



GreenACES / GreenTEAM



Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability

Greenbelt is a Sustainable Maryland Certified Community

GREENBELT GUIDE TO ZERO WASTE EVENT PLANNING

Why Zero Waste

Zero Waste is a philosophy and strategy to reduce our environmental footprint by minimizing the amount of waste that is landfilled or burned and to conserve resources by considering all discarded materials as resources to be recovered and reused. Components of a zero waste strategy include waste reduction, reusing, composting, recycling, and other actions. A Zero Waste system reduces natural resource depletion, conserves energy, mitigates climate impact, reduces water usage, prevents pollution and production of toxins, and strengthens the local economy. (Sources: Zero Waste International Alliance and Eco-Cycle).

Key Elements for Successful Zero Waste Events

- **Advance planning:** Plan for venue location, permits (only for outdoor events on city property), appropriate food vendors, caterers & serving ware, ecologically-oriented publicity, zero waste recovery stations, staffing & volunteers, post-event waste pickup and disposal. **Contact the Environmental Coordinator at Public Works Department (PWD) for assistance.**
- **Product use:** Use only reusable, certified compostable, or recyclable products. Minimize packaging and use of cardboard and paper. Choose vendors and caterers that comply with zero waste practices.
- **Guidelines:** Develop & distribute clear guidelines for acceptable products and zero waste practices for event vendors, staff, volunteers, and other participants. **See attached chart for varying options for zero waste events.**
- **Zero waste stations:** Set up adequate number of zero waste stations distributed conveniently throughout event area. Group separate bins--clearly marked "recycling," "compost," "landfill"--together at each station (**see attached chart for options**). Place clearly-visible signage at each station that illustrates what goes into each bin (**Note: PWD can loan bins**).
- **Volunteers:** Assign volunteers ("trash talkers") to each zero waste station to guide & educate the public on proper sorting. Provide good training to volunteers about zero waste practices and proper sorting.
- **Post-event pickup:** Arrange pickup of recyclables & compostables after event with the Environmental Coordinator at PWD.
- **Non-perishable food donation:** Consider donating non-perishable leftover food to community food programs listed below.


Contact Information and Resources

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| • Greenbelt Public Works Department (PWD) | (301-474-8004) | Website: Public Works |
| • Permits (needed only for outdoor events on city property): City Manager Office | (301-474-8000) | Website: City Manager's Office |
| • Non-Perishable Food Donation (St. Hugh's Food Pantry or website list) | (301-474-4322) | Website: PG Food Equity Council |
| • Compostable Product Info (Biodegradable Products Institute) | | Website: bpiworld.org |

Specific Tips for Planning a Zero Waste Event in Greenbelt

TOPIC	CONSIDERATIONS & RESOURCES
Planning	Contact Environmental Coordinator at PWD one month before the event for guidance. Zero Waste volunteers are available for advice. Public Works can loan bins for events , and may be able to pick up recyclables and compostables at some public events.
Budget	Budget for purchasing compostable or recyclable food containers, plates, cups, utensils. Using compostable products is more ecologically friendly than recycling. Using washable items will both save money and further reduce environmental footprint.
Publicity	Use electronic invitations, social media, list serves, meetings, public gatherings, Greenbelt News Review, and word of mouth to publicize your event. Minimize or eliminate paper flyers and posters.
Volunteers	Train volunteers. Assign volunteer to each zero waste station to guide event guests and vendors on proper disposal. Two volunteers at each station is ideal. Recruit sufficient volunteers for clean-up. If you have enough volunteers, assign some to assist vendors.
Vendors	Choose vendors (including caterers & party planners) who are willing to provide washable, compostable, or recyclable materials, and are willing to compost their food scraps. Meet with vendors in advance of event to make sure they understand zero waste practices.
Food Serving Options Options include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washable silverware, dishes, glasses, serving dishes & utensils, pitchers & carafes, cloth napkins & tablecloths (most ecological). • Compostable or recyclable plates, cups, and eating utensils along with reusable or washable serving dishes, containers, utensils, drink dispensers. Info on compostable products is available on the Biodegradable Products Institute website: bpiworld.org. • Guests bring & take home—in reusable shopping bags—their own washable place settings, serve ware & personal water bottles. • Store & cart food in reusable bags or recyclable boxes rather than plastic bags. • Avoid use of single-package cream, sugar, condiments, chip bags, or k-cups. Serve food, drinks, cream & sugar, and condiments in washable, reusable containers or dispensers. Condiments also can be served in compostable cups. • Provide water stations to refill personal water bottles.
Zero Waste Stations	Set up zero waste stations with separate bins grouped together and clearly labeled “ <u>Recycling</u> ,” “ <u>Compost</u> ” & “ <u>Landfill</u> ,” based on items accepted at event. Use only certified compostable bags in the bins. Thicker bags (measured by MIL) or double bagging is best (see PG Food Waste Recycling for acceptable bag list). Assign at least one volunteer to each station to help guests do correct sorting.
Cleanup Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit plenty of volunteers for cleanup. • Pack reusable items in reusable shopping bags, recyclable boxes, or other reusable containers. • Consider donation of non-perishable leftover food to St. Hugh’s Food Pantry or other community food programs listed here. • For public events (only): arrange with the Environmental Coordinator at Public Works Department for pickup of compostable material and recycling for transport to commercial composting and recycling sites. For private events: transport compostable material in certified compostable bags to a drop-off site such as Greenbelt Food Scraps Drop-Off or MOM's Organic Market.
Evaluation	Count and weigh the bags of compost and recycling collected. Make a record of the results to track the amount of waste diverted from the landfill. Plan a meeting with your group and volunteers to evaluate zero waste efforts, highlight the successes, and discuss how to improve practices for your next event.
Supplier List	Ask your current supplier about certified compostable products that they carry. Local suppliers include: Greenbelt Coop Supermarket , MOM's Organic Market , Acme Paper & Supply , Eco-Products Store Locator , World Centric Products Store Locator

