



Scottsdale Environmental Advisory Commission
Office of Environmental Initiatives
City of Scottsdale
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Dear Mayor and City Council:

According to a 2021 study¹, Arizona is number one in the country in terms of the highest share of food wasted and the lowest amount of food recycled. It also ranks third-lowest in the amount of donated food. In Scottsdale, about 94% of the organic (or food) waste generated ends up in the landfill instead of being consumed or composted². Extrapolating from publicly available food waste estimates and visitor data, Scottsdale visitors generate ~635,000 tons of food waste per year (over 2,500 tons/day) of which ~597,000 tons are landfilled. A significant amount of this waste is generated at large events hosted at city-owned venues, such as WestWorld and the Scottsdale stadium.

The City Council has already identified waste as a priority issue in its Sustainability Plan. Such forward thinking is to be commended, however, there are immediate actions that can be taken to begin to reduce the food waste accumulating from public events. One of those ways would be for the City Council to issue a mandate that requires all city-owned public venues to divert their food waste from the landfill.

Separating organic waste at city-owned public venues would have several environmental, economic, and social benefits/opportunities, including but not limited to:

1. **Alleviating pressure on the landfill.** By 2035 many of the county's landfills, including the Salt River landfill used by the city will be at capacity.
2. **Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and associated heat events.** When food goes to the landfill, "the wasted food rots and produces methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times as potent as CO₂ at trapping heat in the atmosphere" (U.S. EPA 2023)³. The greenhouse gas emissions from wasted food in the U.S. alone is estimated to be the equivalent of the emissions from 37 million cars.⁴
3. **Improving the quality of recycled materials.** Not separating food waste at public venues can lead to the contamination of recyclable materials that then end up having to be landfilled.
4. **Economic opportunities.** Engaging in private/public partnerships, food waste can be:
 - a. Collected and converted to renewable bioenergy or fertilizer/compost and worm castings that can then be sold or used by the city.
 - b. Converted into animal feed, bioplastics, and clothing.⁵
5. **Social opportunities.** Partnering with nonprofit organizations, businesses, and charities to avoid excess food becoming waste in the first place by:
 - a. Recovering the food and donating it to those in need.⁵
 - b. Selling excess food at a discount. Develop an app that allows the city-owned venues to advertise any excess food they have to citizens or businesses who are interested in purchasing the remaining food at a discounted rate.⁴

¹ Ardoin (2021). "2022's states that waste the most food." Retrieved from: <https://www.lawnstarter.com/blog/studies/states-that-waste-most-food/#experts>

² City of Scottsdale (2023). "Food Waste and Composting". Retrieved from: <https://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/solid-waste/food-waste-composting>

³ U.S. EPA (2023). "Sustainable management of food basics". Retrieved from: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics#conserving>

⁴ RTS (2023). "Food Waste in America in 2023". Retrieved from: <https://www.rts.com/resources/guides/food-waste-america/>

⁵ USDA (2023) "Food Waste FAQs". Retrieved from: <https://www.usda.gov/foodwaste/faqs>

Scottsdale City Council

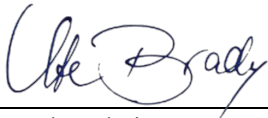
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In addition to the potential environmental, social, and economic benefits outlined above, diverting food waste at city-owned public venues sends a powerful message to residents and visitors that Scottsdale is serious in its commitment to sustainability. It also represents an opportunity to educate the public about food waste and ways to reduce it in everyday life.

In summary, diverting food waste at city-owned public venues is an opportunity to take a small but important step toward a more sustainable future. By taking leadership in the management of its own food waste, City Council can demonstrate its leadership and contribute to positive environmental, economic, and social change in a fairly rapid and cost-effective manner. For all of the reasons above, the Scottsdale Environmental Advisory Commission highly recommends City Council issue a mandate that requires all city-owned public venues to divert their food waste from the landfill. We are happy to assist in that process as needed and when called upon.


Respectfully,



Ute Brady, Chair

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