



CENTRAL OHIO
FOOD WASTE INITIATIVE

COORDINATED BY
SWACO
FROM WASTE TO RESOURCES

Food Waste Reduction Roundup

SCHOOLS

Columbus School for Girls participated in its first full year of a campus-wide composting initiative. Collection of food scraps was implemented within the youngest age groups at the schools (3 years old) through the seniors in High School. Both back and front-of-house food scraps were collected. The school's food service has replaced plastic disposable bowls, cutlery and cups with compostable alternatives.

Dublin Jerome High School processed about 42,000 lbs. of food leftover from student lunches and the cafeteria in their Grind2Energy system. This material is diverted to an aerobic digestion facility where natural gas is captured for reuse.

The Ohio State University increased landfill diversion over a 5-year period, from 31% in FY19 to 41% in FY24. The university continued to expand the Campus Composting program, collecting 14% more over the previous year, from nearly 40 residence halls, 10 research labs, and over 30 food service locations. Other exciting activities:

- Doubled the number of students signed up for residence hall organics collection (to about 2,000) partially through a new automatic enrollment program for first-year students.
- Ohio State's compost drop off program started in 2022, with five drop-off locations. Since 2022, the number of drop-off sites increased to eight and the number of participants who bring their food scraps from home to these sites doubled to about 2,000 faculty and staff members across the campus.
- Held 40 zero waste events. Reusable container program- 248,656 single-use containers were avoided through the program last academic year, saving a corresponding 12.3 tons.
- Starting in Fall of 2023, 3 campus dining locations transitioned to using reusable containers for all to-go orders. In 2024, the university expanded the number of reusable container return stations to 13 and created [additional education](#) to help students use the system more easily.



The Food Recovery Network at The Ohio State University recovers food from 8 campus dining location partners and major campus events. In 2024 OSU FRN redirected over 10,000 lbs. of food from landfills and to people in need with a team of student volunteers.

KNOW Food Waste club at The Ohio State University supported wider OSU composting program by helping to distribute composting supplies to students and managing strategic collection points across campus. KNOW also:

- Hosted seminal research presentations on food waste featuring Dr. Brian Roe (Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics) and Molly Sheridan
- Organized a variety of educational events including a pumpkin carving festival that demonstrated practical waste reduction techniques including roasting seeds.

GOVERNMENT

Bexley engaged students and residents in a variety of food waste education. Notably, 375 Bexley City School students about sustainable food systems as part of their Sustainability Education lessons. The city also plans to pilot a freedge (free fridge) in the community. The curbside Food Waste Recycling program continues to be successful, with about 40% of homes signed up for the service.

Columbus opened 4 additional food waste drop off sites (for a total of nine), is piloting a Mill Food Recycler in the Department of Public Services downtown office, and added composting to the City's Refuse Code (Title 13) define composting by the Director of Public Service (the same way we have recycling in the code), allow the Division of Refuse Collection to define collection, containers, and other actions related to compost collection, and authorize the division to investigate any illegal composting activities (e.g. contamination).

Grandview Heights launched a monthly marketing campaign aimed at educating residents about our Food Waste Drop Off Site, which led to a remarkable 30% increase in food waste diverted through the drop-off program.

Marble Cliff piloted a curbside food waste collection program. Based on the success of the pilot, the program which provides compost services at no cost to residents has been extended through 2025.



New Albany opened a 4th food waste drop-off location and ran the Save More Than Food Community Campaign to educate residents about food waste and diversion opportunities in the community. Other activities included:

- Collecting 42,000 lbs. of pumpkins in the autumn for composting
- Conducting a resident survey to gauge interest in a potential curbside compost program, supported food waste diversion at community events through the Green Guardians program
- Awarding grant funding through the New Albany Student Leaders in Sustainability Grant for a multi-faceted educational campaign regarding composting.

Westerville ran the Save More Than Food Community Campaign educating residents on ways to prevent and divert food waste from the landfill and added new signage to all four food waste drop off locations to improve site use.