Attachment: Guidelines for Acceptable Materials for Zero Waste Events. Reuse and composting are the most eco-friendly ways to reduce waste.

OPTION 1: RECYCLING ONLY	OPTION 2: COMPOSTING & RECYCLING	OPTION 3: REUSE & COMPOSTING (<i>most ecological</i>)
<p><i>This option is the minimum recommended for all public events. Zero Waste Stations must include paired bins labeled “Recycling” and “Landfill.”</i></p>	<p><i>Use this option only if you can take compostable material to a <u>commercial drop-off site like those listed in the yellow box below</u>. Zero Waste Stations must include three bins placed side-by-side labeled “Compost,” “Recycling,” and “Landfill.”</i></p>	<p><i>All items used are either washable & reusable or compostable (especially suitable for private parties). Do composting only if you can take materials to a commercial composting site. Use one bin labeled “Compost” for food scraps and compostable items.</i></p>
ACCEPTABLE FOR RECYCLING	ACCEPTABLE FOR COMPOSTING	ACCEPTABLE REUSABLE ITEMS
<p>(NOTE: All items must be emptied of any remaining food residue/fluids/grease, and free of cigarette butts or any other garbage.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic & glass bottles. • Aluminum & metal cans, aluminum foil. • Plastic cups & containers (numbers 1 to 5 only—shown on bottom of item). • Paper plates and cups. • Paper milk cartons & drink boxes. • Paper bags, cardboard boxes (flattened), paper coffee sleeves. • Office paper, including flyers, brochures, programs, etc. Post-consumer or recycled content preferred. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food scraps (see acceptable list). • Certified compostable plates, cups, containers, lids, clamshells, utensils (spoons, forks, knives) and straws of any size. (Note: Must be BPI-certified as described below in lower box. This is surest way to assure these products are compostable.) • <u>Wood</u> stir-sticks, ice cream sticks, toothpicks (no plastic-decorated tops), skewers, chopsticks, corks. <u>Must be 100% made from wood.</u> • <u>Uncoated</u> paper products (plates, napkins, paper towels, cups, bags), <u>including if soiled with food/grease.</u> <p>(Note: If the paper product has a <u>wax or plastic coating</u>, it is <u>not acceptable for composting</u>. If the product has a <u>glossy or shiny finish</u>, it probably is <u>plastic and not acceptable</u>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washable dishes, cups, glasses, silverware, serving dishes & utensils, napkins, tablecloths, food containers. • Reusable shopping bags. • Unpackaged promotional materials that are reusable (pens, key chains, etc.)
<p>Further Info On Acceptable And Non-Acceptable Items & Composting Site List</p> <p>Recycling: PG Recycling</p> <p>Composting: Greenbelt Public Works Drop-Off MOM's Organic Market PG Food Waste Recycling</p>	<p> <i>Note: <u>Certified compostable products</u> are identifiable by this “BPI Compostable Logo” displayed on the packaging. The logo usually can be found on the bottom of the packaging with a description such as: “Denotes certification by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) to be compostable in commercial or municipal composting facilities in compliance with the U.S. standard ASTM D6400.” More info: bpiworld.org</i></p>	<p><u>NON-ACCEPTABLE ITEMS (all categories)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All styrofoam products. • Plastic bags or plastic wrap (unless you collect separately & take to a grocery store). • Plastic cups & containers (numbers 6 & 7—shown on bottom of item). • Paper products with a glossy finish or wax coating because they may contain plastic. • All plastic lids, utensils, and straws. • Plastic stir sticks, chopsticks, toothpicks, or skewers. • Single-use bottled water and foil drink pouches. • Single-packet cream/sugar/condiment packaging, chip bags, k-cups, and other prepackaged foods in non-recyclable material (such as ice cream wrappers, cellophane). • One-time use decorations, such as plastic tablecloths, stickers, balloons, confetti, etc. • Metallic, laminated, or non-paper materials & foil-backed or plastic-backed paper.

NOTE: If you are unsure if an item is acceptable for recycling or composting, it is better to place it in the landfill bin to avoid load contamination.