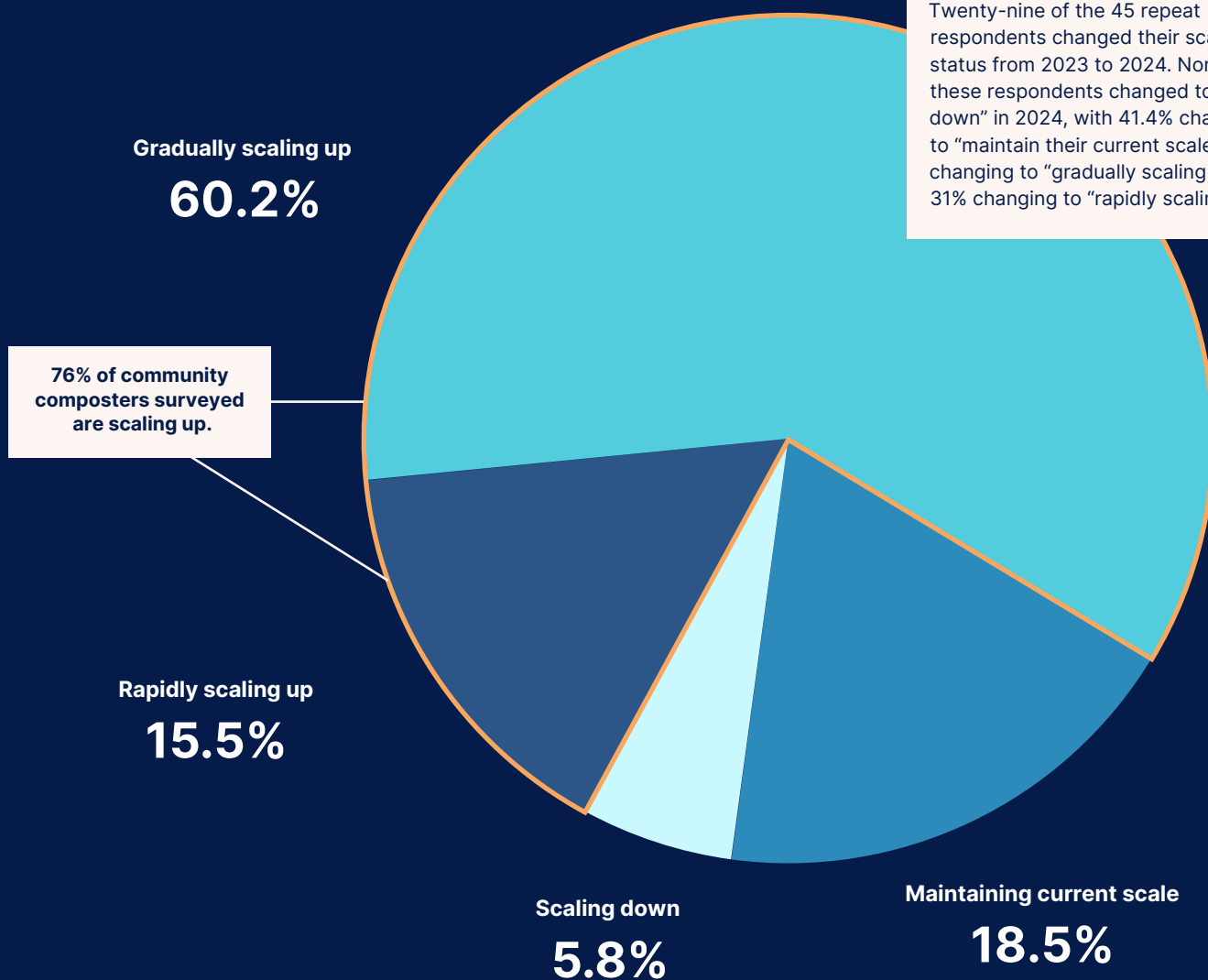


# Scaling

In 2024, 60.2% of respondents self-identified as gradually scaling up operations, 15.5% as rapidly scaling up, 18.5% as maintaining their current scale, and 5.8% as scaling down.

## Scaling Operations

(Percentage of Respondents)



### Change from previous year

For 2023 and 2024, the most common response was gradually scaling up. 2024 saw an increase in the percentage of respondents who are rapidly scaling up (11.1% in 2023 to 15.5% in 2024) and a decrease in the percentage of respondents who are scaling down (7.4% in 2023 to 5.8% in 2024).

**Just 4% of repeat respondents were scaling down in 2024, compared to 9% in 2023.**

Twenty-nine of the 45 repeat respondents changed their scaling status from 2023 to 2024. None of these respondents changed to "scaling down" in 2024, with 41.4% changing to "maintain their current scale," 27.6% changing to "gradually scaling up," and 31% changing to "rapidly scaling up."



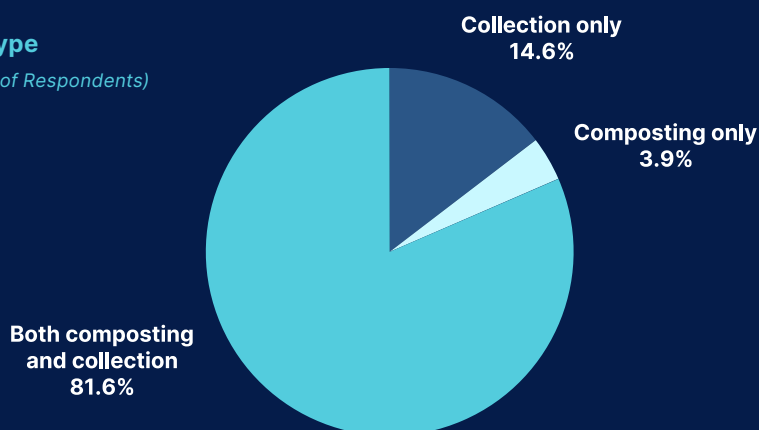
# Operations

## Services provided

Our definition of community composting includes both composting and collection services, with the latter encompassing curbside and/or drop-off food scraps collection.

### Service Type

(Percentage of Respondents)



\*Due to rounding, the numbers in this chart do not add up to exactly 100%.

