

A Philadelphia
Guide to
Zero Waste Events

Introduction

In addition to requiring recycling at public events, the City of Philadelphia is committed to expanding food composting at events as part of a citywide goal to reach 'zero waste' by 2035. To reach this goal, City of Philadelphia is proud to offer several options for event organizers who would like to utilize City resources such as municipal compost pick-ups by the Streets Department and the Waste Watchers program.

The mission of the Waste Watchers program is to empower residents to educate their communities and conduct neighborhood clean-ups using zero waste principles. Waste Watchers Captains and full teams can be deployed to assist event organizers. Waste Watchers volunteers educate event attendees on how to sort waste properly to reduce contamination and to make your event as sustainable as possible. Waste Watchers can also provide a three bin system that separates landfill waste, recycling, and compost.

For more info on Waste Watchers, please visit www.cleanphl.com.



What You Will Need to Compost at Your Event

Based on the City of Philadelphia's experience operating Waste Watchers at large public events, like the Philadelphia Marathon and Broad Street Run, we have some tips for how your event can compost effectively. The City is proud to be able to offer some of these resources for events that are interested in expanding their sustainable waste management practices, which are listed on page 3.

1) Labeled and color-coded three bin system (available through the

City). Sorting waste into the right containers is easier when the bins are well-labeled and easy to differentiate by color. This also helps event attendees understand that they are participating in a green initiative by sorting their waste properly.

2) Compost hauler and processing facility (available through the City).

Someone needs to pick up your compost from the event and bring it to the processing facility. There are a limited number of composting facilities in the Philadelphia area that can handle large volumes of waste.

3) On-site waste management staff (available through City partners). To keep bins from overflowing, you will need a waste management team to tote full bags of waste from bins to a designated waste collection area.

4) Volunteers (available through the City). We have found that without volunteers to help direct event-goers, waste will not get sorted properly into the compost bin. Composting facilities have very high standards when it comes to contamination and they will not accept non-compostable material.

5) Supplies. You will need to outfit your volunteers and waste management team with compost, recycling, and trash bags (good to color-code these as well) and gloves.

Event Composting Options

The following composting operations and support options are available to your event. For more information on cost, please contact Olivia Gillison in the Special Events Office.

Option 1

City compost pick-up with Waste Watchers Bins and a Waste Watchers Captain.

Option 2

City compost pick-up with Waste Watchers Bins, a Waste Watchers Captain, and Waste Watchers Volunteers (your event will supply its own volunteers to be led by the Waste Watchers Captain).

Option 3

Private Hauler compost pick-up (your event will supply its own bins, volunteer corps, and leaders to help manage proper source separation).

Option 4

Private Hauler compost pick-up with Waste Watchers Captain and Waste Watchers Bins (your event will supply its own volunteers to be led by Waste Watchers Captain).

Option 5

Private Hauler compost pick-up with Waste Watchers Captain, Waste Watchers Bins, and Waste Watchers Volunteers.

**To find a list of private compost haulers in the Philadelphia region, please visit our Special Events Documents page at www.phlevents.org/applications and look for the document, “Zero Waste Event Hauler Options.”*

Other Waste Reduction Opportunities

Your event can reduce waste generated and increase waste diverted from the landfill through the following zero waste practices.

Refillable water stations. Offer your guests fountains or water coolers, and reusable water bottles instead of plastic water bottles.

Recyclable and compostable materials. Require your food service vendors to eliminate landfill materials, such as plastic-lined paper products and Styrofoam. Require vendors to use recyclable plastic products. If your event is composting, ask your vendors to use as much compostable material as possible. For example, food service vendors can switch from Styrofoam to paper food service items, which can be composted.

Reusable materials. If your event will generate large volumes of waste that could be reused, such as construction materials or clothes, set up a system to collect, palletize (if needed), and donate the reusable materials to the appropriate organization.

Excess food donation. If you have excess food at the end of your event, please provide your phone number or email address to the Food Access Collaborative at the time of filling out the permit to have a volunteer pick up the excess food and bring it to a local food pantry, soup kitchen, or shelter, rather than throwing it away.

Non-Single Stream Recycling

If your event will generate large amounts of any of the materials below, commit to recycling them by working with the appropriate companies and/or organizations.

E-waste and polystyrene/Styrofoam (available through the City). [Northeast Philadelphia Sanitation Convenience Center 6](#) accepts materials for free that cannot be recycled at our regular recycling facilities, including Styrofoam, computers, monitors, televisions, and other computer-related equipment.

Metal and Wood. There are several Philadelphia-based companies that will pick up metal to recycle, and some will even pay for scrap metal. There are also several local companies that will pick up wood pallets to recycle.

Zero Waste Event Reporting

If your event is interested in being recognized by the City of Philadelphia as a Zero Waste Event, please visit our online [Zero Waste Events Diversion Form](#) and follow all instructions on inputting your event's waste management information.