Scaling Up Composting in Charlotte

Why Was Mecklenburg County Chosen?

3rd Annual National Zero Waste Business Conference

“Creating Value through Zero Waste”

May 8, 2014

Presenter

Laurette Hall, Environmental Manager

Mecklenburg County Solid Waste

Charlotte, NC
Mecklenburg

- Population: 722,627 City of Charlotte, 966,160 Mecklenburg County, 1,857,624 MSA
- Seven Municipalities
- 35% Waste Reduction Goal by 2018
- Target Food Waste Trimmings/Scrap to achieve
Commitment to Proper Management of Organics

Mecklenburg County owns and operates a permitted Large Type 1 Compost Facility – Compost Central

May receive 125,000 tons annually

Ground material is sold as mulch, boiler fuel or composted

Yard trimmings and other vegetative debris are banned from disposal in Subtitle D Landfills in the North Carolina
Planning
Food Waste Diversion Study

Commercial

• Identify major generators
• Identify and profile existing recovery programs and facilities
• Estimate current diversion practices
• Assess potential food waste collection and transport options
• Identify economic, environmental and policy drivers for recovery
• Identify barriers to successful recovery

Residential

• Estimate per household food waste generation
• Assess potential for existing curbside collection to include food waste
• Identify program implementation gaps and opportunities
Key Findings

Business

- The six largest food waste generating sectors are food manufacturers, food stores, restaurants, hotels/lodging, medical/health services and education.

- Businesses generate approximately 143,000 tons annually.

- County could recover 30,000 tons/year utilizing a 60% recovery rate.

- 36,000 tons already composted, 30,000 tons of unused capacity exist.

Residential

- Residents generate 39,000 to 60,000 tons annually.

- A residential waste characterization study is needed to obtain more accurate quantities.

- The Town of Huntersville, that offers a 96-gallon roll cart for weekly collection of yard debris, is best suited to conduct a food scraps recovery pilot.

Business and Residential Findings

- Existing capacity to perform pilot collection programs.

- Not enough capacity for the County to roll-out a countywide program.
Major Site Generators
Food Waste Diversion Study

Drivers to Recovery
- Economic
- Environmental
- Policy

Barriers to Recovery
- Generator Awareness
- Collection Infrastructure
- Processing Capacity
- Economics
- Environmental Awareness
- Options for pilot programs
Charlotte Mecklenburg School System and Private Schools

The Process

The 5-month process starts with organic material we gather from the Charlotte area. Everything we collect is tested to ensure we are not putting anything non-compostable into our mix, and to make sure we have our perfect recipe of nitrogen and carbon.
Charlotte Douglas Airport

5000 tons diverted
Panther Stadium
Food Waste Recovery

• 11.86 tons in 10 Games
Events
• Food Courts
• SouthPark Mall
• Carolina Place Mall
• Northlake Mall
Opportunities Still Exist – Synder’s Lance
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OPPORTUNITIES STILL EXIST IN MECKLEMBURG COUNTY TO RECOVER FOOD SCRAPS