### Change from previous years

Of the 2024 respondents, 81.6% provided both composting and collection services, an increase from 77.8% in 2023 and 75% in 2022. For all three years, the majority of organizations provided both services, followed by organizations that provided collection only. Organizations that provide only composting services represent the smallest percentage each year.

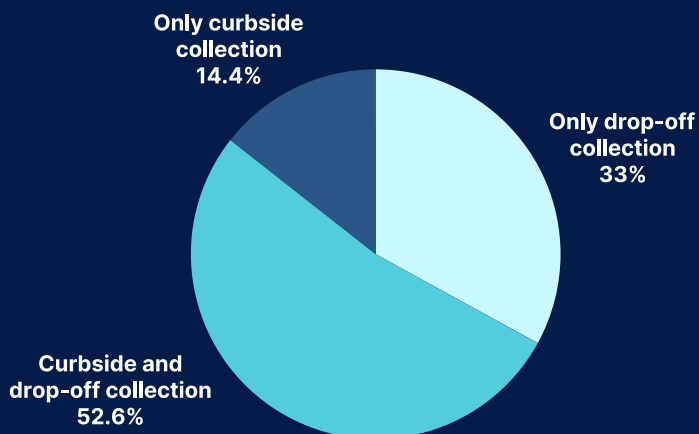
Of 45 repeat respondents, the vast majority (95.6%) provided the same services from 2023 to 2024. One expanded services to offer both, and one limited services to provide only one.

## Collection services

In 2024, 96.1% of respondents offered a collection service.

### Types of Collection

(Percentage of Respondents)



Note: Based on 97 responses.

### Change from previous year

The majority of respondents offered curbside collection and drop-off collection for 2023 (78 responses) and 2024 (97 responses). In 2023, curbside collection was more commonly offered than drop-off collection. By 2024, this had flipped.

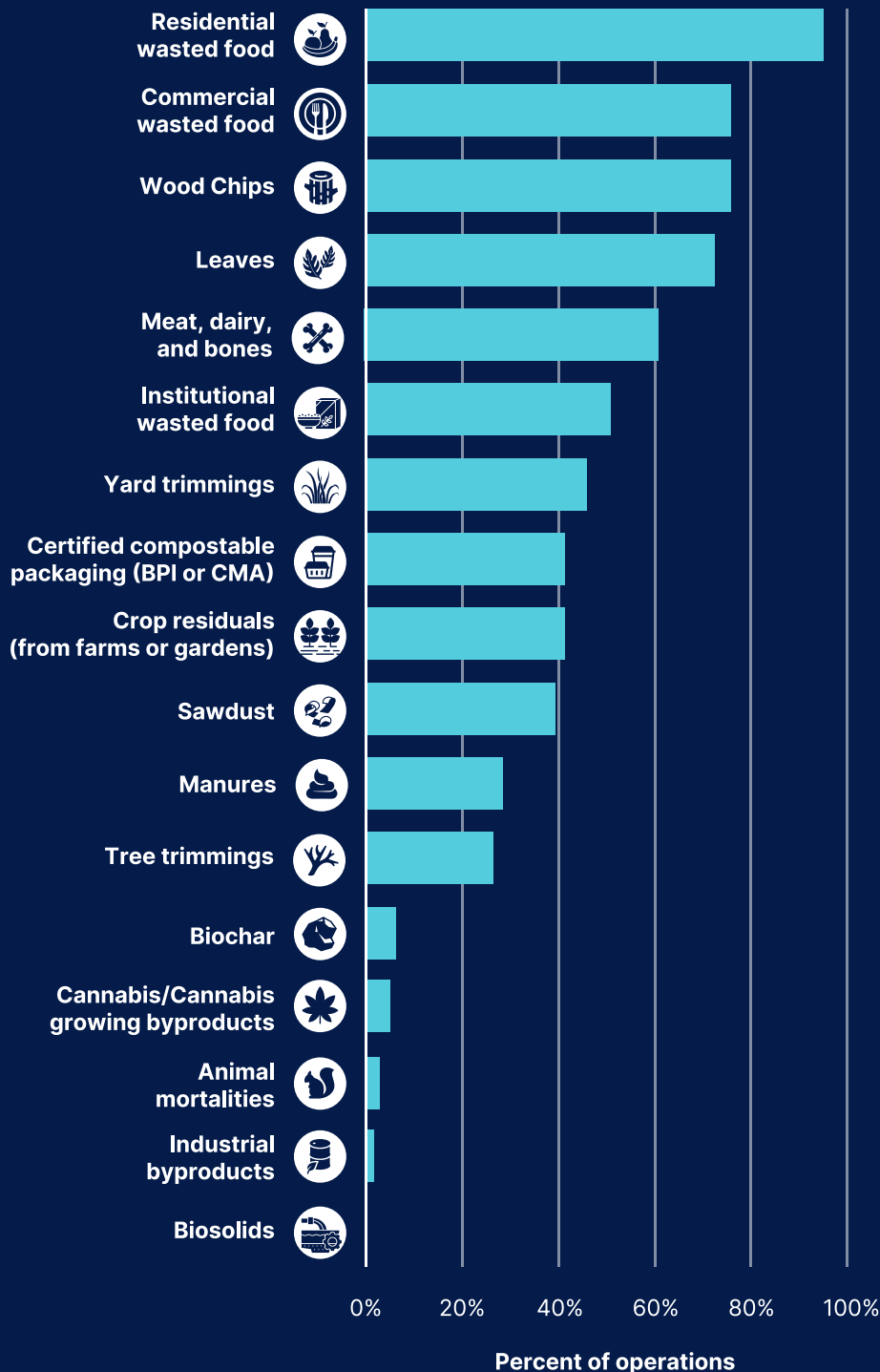
Of the 43 repeat respondents, 86% maintained the same collection type. Four respondents (9.3%) expanded collection services from offering one service to offering both, and two respondents (4.7%) decreased services from offering both types of collection in 2023 to only one in 2024.

# Materials accepted

The most commonly accepted materials by respondents in 2024 are residential wasted food (94.1%) and commercial wasted food (76.5%). The least common materials accepted are industrial byproducts (accepted by 2% of respondents) and animal mortalities (accepted by 2.9% of respondents). No respondent accepted biosolids. Certified compostable packaging (BPI or CMA) was accepted by 41% of respondents.

Nearly 15% of respondents also wrote in materials accepted other than those listed, such as paper products and straw.

