ZERO WASTE TIP SHEET

COMMERCIAL FOOD SERVICE

Restaurants, cafeterias, grocery and catering.

SAVE MONEY, REDUCE WASTE AND COMPLY WITH THE UNIVERSAL RECYCLING ORDINANCE.

Conduct a food waste assessment to measure and track the amount, type and reason for food generation and disposal. For a quick assessment, look in containers and document the weight and types of food scraps at the end of service.

A food service enterprise serves non-prepackaged food and is required to hold a City of Austin food permit.			
Deadline	Oct. 1, 2016	Oct. 1, 2017	Oct. 1, 2018
Business Size	≥ 15,000 Sq. Ft.	≥ 5,000 Sq. Ft.	ALL

SET-UP YOUR KITCHEN (BACK OF HOUSE) FOR ZERO WASTE:

1. **Disposal Stations** – Landfill trash, compost and recycling containers should be located near each other and be clearly marked. Recommend black for trash, blue for recycling and green for organics.

2. **Staff Training** – Using disposal containers correctly is critical to the success of your program. Clearly communicate expectations and hold employees accountable. Use signs, color containers and posters for quick reminders.

3. **Green Team Lead** – Designate at least one supervisor or manager to regularly check containers to ensure items are properly disposed in the correct container.

4. **Materials** – Replace disposable items with reusable, compostable or recyclable options. For example, switch Styrofoam cups for paper cups and cloth napkins instead of paper.

5. **Ask Your Staff** – When designing your recycling and composting program, include staff in the decision-making process. Engaged employees can lead to better decisions, improved morale and reduced costs.

REDUCE FOOD WASTE:

- **Reduce Over-Purchasing** – Consider local grocers and more frequent deliveries to prevent bulk food purchases from expiring. Less than perfect food can be used in soups and casseroles or donated to local food pantries.

- **Reduce Prep Waste** - Train staff to use proper food preparation techniques, purchase pre-cut food and reduce batch sizes when reheating.

- **Secondary Uses** - Leftover bread can become croutons, leftover fruit can be a dessert topping and vegetable trimmings can form a base for soups and sauces.

- **Inventory Management/Mind Your Menu** – Create a system to manage foods near expiration. Promote daily specials that use foods near expiration. Consider donating to local charities.

REDUCE PLATE WASTE (FRONT OF HOUSE):

Post-consumer food waste is generated once the food reaches the customer, including garnishes and uneaten food.

1. **Menu Modifications –** Identify types of food frequently uneaten or sent back by customers. Use this information to modify menu or portion size.

2. **Change Serving Sizes and Garnishes -** Avoid inedible or rarely eaten garnishes, reduce serving often discarded foods and use an "ask first" policy for sides.

3. **Encourage Guests to Only Take What They Can Consume -** Post signs at buffet-style venues reminding customers to take only enough food to meet their appetite. Consider offering half portion options.

4. **Go Trayless -** Removing trays and providing smaller plates at buffets results in 25 to 30 percent less waste.

5. **Condiments and Cutlery Behind the Counter -** Keep condiments, service ware, napkins, straws and other accessories behind a counter.

INNOVATIONS AND PILOTS:

If approved by Austin Water and Austin Resource Recovery, digesters, pulpers and other types of commercial composting equipment may be counted as organic diversion. **Equipment must be approved by the City before installation.** Commercial food disposals are prohibited.

MINIMUM ORGANICS DIVERSION URO REQUIREMENTS:

1. Establish reuse, reduction, food donation or compost program.

2. Implement back of house diversion program to prevent majority of organic waste from being burned or landfilled.

3. Total diversion capacity of recycled and organics must be equal to or greater than total weekly service capacity for all waste materials.

RESOURCES:

- EPA Food Recovery Challenge: epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge/
- U.S. Food Waste Challenge: usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/index.htm
- Food Waste Reduction Alliance: foodwastealliance.org
- Find a food bank: feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank
- Keep Austin Fed food bank: keepaustinfed.org
- Request a free on-site waste assessment from the City of Austin Business Outreach Team: Call us at (512) 974-9727 or email CommercialRecycling@austintexas.gov.
- For additional information on organices diversion URO requirements, please visit: AustinTexas.gov/URO