

# 2025

Day 1

Concurrent PM

12:45 PM

Oct 22

Track B

## Strategies for Zero Waste in Parks

**Moderator:** Celeste McMickle

Madhavi Trikha

**Speakers:** Alison Waliszewski

Ryan Torres





**The leading change agency for the reuse movement in the US and Canada.**

### **Mission**

We **accelerate the transition** from our current throw-away economy to one that is **regenerative, circular and equitable.**



## Primary Goal

**Widespread, shared, interoperable infrastructure** fueling a reuse economy across North America.

## Our Approach

**Normalize  
reuse**

**Grow and  
support  
reuse  
systems**

**Create an  
enabling  
policy  
environment**

# REUSE

## America's Best Resiliency Idea

### Problem

Single-use foodware must be continuously purchased, which is difficult for remote national parks and is not locally resilient. Single-use foodware is thrown out, wasting money and increasing burden on NPS staff for waste management.

### Solution

The first 100% **reuse ecosystem for foodservice** in a National Park serving both closed-loop (i.e., dine-in) and open-loop (i.e., takeout and grab-and-go) operations at Grand Canyon South Rim, **eliminating nearly all single-use foodware** at 17 properties within the Park.



# Single-use to Reuse > Team

## National Park Partner



## Project Lead



## Lead Implementation Partners



## Education + Advocacy Partners



# Single-use to Reuse

## Grand Canyon South Rim Current Status

Single-use items  
**Millions in throwaway spending**

Distance waste is trucked to landfill  
**145 miles**

Reduction in funding  
**Less NPS staff for waste management**

GC National Park is remote  
**Difficult to get supplies**

# Single-use to Reuse

## **NEW REUSE SYSTEM** Impacts over the next DECADE

**Single-use purchasing**  
**-50M units**

**Waste-to-landfill**  
**-640 tons**

**Less waste management labor**  
**Less time needed from NPS**

**On-site supplies**  
**Increased resiliency**

# Best Waste Reduction Idea for America's Best Idea

Key outcomes:

- **Transparent, inclusive process** using best practices to showcase **a reuse model at scale** for the reuse movement
- **Road map to scale reuse across national parks** and across two massive food concessionaire companies
- A **permanent reuse system** embedded into operations at the Grand Canyon National Park



# Our progress

- In-person stakeholder analysis and data collection
- Two design sprints with key stakeholder participation
- Wash facility design
- Released two RFPs
- Strong partnership with NPS compliance and health department
- VESP award recipients