## Accepted Materials



**98% of respondents handle food scraps. Of those that handle wasted food, 61% accept meat, dairy, and bones.**

## Community composting tackles food waste

In 2023, 73.9 million tons of surplus food were generated.<sup>3</sup> Wasted food causes 58% of methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills.<sup>4</sup> In many cities and regions, community composters have played a leading role in pioneering the composting of food scraps. Now, many cities are relying on the foundation laid by community composters to expand the capacity of food scraps collection and composting.

**98%**  
of survey respondents  
compost food  
scraps

vs.

**57%**  
of U.S. composting  
facilities only handle  
yard trimmings.<sup>5</sup>

Note: Based on 102 responses. Respondents were able to select more than one category.



# Diversion

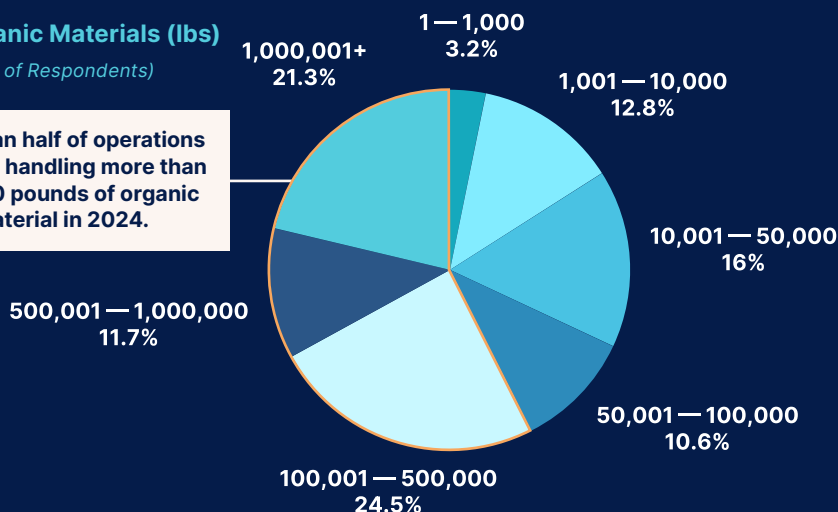
## Organic materials

Participants reported a wide range in the amount of total organic material (including wasted food) they collected and/or composted in 2024.

### Total Organic Materials (lbs)

(Percentage of Respondents)

More than half of operations reported handling more than 100,000 pounds of organic material in 2024.



Note: Based on 94 responses.

\*Due to rounding, the numbers in this chart do not add up to exactly 100%.

### Change from previous year

**Total organic material handled by repeat respondents increased by 17% from 2023 to 2024.**

Average change in material handled per operation: **+153,225 pounds**

The number of operations handling 100,001 to 500,000 pounds and 500,001 to 1,000,000 pounds increased from 2023 to 2024.

Thirty-five percent of repeat respondents increased from a lower range of organic material handled to a higher range; 51% continued handling materials within the same range; and 14% decreased from a higher to a lower range.

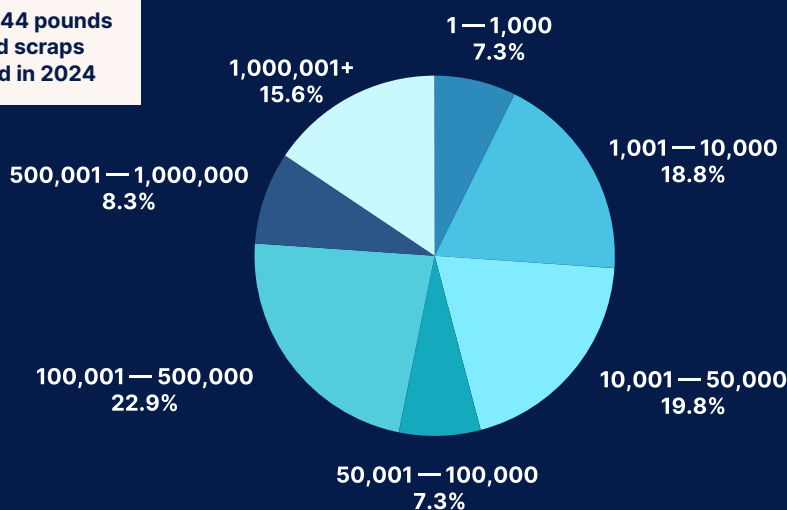
## Food scraps

Participants reported a wide range in the amount of food scraps they diverted.

### Total Food Scraps (lbs)

(Percentage of Respondents)

**69,697,344 pounds** of food scraps diverted in 2024



Note: Based on 96 responses.

### Change from previous year

More than half of operations reported handling over 50,000 pounds of food scraps in 2023 and 2024.

**Average Quantity of food scraps:**

**445,955 lbs**  
2023

**726,014 lbs**  
2024

Note: We report this statistic to illustrate the growth in quantities and caution against using these figures to imply there is an average quantity handled by a community composter.

Of 45 repeat respondents, 62% increased the amount of food scraps they diverted, with an additional 8.9% maintaining the same amount of food scraps.

Average change in amount of food scraps handled per operation: **+38,009 pounds**

**Repeat respondents who handled more than 500,000 pounds of food scraps:**

**24.4%**  
2023

**33.3%**  
2024

# Community Impact

## Job Creation



Note: Based on 100 responses.

Across all operations,  
the survey showed:

**544**

workers employed

**319** full-time

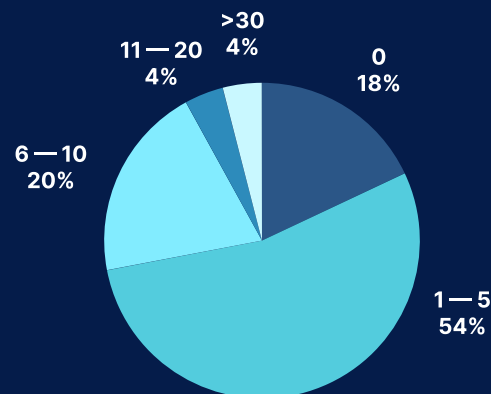
**225** part-time

42% percent of operations rely on  
both part-time and full-time workers.

Note: Full-time employees work 32 hours or more per week.  
Part-time employees work less than 32 hours per week.

