

# **Recycling Integrity:**

*Truths, Myths &  
Emerging Technologies*

# A National Non-Profit in collaboration with the National Restaurant Association

## Mission:

*To return the environment's resources to  
their natural, balanced state through  
collaborative, action-oriented projects*

## **Zero Waste Zones**

**POWER** – Perishable Organic  
Waste to Energy Recycling

**Sustainable Food Court  
Initiative**

# Zero Waste Zones

- Atlanta's response to losing a 2008 convention as client perceived another city as "greener"
- Launched in February, 2009 in an acclaimed press conference led by the Acting Regional EPA Director
- Media Loves ZWZ: CNN Story, Front-Page NY Times story among press
- Four additional zones launched in Atlanta
- Ready for national expansion

# Zero Waste Zones

## Criteria:

- Spent grease collected for production of biofuel
- Common recycling practices in place
- Excess food meeting the Good Samaritan Donation Act donated
- Other excess food and kitchen scraps collected for composting or other approved organics solutions

## Mission:

*To explore and evaluate the highest good collection, recycling and use of perishable organics and make recommendations for deployment of economically viable projects within a defined geographic region area.*

# Sustainable Food Court Initiative

## **Mission:**

*To bring zero waste initiatives to food courts and develop industry, sustainable best practices for Back-of-the-House and Front-of-the-House operations*

**Co-Chairs:** Chris Moyer, NRA Conserve Program Director & Doug Kunnemann, NatureWorks

**SFCI Team:** National industry experts in packaging, organics management, foodservice industry

## Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport

- Six month project designed to bring organics collection to front and back-of-the-house concession operations
- Project stages to simplify process
- Collaborative effort with City of Atlanta, Dept of Aviation, Concessionaires and SFCI Team
- GOAL: Develop a viable game plan to implement organics collection throughout the airport



## Is Zero Waste Possible?

- Best efforts average around 85% diversion rate
- Final ZWZ Stage requires a waste audit to determine profile of remaining “trash”

## What is landfill destined?

- Vinyl kitchen gloves
- Caps & lids to recyclable containers
- Transport packaging: polystyrene & plastic film
- Broken plates/dishes
- Kitchen plastic wrap & foil

# Tips to Increase Recycling

## An Integrated Approach to Sustainability

- Custodial staff is key to successful recycling programs
  - Consider reorganizing labor so one person is responsible for recycling separation
  - Train, Train & Train
  - Develop incentives or rewards

# Tips to Increase Recycling

## An Integrated Approach to Sustainability

- Top Management buy-in is critical
  - Educate managers on recycling & contamination
  - Encourage managers to lift recycling container lids and look for contamination
  - Explore local recycling companies who will pay for clean, separated material

# Recycling Destination

## Single-Stream Recycling:

- Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF) separate material to sell as a raw material
- MRF for SS cost 5 times more than for co-mingled
- Most large waste haulers only offer SS recycling option

# Single-Stream

GOAL: Increase recycling participation

FOCUS: Diversion from the dumpster

RESULT: Increased recycling rates with a decrease in tonnage recycled

***Collection is not recycling. A product is not recycled until it is made into another product.***

Container Recycling Institute issued:

***Understanding Economic and Environmental Impacts of Single-Stream Recycling***

For the highlights & to download 30-page report, visit ZWZ Blog post, [Single-Stream Recycling Controversy](#)

## IMPORTANT FACT:

*Contaminated material is landfill destined, whether placed in a dumpster, a blue recycling bin or green organics bin*



**What is a food court's  
biggest contamination  
challenge?**

**Answer:**

**Melted Ice (water) from  
fountain beverages**

## The Glass Dilemma:

- Compactors & packer trucks crush glass into shards that contaminate paper & plastic
- Glass causes expensive equipment repairs & maintenance

**GLASS RECYCLING:  
ALWAYS #1 CHOICE**

Where Glass Recycling is not an option:

- Fiberglass
- Secondary Uses:
  - Roadwork
  - Construction fill
  - Sandblasting
  - Interior Products (countertops, flooring, tiles)

# Recycling Goal

***Maintain maximum value of recyclable material (i.e. contaminant-free) with the least energy expended (electric, transportation, labor + other)***

## **Zero Waste Zones:**

- Provides a network of engaged foodservice operators to pioneer new recycling systems
- Creates route density with the Zones

## Zero Waste Zones:

- Start with the large operators (conference centers, hotels) who provide the volume to make the economics work
- Fill-in with the other ZWZ Participants within the route



## Source-Separation:

- Cardboard + Paper
- Film Plastic
- Glass
- Other Plastic + Metals

## Challenges | Concerns:

- Local markets for material
- Carbon footprint of separated collection

## Challenges | Concerns:

- Economics – creating a model that makes good business sense for the operator, collector & recycler
- Industry standards – each market varies so difficult to create a template

# What Can You Do?

- Understand your current trash inventory
- Visit the MRF or other recycling material destination – understand contamination & how to eliminate it in your operation

# What Can You Do?

- Collaborate with other operators to develop a recycling system that makes sense for your locale
- Start with the easy, high-value items currently in single-stream

**Remember Recycling  
Integrity is a Journey**

**Take baby steps**

**Celebrate success!**

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