



Subject: Universal Recycling Ordinance Phase 2 – Administrative Rules Development
#9 Stakeholder Group Meeting – Restaurants and Bars, Mtg. 1 of 2

Date: October 22, 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 stakeholder meeting intended for restaurants and bars to discuss the Universal Recycling Ordinance. 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. The goal was to gather information necessary to develop a set of recommended amendments to the Universal Recycling Ordinance 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 – Staff presentation on URO and Administrative Rules

Staff made a presentation to stakeholders on the City's Zero Waste goals, the Universal Recycling Ordinance, and the process to amend the Administrative Rules. Staff clarified basic questions in regards to the presentation. Staff then provided information on the results of the composting pilot undertaken by restaurants in Austin.

Part Two – 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 Recycling and Food Waste Diversion

Space Constraints (Exterior)

- Two cages to hold containers, grease, ash dumpster, trash, single stream recycling, and composting dumpster were required to implement a successful recycling and composting program at County Line.
- How will recycling and composting work downtown in alleyways where dumpsters are often shared?
- Taking away a parking space for a diversion container in the quick service industry has been estimated to cost \$20,000 per year income for that business.

Space Constraints (Interior)

- Finding a place for new diversion containers on "the line" (in the back of house) could be difficult in existing facilities.

Infrastructure

- The amount of compostable material coming out of the facility at County Line could not be accommodated by the hauler during the restaurant pilot.
- Will service providers be able to accommodate "spikes" in service required by restaurants and bars for events and on weekends?





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- There will need to be a lot of thought, work, and education done by the City to ensure that the program gets off on the right foot.
- More haulers will be needed to bid competitively and help bring costs down.
- The City needs to be involved to ensure that the infrastructure is in place by 2016 to accommodate the needs of restaurants and bars.

Incentives

- Could the City subsidize diversion containers? If you do a certain volume in recycling or composting can there be a tax break if a business exceeds the goals on the timeline?
- Could the City provide a website where business could compare service providers?
- The EPA has calculators for conservation. You could come up with a correlation where the amount you recycle could save you money on a water or electricity bill.
- The City could look into phasing in composting by first implementing vegetables, then proteins, and finally plate scrapings. Maybe look at phasing by wet and dry compost as a way to phase in composting.
- The whole City will need to get behind this to make it successful. It will require a culture change.
- I feel most restaurants want to do the right thing, but they need a tangible benefit.

Weight of Compost Containers

- Compost bins were found to be much heavier than typical waste bins in the pilot program.

Training (Staff and Patrons)

- Training staff posed a “lesser” problem than patrons in County Line pilot program. Training of restaurant patrons proved to be difficult at County Line in pilot program.
- Training staff had mixed results at El Mercado – there is an extensive amount of education that will need to be done.
- Single stream recycling has made training staff “easy” at Buenos Aires Café.
- There are concerns with restaurants paying additional costs from contamination by patrons placing incorrect materials in front of the house containers.
- Quick service restaurants have 70% of business going through the drive thru. It is difficult to control waste streams coming from outside sources into the waste bins at the interior and exterior of the facilities.

Materials

- In quick service there is a large amount of “wet paper” (for example a half-eaten hamburger wrapped in foil-lined paper) that cannot be recycled.
- Most quick service food is prepped offsite. There is little to no food waste produced in the back of the house.
- Cardboard and packaging are high volume materials that come through restaurants and bars that could be recycled.





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- There was some confusion as to where waste streams from restrooms (such as used paper towels) were to be diverted to as they are currently going into the landfill trash.
- After speaking with a hauler Buenos Aires Café was able to move to single stream recycling, which seemed to make recycling easier to manage for staff.
- Scraping plates doubled the amount of compostable material produced at Flemings.
- Wasted food by restaurants means wasted profit, so waste is limited as much as possible.
- Restaurant employees are trained to not waste due to cost and small profit margins.
- (Hauler) People will throw away what you put in their hand. It is important to put recyclable and compostable materials in the hands of the patrons, rather than materials that go to the landfill.

Sanitation

- Gueros had concerns with vermin issues created by compost bins potentially effecting customers and food safety.
- (Hauler) Food scraps will be outside in dumpster whether it is in the trash or compost. Many times it is a staff training issue to ensure that the lids are closed. We recommend spreading coffee grounds in compost to help reduce insects.
- Truluck's had concerns about potential health code issues. They prepare a lot of fish on site and had questions for clarification such as: how long can it sit before it becomes a health problem?

Cost of Service

- Implementation of recycling and compost program at County Line cost of about \$7,000-\$10,000 per year.
- County Line found that the cost of landfill trash service dropped from \$640 to \$623. Composting and single stream recycling saved County Line \$40 a month in 2011.
- (Hauler) I feel the market will start to work to bring cost down. New composting and recycling contracts will bring innovation.
- I feel restaurants strive to provide sustainable products to patrons, but it really is a matter of expense.
- Some restaurants have stopped recycling because the service was more expensive than landfill trash and found recycling to be too costly.
- Quick service has estimated that it will cost them \$30,000 per site to retrofit to accommodate the new diversion containers and screening.

Lease Agreements

- Some restaurants are located in shopping centers with shared dumpsters. One restaurant had a landlord that did not provide for recycling bins. They were unable to recycle, as a result.

Food Recovery

- Several restaurants indicated they donated food to local charities. This will be discussed in further detail in the next stakeholder group meeting.





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Conclusion

Staff wrapped up the meeting by pointing to the challenges identified throughout the discussion. Staff let stakeholders know that the follow-up meeting for Restaurants would be held on November 6 and that the discussion would focus on identifying solutions to the challenges identified by stakeholders. A stakeholder requested that the challenges be provided prior to the November 6 meeting to provide stakeholders time to familiarize themselves with the information. Staff said they would be sure to post the challenges on-line and notify stakeholders. Stakeholders were encouraged to visit the project website and to begin thinking about solutions to share at the November 6 stakeholder meeting.