### Number of Active Employees

(Percentage of Respondents)



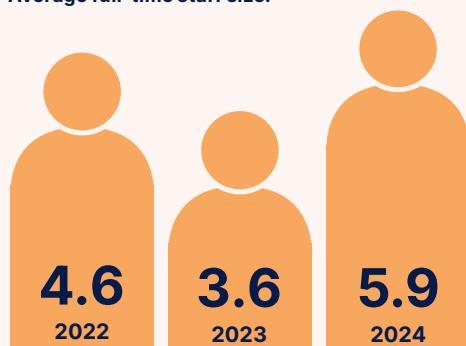
### Change from previous years

The share of active employees who were full-time versus part-time increased in 2024, with full-time employees newly representing a majority of 58.6% (an increase of 13 percentage points from 2023). The proportion from 2022 to 2023 remained within a percentage point of change.

For operations with staff, the average full-time staff size increased in 2024 compared to 2022 and 2023.

Note: Based on 100 responses for 2024, 79 responses for 2023, and 84 responses for 2022.

Average full-time staff size:



Note: We report this statistic to illustrate the growth in staff and caution against using these figures to imply there is an average staff size for a community composter.

Of the repeat respondents:

**81.4%** increased or maintained total staff

↑ 44.2%

↔ 37.2%

↓ 18.6%

Of the eight operations that decreased total staff, all but one decreased by one to two staff members.

Note: Based on 43 repeat respondents.

**90.6%** increased or maintained full-time staff

↑ 37.5%

↔ 53.1%

↓ 9.4%

Of the three operations that decreased full-time staff, two increased the number of part-time staff.

Note: Based on 32 repeat respondents.

**80.5%** increased or maintained part-time staff

↑ 34.2%

↔ 46.3%

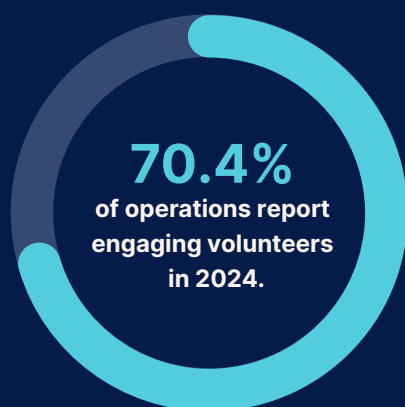
↓ 19.5%

Of the eight operations that decreased part-time staff, half increased the number of full-time staff.

Note: Based on 41 repeat respondents.



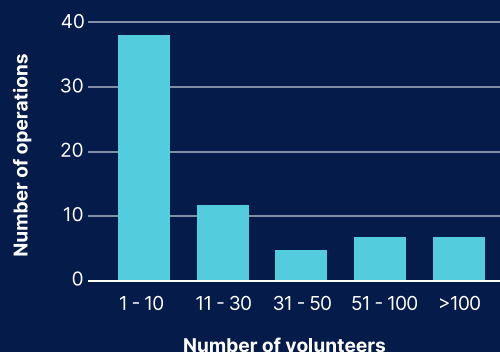
# Volunteers



**44**

Average volunteers  
engaged

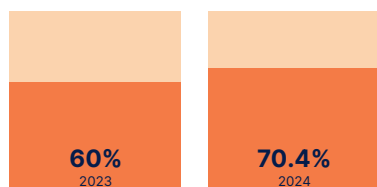
## Volunteers Engaged



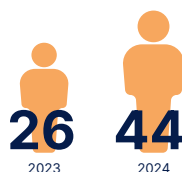
## Change from previous year

Note: Based on 98 responses for 2024 and 80 responses for 2023.

### Operations engaging volunteers:



### Average volunteers engaged:



Note: We report this statistic to illustrate the growth in volunteers and caution against using these figures to imply there is an average number of volunteers for a community composter.

Of 44 repeat respondents, **72.7%** either maintained or increased their number of volunteers.

↑ 40.9%   ↔ 31.8%   ↓ 27.3%

### ? Why might volunteers engaged shrink?

The two respondents with the highest decreases in volunteers increased the number of full-time staff they employed. Of the 12 respondents who decreased the number of volunteers, almost half increased the size of their full-time staff.

# Clients served

Respondents serve residential and commercial/institutional clients. Residential collection accounts for 93.6% of clients in 2024.

Note: Based on 87 responses.

## Total Clients Served



## Number of Clients by Type

■ Residential ■ Commercial / Institutional



## Change from previous year

### Average Clients Served

|                       | 2023 | 2024 |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| Residential           | 551  | 624  |
| Commercial/Industrial | 36   | 43   |

Note: Based on 87 responses for 2024 and 74 responses for 2023.

Note: We report this statistic to illustrate the growth in clients and caution against using these figures to imply there is an average number of clients for a community composter.

## Clients served (continued)

### Change from previous year

Of the 40 repeat respondents for residential clients, 75% increased or maintained their clientele:

↑ 62.5% ↔ 12.5% ↓ 25%

Of the 10 respondents who decreased residential clients, 30% increased their commercial/institutional clients.

Of the 37 repeat respondents for commercial/institutional clients, 81.1% grew or maintained their clientele:

↑ 46% ↔ 35.1% ↓ 18.9%

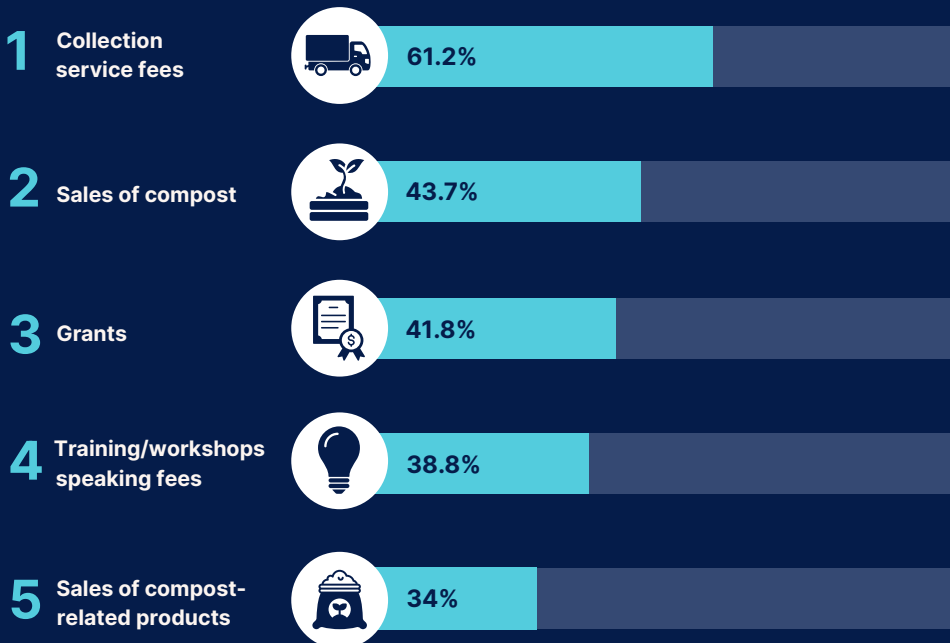
### ? Why might composters lose clients?