# **Vision for Reuse at the GCSR**

Visitor returns reusable to return station outside F&B location



Xanterra collects reusable



Xanterra brings dirty reusable to central wash facility



Xanterra staff wash the reusable



Visitor receives food in reusable



# Reuse System

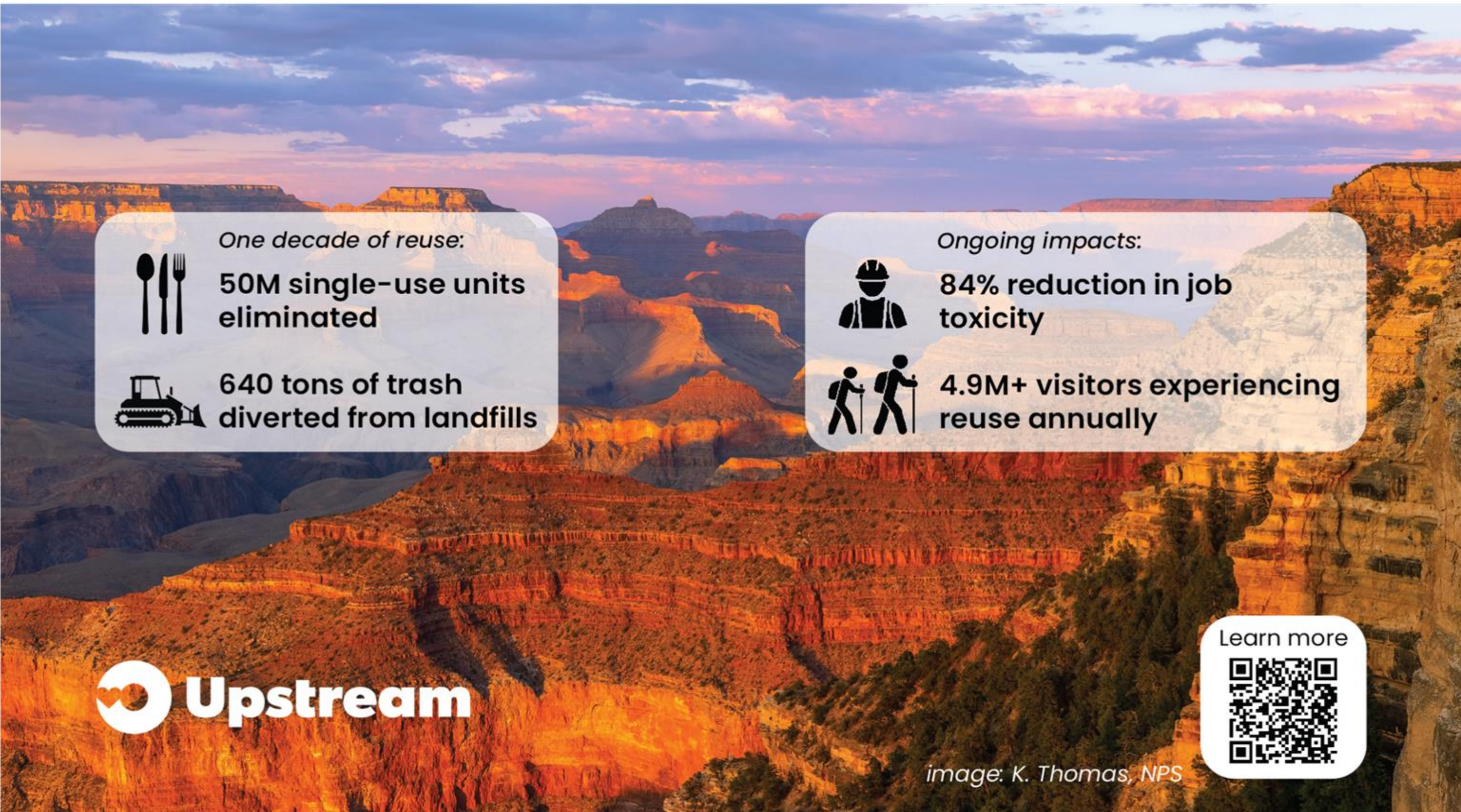
DNC & Xanterra 'order' the clean reusable from Xanterra storage facility (co-located with wash facility)

# Our project partners!



# Be Part of History

Join us to Create the Most Sustainable National Park in the Country



*One decade of reuse:*

-  50M single-use units eliminated
-  640 tons of trash diverted from landfills

*Ongoing impacts:*

-  84% reduction in job toxicity
-  4.9M+ visitors experiencing reuse annually



Learn more



image: K. Thomas, NPS



# FROM DATA TO DISRUPTION

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**How Waste Audits Can Fuel Culture Shift,  
Movements & Policy Change**

Presented By:  
**Alison Waliszewski**



Yosemite National Park

# Waste Audits

## Why Do Branded Audits Matter?

TrashBlitz and BFFP Global Brand Audit data contributed to *Global Producer Responsibility for Plastic Pollution* (Cowger et al., 2024, Science Advances)

- 1,500+ branded waste audits across 84 countries, including TrashBlitz sites
- Branded audits link waste to its producer, showing where pollution begins
- The more a company produces, the more of its packaging is found in the environment
- Citizen science = proof of accountability and policy relevance