Columbus Department of Public Health worked alongside the departments of Public Service and Recreation & Parks and Columbus Food Rescue to recover food from vendors at the Jazz & Ribs Fest. CFR received a generous contribution for a refrigerated cooler from Councilmember Wyche helping them to rescue 780lbs of food. Based on this event, the City partners plan to create a "Food Donation Plan" in the permitting process for vendors at city-sponsored events. Public Health also worked with Public Service on an EPA Community Change grant to bring capacity and critical infrastructure to Columbus Food Rescue.

Ohio EPA expanded the [Recycle Ohio Grant program](#) to include a new Organic Material Diversion category. This category includes efforts to recycle food via compost or food rescue.

SWACO published a 2024 update to the [Central Ohio Food Waste Action Plan](#) which details all the activities that partners have accomplished since the original plan was created in 2019. Other activities included:

- Hosting 35 partners at the 2024 Central Ohio Food Waste Convening
- Redesigning the [SaveMoreThanFood.org](#) website to help businesses, schools, and residents find the resources they are looking for quicker and making the website available in 100+ languages. Adding a [map of food waste drop off sites](#) across the county to the site.



- Piloted food scrap collection at Budd Dairy Hall, Kittie’s and Joya’s, diverting over 20,000lbs of organics in 5 months. All three locations will continue the program beyond 2024.
- Added a [food waste drop off sites](#) at Ohio Mulch Westerville, 4655 Westerville Road, Columbus.

NONPROFITS

Columbus Food Rescue volunteers recovered 780,000+ lbs. of surplus food and distributed it to 70+ receiving organizations around central Ohio. CFR also:

- Launched Ro's Kitchen, a commercial kitchen where raw rescued produce and ingredients are turned into nourishing meals. The kitchen has made 10,000+ prepared meals for agency partners since then.
- Partnered with the City of Columbus to rescue prepared food and ingredients from the Jazz and Ribs Fest, resulting in 780 lbs. of food recovered and distributed to receiving agencies.

Local Matters reestablished a hands-on in the store grocery tour education programming and continued ongoing education on composting, food waste, and portion control for all ages. All food scraps from cooking classes and educational programming are composted in their office.

ECDI piloted food waste collection at the Food Fort, an incubator kitchen used by over 70 member businesses. The data collected is informing a plan to establish on site composting technology with the possibility of being accessible to the community.

BUSINESSES

Borgata Pizza Cafe started using the Too Good To Go app to sell leftover food at the end of the day and has diverted 550 lbs. of edible food from going to waste across their Budd Dairy and Worthington stores.

Budd Dairy Hall started diverting organics from their ten Chef Partners. In November they also started collecting organic material in the front of house. Collectively they diverted 14,931 pounds of organics materials. The Columbus Food Rescue also works with vendors



to recover any donatable food that would otherwise be put with organics collection at the end of night.

Joya's and Kittie's in Worthington partnered on a pilot program that diverted 5,238 pounds of organics in the first 5 months of collection. Kittie's also diverts organic materials from their German Village and Bexley locations.

Kroger donated more than 1.42 million lbs. of food in its Central Ohio stores to local organizations including Local Matters and Ro's Kitchen.

Rev1 Ventures is a small company that shares leftovers from events with the tenants in their building, keeping almost all of it from going to waste. Informal effort but effective!

Sunsprout Farms donated about 10lbs of retail sprouts regularly each week with the Mid Ohio Workers Association food drive and redistribute occasional surpluses with Columbus Food Rescue. They also send about 9,600 lbs. of food scraps annually to be composted.

COMPOSTERS & HAULERS

There are a growing number of private sector organics haulers in Franklin County. Go Zero Services, the Compost Exchange, and Compost Clubhouse together transported over 3,200,000 lbs. from Franklin County for composting. Waste Management Services, Organix and Earth Peak Organics are service providers whose diversion is not included in the above metric but which provide organics hauling services in the region.