The respondent with the largest loss of residential clients in 2024 was hit by city budget cuts to community composting. Reported another respondent: "All residential pick-up services were shut down in August 2024 because of city policies so deeply hurting our business model."

## Finances

### Revenue sources

#### Top Revenue Sources



Note: Respondents were able to select more than one category.

### Change from previous years

Collection service fees is the most common revenue source received by community composters in 2022, 2023, and 2024, followed by sales of compost. Grants, training/workshop speaking fees, and sales of compost-related products remain in the top five most common for all three years.

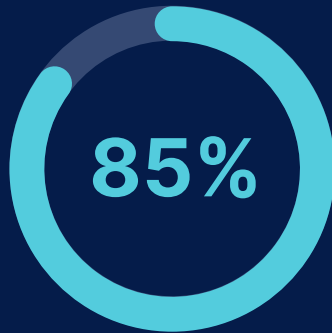
While the percentage of respondents receiving collection service fees decreased from 75% in 2022 to 61.2% in 2024, the percentage receiving revenue from government contracts more than doubled, from 11.9% in 2022 to 26.2% in 2024. The percentage of respondents receiving grants increased from 26.2% in 2022 to 40.8% in 2023 and 41.8% in 2024.



## Earned income

Earned income does not include philanthropic grants, crowd-source campaigns, or donations.

The majority of operations in 2024 estimate that **85% or more** of their revenue was from earned income.



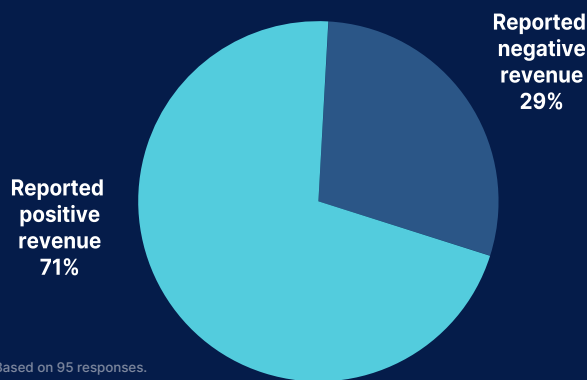
Note: Based on 88 responses.

### Change from previous year

The majority of operations estimated that 85% or more of their revenue was from earned income in both 2023 and 2024. Community composters are also diversifying their income sources. For example, those receiving revenue from the sale of vegetables and/or other farm/food products nearly doubled from 8.6% in 2023 to 16.5% in 2024. Community composters receiving revenue from the sale of compost-related products increased from 24.7% in 2023 to 34% in 2024 and those receiving revenue from government contracts increased from 14.8% in 2023 to 26.2% in 2024.

## Profit & Loss

Respondents were asked if their profit and loss statement was positive or negative at the end of 2024.



Note: Based on 95 responses.

### Change from previous year

Respondents reporting positive revenue increased from 2023 to 2024. Seventy-one percent of respondents reported positive revenue in 2024, up 14 percentage points from 2023.

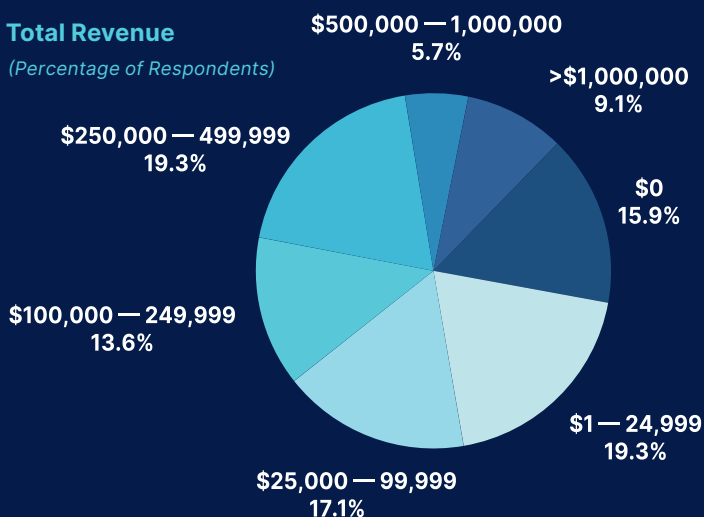
|                           | 2023 |   | 2024 |
|---------------------------|------|---|------|
| Reported positive revenue | 57%  | → | 71%  |
| Reported negative revenue | 43%  | → | 29%  |

Note: Based on 95 responses for 2024 and 72 responses for 2023.

## Total revenue

### Total Revenue

(Percentage of Respondents)



Note: Based on 88 responses.

