



Subject: Universal Recycling Ordinance Phase 2 – Administrative Rules Development
#10 Stakeholder Group Meeting – Restaurants and Bars, Mtg. 2 of 2

Date: November 6, 2013 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Location: Austin City Hall, Room 1029; 301 W. 2nd St; Austin, TX 78701

Introduction

Austin Resource Recovery held a second stakeholder meeting intended for restaurants and bars to discuss the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO). The purpose of this meeting was to educate stakeholders about the ordinance, to learn about recycling and food waste diversion in the food service industry, and discuss solutions to challenges with current requirements of the URO. The goal was to gather information necessary to develop a set of recommended amendments to the URO Administrative Rules.

Stakeholders were provided with information on Austin Resource Recovery's Strategic Initiatives' planning and business outreach teams. Stakeholders then introduced themselves. Staff walked meeting participants through the meeting agenda and transitioned to the education component of the discussion.

Part One – URO Phase 2 Information Exchange and Facilitated Discussion

Staff outlined the facilitated discussion portion of the meeting and described the questions they would be asking.

Restaurant and Bar Waste Diversion - Stakeholder Recommended Solutions

Infrastructure

- City should have multiple bidders and multiple contracts.
- City only provides commercial recycling and trash service within downtown district.
- City could subsidize recycling and composting programs to meet URO.
- City could expand service to pick-up commercial properties in larger area than just downtown.
- The City should look into a pilot program for composting specifically in markets such as: urban, rural, quick service, high density, suburban, strip centers.
- The City should offer a rebate: figure new and old costs and receive difference from City for short period of time (1-2 years).
- One restaurant in a lightly populated region of Austin is concerned that service density and frequency will not be enough to bring the cost of composting down.

Weight of Compost Containers

- Some restaurants have utilized "toters" because the dumpsters were too heavy.

Materials

- Would it be possible to return packaging boxes to distribution companies as credit?
- One restaurant found space is an issue. They produced a lot of bones. Pre-consumer should be first, post-consumer should be last. A phased approach to the implementation of composting would be beneficial.





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Sanitation

- Some restaurants have experienced a rodent issue during the pilot program.
- (Hauler) noted that food service businesses need to be disciplined in training staff to lock containers.
- City staff from the Health Department is concerned with storage of compost and food scraps. If rats are in food establishment, the Health Department will be required to shut food service business down. Staff is also concerned about set-back distances, attracting flies to back door, air curtains work well. If containers are by back door, increases possibility of rodent issues. Containers should be sealed well to avoid odor complaints.
- Open containers inside the restaurant do not violate health codes.
- (Hauler) noted that compostable bags, cardboard, and paper towels helps reduce vermin issues.

Cost of Service or Implementation

- Some quick service franchises have estimated a cost of \$30,000 to retrofit for additional diversion containers and screening, per site, at a potential of 27 sites.
- (Hauler) noted that density and commitment is needed by food service community. Price is based per minute and driving more miles increases the cost. In order to get costs down, the more people that are doing this, the cost should drop. Costs are run per minute, if higher density, the costs decrease.
- What is being asked of the recycling companies and what timeframe are they on to ensure infrastructure is in place by 2016?
- Composting and recycling is a business of its own. Why does the generator pay \$6k-\$10k a year while someone else is reaping benefits? Why are we paying for recycling when businesses are benefiting off of recycling materials?
 - The hauler pays companies that bring material to the service center. If the hauler goes to pick it up, that's what costs money.
- Why can't we make the landfill [tipping fees] cost more?
- Onsite composting could work better than composting services in some instances. City should look at an alternative compliance formula.
- There is not a lot of density in west Austin. Could location be an alternative compliance at least for 2-3 years until costs go down?
- One restaurant was able to lower hauler service costs with less frequent service capacity.
- Local non-profits offer free services to pick up food for donation. The more diverted for human consumption the more businesses will save.
- Food service businesses could share services. What about a dumpster partnering program to find a partner via City website?





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Food Recovery

- Following the food hierarchy should count toward diversion.
- City Health Department staff noted that catered events or buffets with extra foods can raise red flags for potential risk. Food could be at the incorrect temperature, etc. Donated food needs to have discard dates, be maintained at the right temperature.
- Bakeries and small restaurants should be able to have their own composting on site.
- Community Gardens can be used as another resource for donation.

Food Hierarchy/Recovery

- One local non-profit picks up and delivers when they receive a call, they are only transporters, they do not distribute. They are working with the City Health Department to follow codes. One local restaurant chain provides about 500 meals, and equivalent of about \$4,000 of food, every day and distributes it to non-profits. They are currently working on a tracking system to determine how much food is donated.
- One local non-profit picks up from catered events and banquets. Another local non-profit worked with ACL when it closed on Sunday, farms (food that does not sell) and Onion Creek restaurants that were flooded.
- Restaurants separate out food in containers for donation. Rarely do they report or keep track of the food donated.
- Restaurants are using everything in the back of the house. Waste is lost profit.
- Health Department does not have any regulations against food scraps being donated to animals.
- Some haulers are working with ranchers and farmers in the area.

Enforcement

- Recycling and composting should be separated into different discussions.
- City requires that properties provide a certain level of recycling; businesses with food service permits would have to divert food scraps (until 2016-2017). Technically they could comply by paying for the service, even if the employees/tenants are not using it, but the intent is that if the business pays for the services, they will ensure that the services get used.
- You are mandating composting and not mandating recycling.
- The City should be having small discussions with key stakeholders (leaders of associations, council, commissioners, directors)





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Conclusion

Staff wrapped up the meeting by pointing to the challenges identified throughout the discussion. Staff let stakeholders know that they would be post the meeting minutes and challenges on-line and notify stakeholders. Stakeholders were encouraged to visit the project website.

