

City of Detroit City Council: Green Task Force Organics Recycling Subcommittee

PURPOSE

The Organics Recycling subcommittee is working to support development of a diverse city-wide composting system that reclaims and diverts food waste, yard waste and compostable paper waste, using it to produce compost, and using that compost to create sustainable soil-based solutions to meet citizens’ needs – healthy soil for growing local food and planting trees; quality soils for landscaping parks, open space, new development; engineered soils for storm water management and for in-fill of demolition sites, preparing for the next development; soil that sink carbon and cleans air.

CHALLENGE

The challenge is that currently Detroit does not have the capacity to compost the high volume of organic materials we generate so much of it is treated as waste and it will take policy development, plus strategic policy and process implementation, and creation of businesses and jobs to change that. The City Council plays a role in creating the enabling environments for the City, citizens and others to build the needed infrastructure and ecosystem to serve Detroiters.

PRIORITIES

We work to provide inputs that inform strategy development, policy decision-making, and formation of collaborative initiatives in the following priority areas:

1. **ENABLE POLICY:** Inform updates of Detroit’s solid waste, agriculture and other related policies to make organics diversion and compost production doable at all scales
2. **ENABLE POLICY:** Equip Detroit City and Policy leaders to influence passage of proposed State policy which shifts from a disposal management approach to a sustainable materials management; including establishing standards and thresholds for composting that will give citizens the protections they desire against bad practice and the consequences that negatively impact citizens; apply bill language to guide Detroit policy development; conduct policy briefings to make state policy information accessible to Detroit policy makers, practitioners, and citizens
3. **ENABLE PUBLIC:** Create an informed, supportive public through engagement and education (experiential-based events, presentations, conversations) to create a culture of resourcefulness, conducive for food waste diversion and composting
4. **ENABLE PRACTICE:** Co-design and co-facilitate a residential compost pilot initiative to demonstrate good policy and practice
5. **ENABLE PRACTICE:** Build on the learning from implementing city-wide recycling; leveraging existing investments and efforts by strategically “adding” organics recycling; accelerate achievement of higher overall recycling rate

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Participate	Collaborate with City legislators, administrators, and staff to engage collectively on this work
Envision	Create a shared vision and comprehensive strategy for composting in Detroit; informed by the Sustainability Action Agenda
Plan	Provide inputs to City-led initiatives about how composting and the use of compost supports things that Detroiters indicated they want (SAA #29, #30; DEA Reduce Waste/Increase Recycling; Climate Action Plan)
Baseline Map	Map the current municipal organics collection and composting operations Map existing community-scale and industrial-scale (private owned/operated) compost operations Map backyard composting (ground in food system via the urban agriculture community)
Baseline Data	Support compilation of county, city and community level data to develop a baseline snapshot of the current and future states of composting in Detroit
Awareness	Host public experiential-based engagement to create compost AWARENESS to build support and culture of resourcefulness and participation
Process	Create a map for navigating the City’s processes for establishing compost related operations such as education on organics collection (food scraps, leaves), hauling, compost production and uses (considering food safety and health implications), waste de-packaging and sorting, and packaging finished compost
Demonstrate	Pilot community-scale compost operations that demonstrate what it looks like when good policy and good management are practiced; this is VERY IMPORTANT for not only addressing citizen, staff, and public officials concerns; it is CRITICAL to gaining their support for creating composting jobs and businesses in the City
Resource -- information	Develop organics recycling resource toolkit for City legislators and department leaders/staff, citizens and practitioners in the compost ecosystem and infrastructure
Resource— funding	Collaborate to secure funding and other resources for developing the infrastructure and support development of the ecosystem