### Change from previous year

|                                                                 | 2023  |   | 2024  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---|-------|
| Percentage of respondents making \$100,000 or more annually     | 43.3% | → | 47.7% |
| Percentage of respondents making more than \$1,000,000 annually | 4.5%  | → | 9.1%  |

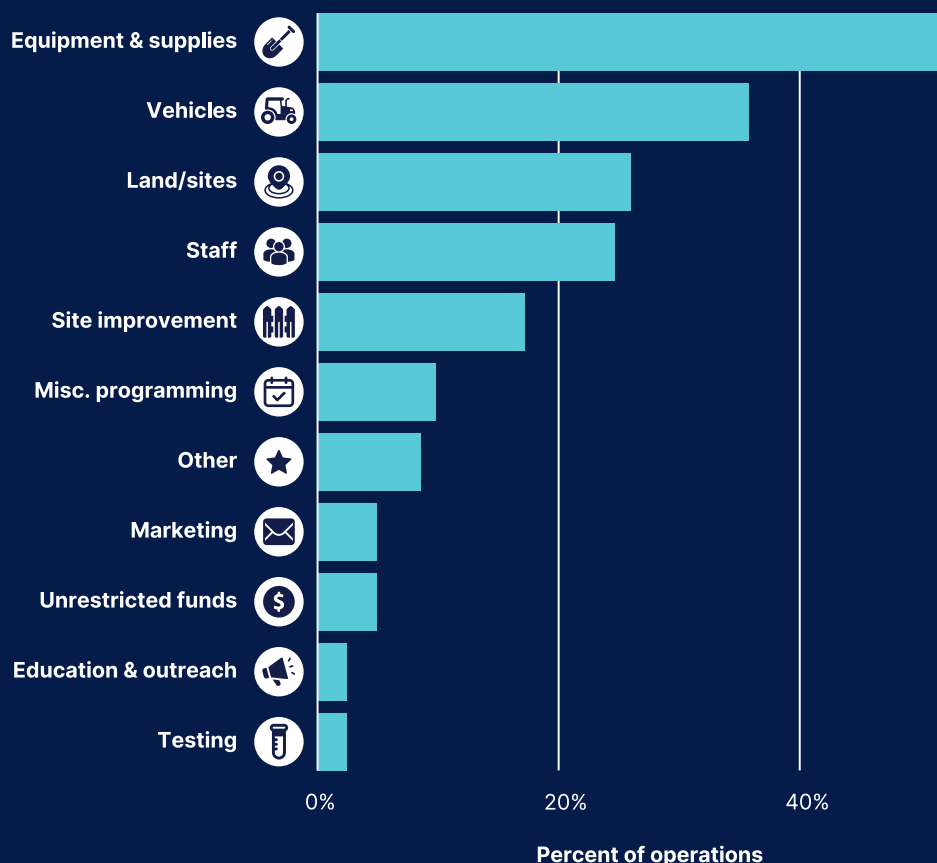
Note: Based on 88 responses for 2024 and 67 responses for 2023.

Nearly 70% of the 36 repeat respondents increased the amount of revenue received from 2023 to 2024. More than 11% of respondents maintained the amount of revenue, and seven operations (or 19.4%) experienced decreases in total revenue. The second and third largest decreases in revenue were from operations impacted by city budget cuts to community composting.

# Funding needs

Respondents were asked “If you were writing a funding proposal today, what would be your top funding needs, and about how much money would you seek for these?”

## Hypothetical Funding Ask



Equipment & supplies was the number one funding need identified by 53.2% of respondents, with finished product processing equipment and collection equipment being the most common specified. Vehicles were identified as a funding need by more than a third of respondents, with trucks and loaders being the most common. More than a quarter of respondents identified funding needed for land/sites, and a quarter identified funding needed for staff. Funding needed for marketing (identified by 5.1% of respondents) covers business to all potential customers, including for new client subscriptions and selling finished compost. Responses for “other” include subsidized collection in disadvantaged communities, volunteer compensation, and capacity building.

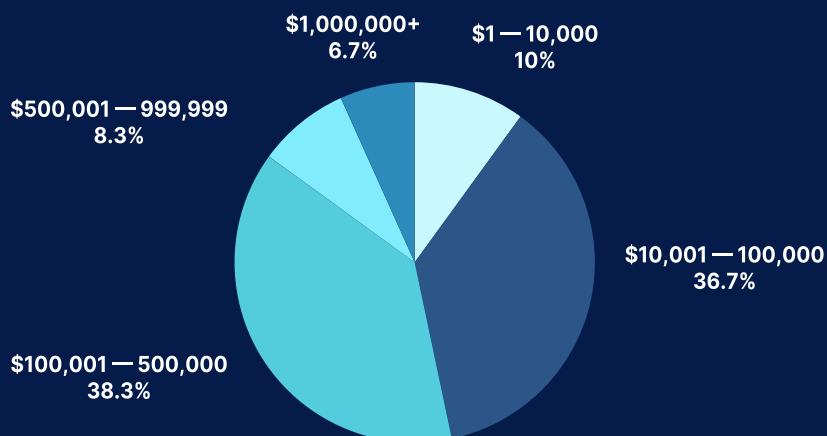
Note: Based on 79 responses. Respondents were able to select more than one category.

## Amount of Funding Needed

(Percentage of Respondents)

The amount of money respondents said they would seek ranged up to \$6,000,000, with the median being \$134,550. Three-quarters of respondents need funding between \$10,001 and \$500,000.

Note: Based on 60 responses.

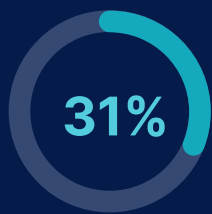




# Government Support

2024 survey respondents were asked,  
“How does your local government support you?”

The most common answer selection was “has zero waste, diversion, or composting goals/targets,” which was selected by 38.5% of respondents. “Provides some financing or funding” and “integrates composting into climate action plans or solid waste management plans” were both selected by 28.6% of respondents.



Percent of respondents contracting with their local government for either drop-off, curbside collection, composting, or outreach and education services.



Note: Based on 91 responses. Respondents were able to select more than one category.

Respondents had the option to write in additional commentary and examples of ways their government provides or does not provide support.

## Respondent comments:

- “Collaborates on grants, supplies our browns free of charge, generally supportive and helpful in non-contractual ways”
- “The town’s RFP for landscaping services includes the delivery of leaves to the composting sites”
- “Provides supplies”

Community composters also reported zero or little support from local government. Nearly 19% of respondents wrote in optional commentary that they receive no support from their local government, with some describing active barriers to operations. Additional write-in answers describe not enough support from their local government.

## Respondent comments:

- “Currently have two state government agencies regulating compost with different rules. One regulates production of compost, the other the sales of compost. Sort of works against each other and us!”
- “Our solid waste district has been on a multi year smear campaign and generally denies our existence.”
- “They literally shut me down.”
- “The zoning office...agreed to amend the zoning policy to include in-vessel systems as conditional use within the city. Unfortunately, after months of discussion, they did not hold up on this promise. After many attempts to follow up, I never heard back from them after this agreement was reached.”

# Contamination

## Contamination Rates

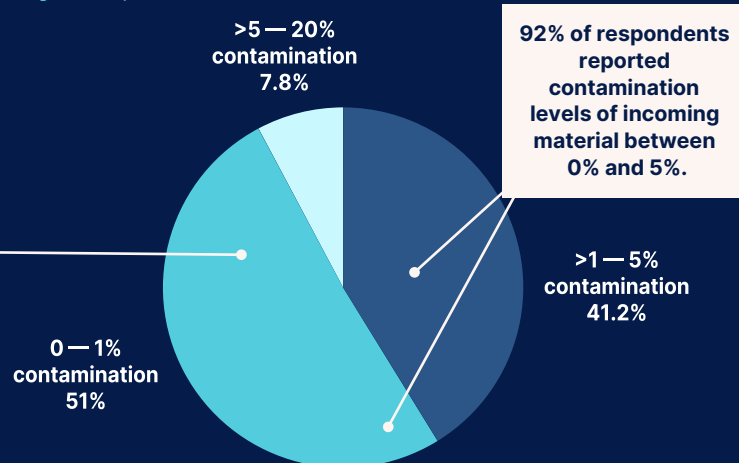
Survey respondents were asked in follow-up communications to provide an estimate of the percentage of contamination in incoming materials handled in 2024. Fifty-one community composters responded.

**The majority of respondents reported contamination levels between 0% and 1%.** Of these 26 respondents, six respondents (or 23%) reported contamination levels between 0% and 0.1%.

Four respondents (7.8%) reported contamination levels between >5% and 20%. Two of these respondents reported levels above 10%; one reported 11% and one reported 20%.

### Estimated Contamination Rates of Incoming Material

(Percentage of Respondents)



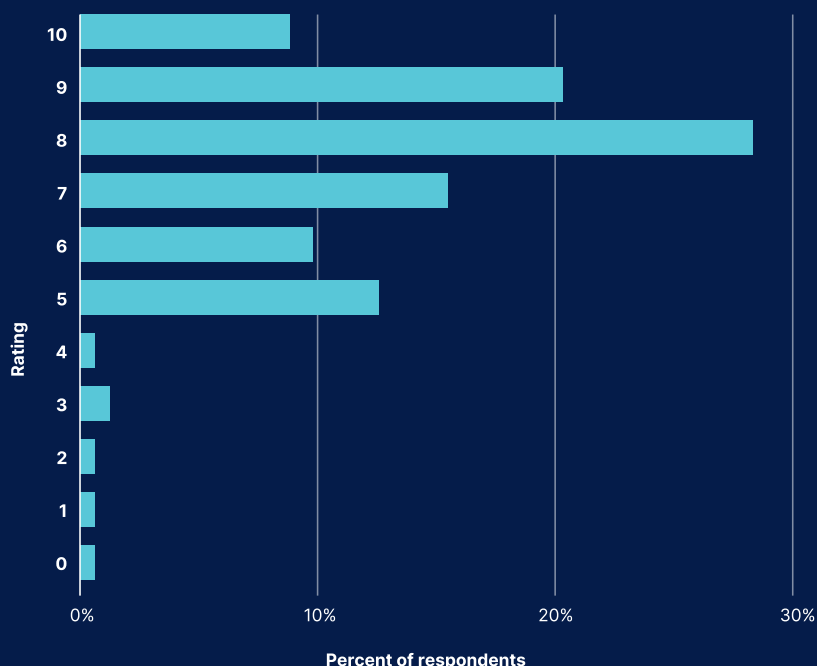
Note: Respondents were not asked to specify whether the estimated percentage of contamination was based on weight or volume. However, 13 respondents voluntarily shared this information. For two respondents who provided separate figures for contamination by weight and volume, we included the estimated percentage by volume in our analysis.

## Contamination Scoring

In 2024, survey respondents were asked to score on a scale of 1 to 10 how effectively they were able to manage contamination in their operations (with 10 being the most effective). Contaminants could be physical or chemical.

More than 70% of community composters scored their contamination management as 7 or higher, with 56.3% reporting 8 or higher, 29.1% reporting 9 or higher, and 8.7% reporting a score of 10. Fewer than 3% of respondents scored their operations as less than 3.

### Scoring in Managing Contamination





# Mitigation

Community composters were asked how they mitigate contamination in their operations.

Respondents had the option to write in additional ways they mitigate contamination. Some examples include avoiding certain feedstocks and optional training.



## Educational Strategies and Contamination Levels

We also examined the relationship between contamination mitigation strategies that are educational and contamination rates for the 51 respondents who provided estimates.

For community composters reporting the least contamination (0 – 1%), the most common strategies employed were: targeted education and outreach (61.5%), taking and sharing photos of contamination (53.8%), and determining where the contamination is coming from (42.3%).

Those reporting the highest contamination levels (>5 – 20%) employed the fewest educational strategies overall, with relatively low utilization of the most common strategies for those with the least contamination.

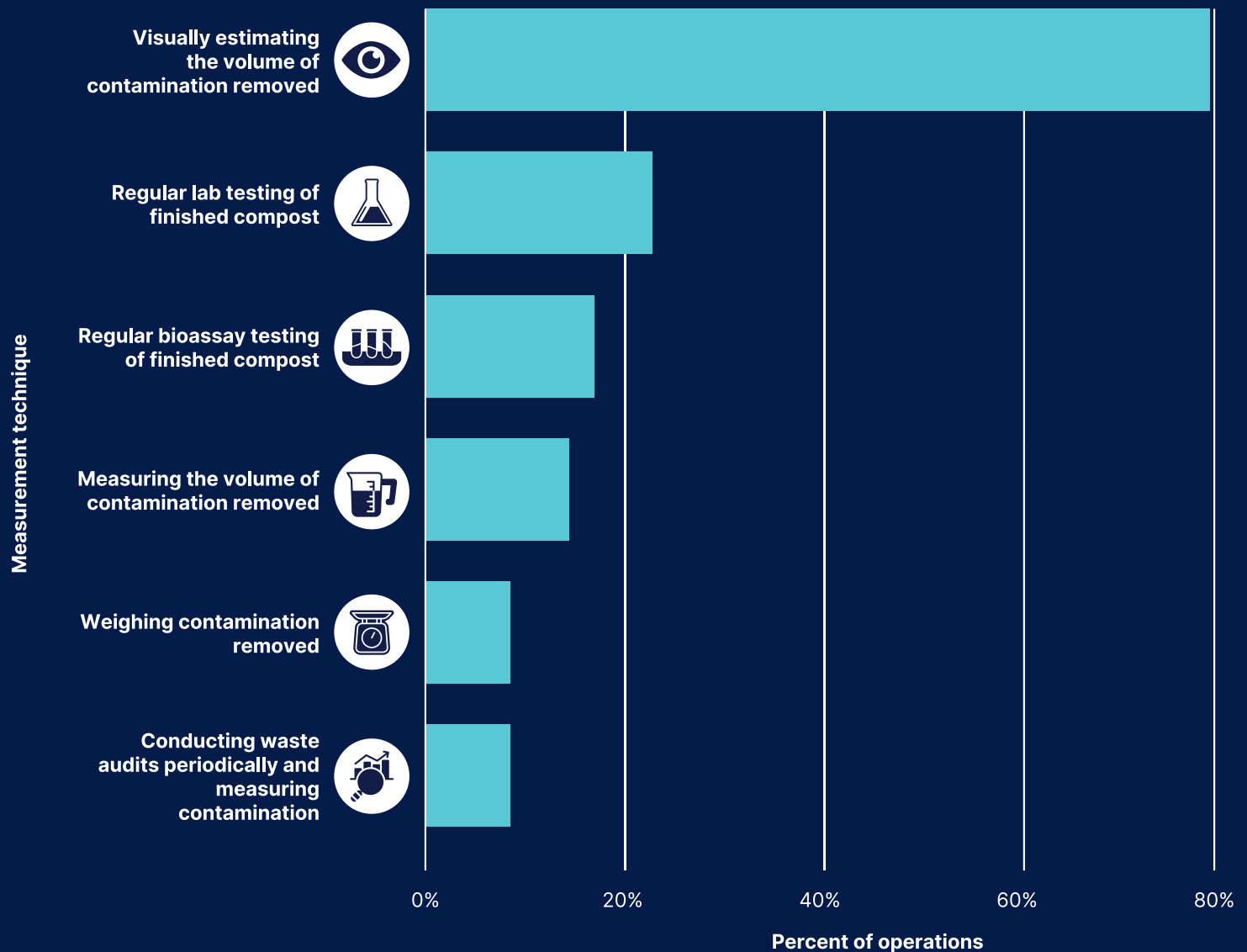
Note: We included all mitigation strategies as educational, with the exceptions of “manually picking contamination from material” and “mechanically screening contamination from material.”

Note: Respondents were able to select more than one category.

# Measurement

Community composters were asked how they measure contamination in their operations.

Approximately 80% of respondents selected “visually estimating the volume of contamination removed” as a measurement technique. Thirty percent of respondents reported regularly testing their finished compost (through lab and bioassay testing).



Note: Based on 83 responses. Respondents were able to select more than one category.



# Conclusion

The 2024 Community Composter Mini-Census highlights and confirms trends emerging from this rapidly growing segment of the industry. Many key findings reaffirm results of the 2022 Census. These studies underscore the strength and potential of community composting and demonstrates how diverse, distributed local composting maximizes the industry's impact, growth, and resilience. Economic investment and political support have the power to uplift this flourishing movement that centers and maximizes economic, social, and environmental benefits to local communities.

The 2024 Community Composter Mini-Census shows that community composters are:



## Diverse

- There is no single model of what community composting looks like.
- Responses varied widely in terms of program type, operations, scale, and more.
- Operations from all three surveys represent 39 states, plus D.C. and Puerto Rico.



## Impactful

- Community composters are expanding access to composting of food scraps and amplifying its benefits.
- 98% of census respondents compost food scraps compared to 57% of U.S. composting facilities that only handle yard trimmings.
- Nearly 70 million pounds of food scraps were diverted in 2024.
- For operations with staff, the share of employees who are full-time, as well as the average full-time staff size, increased in 2024.
- 70.4% of operations report engaging volunteers in 2024, compared to 60% in 2023.
- Total organic material handled by repeat respondents increased 17% from 2023 to 2024.





## Growing

- Local community composting operations are growing in number and by scale.
- 76% of respondents were scaling up in 2024; repeat respondents who were scaling down decreased from 9% in 2023 to 4% in 2024.
- 90% of unique respondents from all three surveys started after 2010, with average new operations per year jumping from one for 1988 – 2010 up to eleven for 2011 – 2025.
- The percentage receiving revenue from government contracts more than doubled from 2022 to 2024.
- Nearly 70% of repeat respondents increased their revenue from 2023 to 2024.



## Resilient

- Community composters show resilience to industry competition and challenges.
- The percentage of respondents reporting a positive profit & loss statement increased from 57% in 2023 to 71% in 2024.
- The majority of operations estimate that 85% or more of their revenue is from earned income for 2023 and 2024.
- Nearly 19% of community composters commented that they receive no support from their local government.
- The majority of respondents reported contamination levels of incoming materials between 0% and 1%.

**Thank you to the respondents who made this report possible!**

Learn more about the movement to support local community composting at [ilsr.org/composting](https://ilsr.org/composting)



### Footnotes

1. B. Platt, C. Libertelli, M. Matthews, *A Growing Movement: 2022 Community Composter Census*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, March 2023 (<https://ilsr.org/articles/composting-2022-census/>)

2. *Community Composter Coalition*, Institute for Local Self-Reliance (<https://ilsr.org/composting/community-composter-coalition/>).

3. *From Surplus to Solutions: 2025 ReFED U.S. Food Waste Report*, ReFED, February 2025, (<https://refed.org/downloads/2025-refed-u-s-food-waste-report/>).

4. M. Krause, S. Kenny, J. Stephenson, A. Singleton, *Quantifying Methane Emissions from Landfilled Food Waste*, United State Environmental Protection Agency, October 2023 (<https://www.epa.gov/land-research/quantifying-methane-emissions-landfilled-food-waste>).

5. N. Goldstein, *The State of Organics Recycling in The U.S.*, BioCycle, October 2017 (<https://www.biocycle.net/state-organics-recycling-u-s/>).