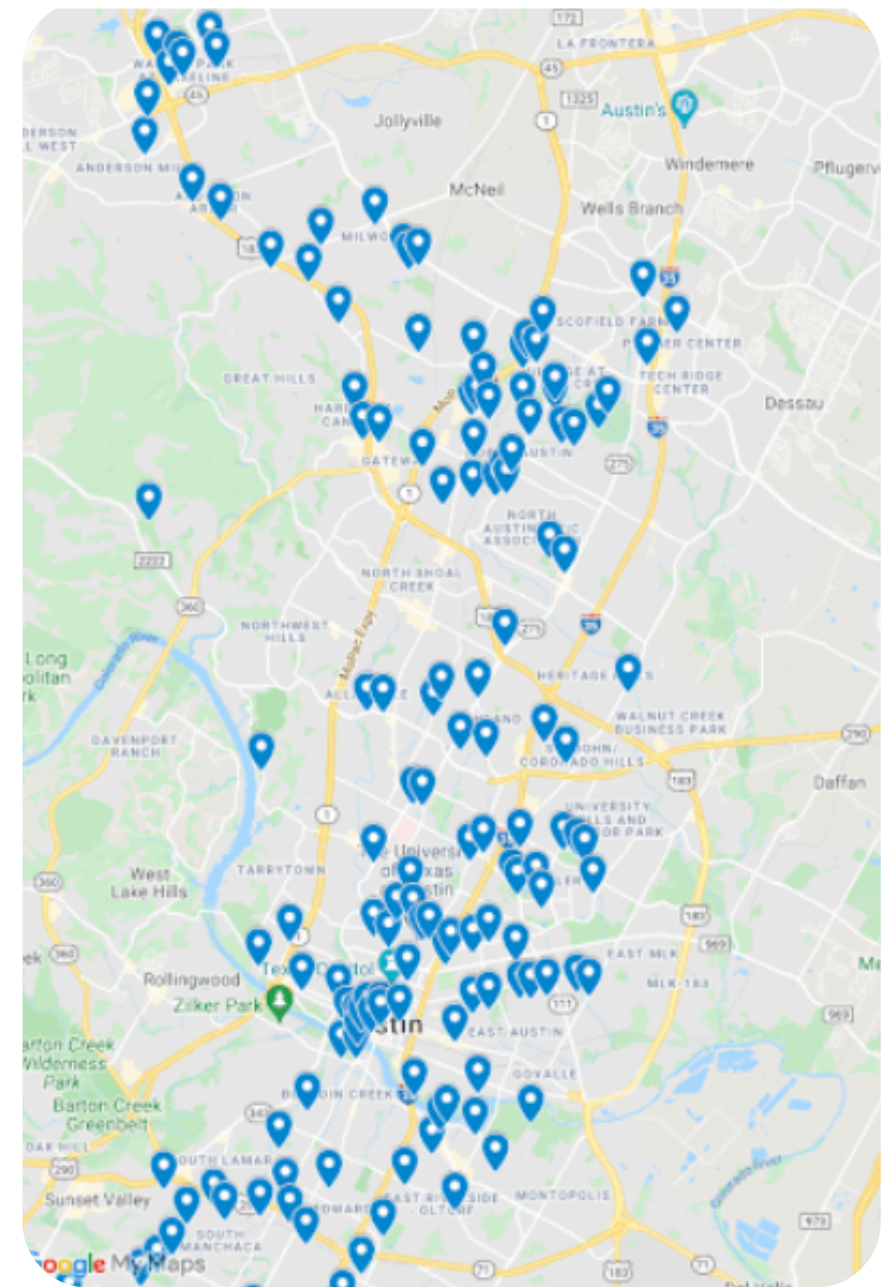


**56 COMPANIES**

are responsible for over half of all branded plastic pollution

# Case Study 1: Austin, TX

## Building a Coalition in a Preempted State

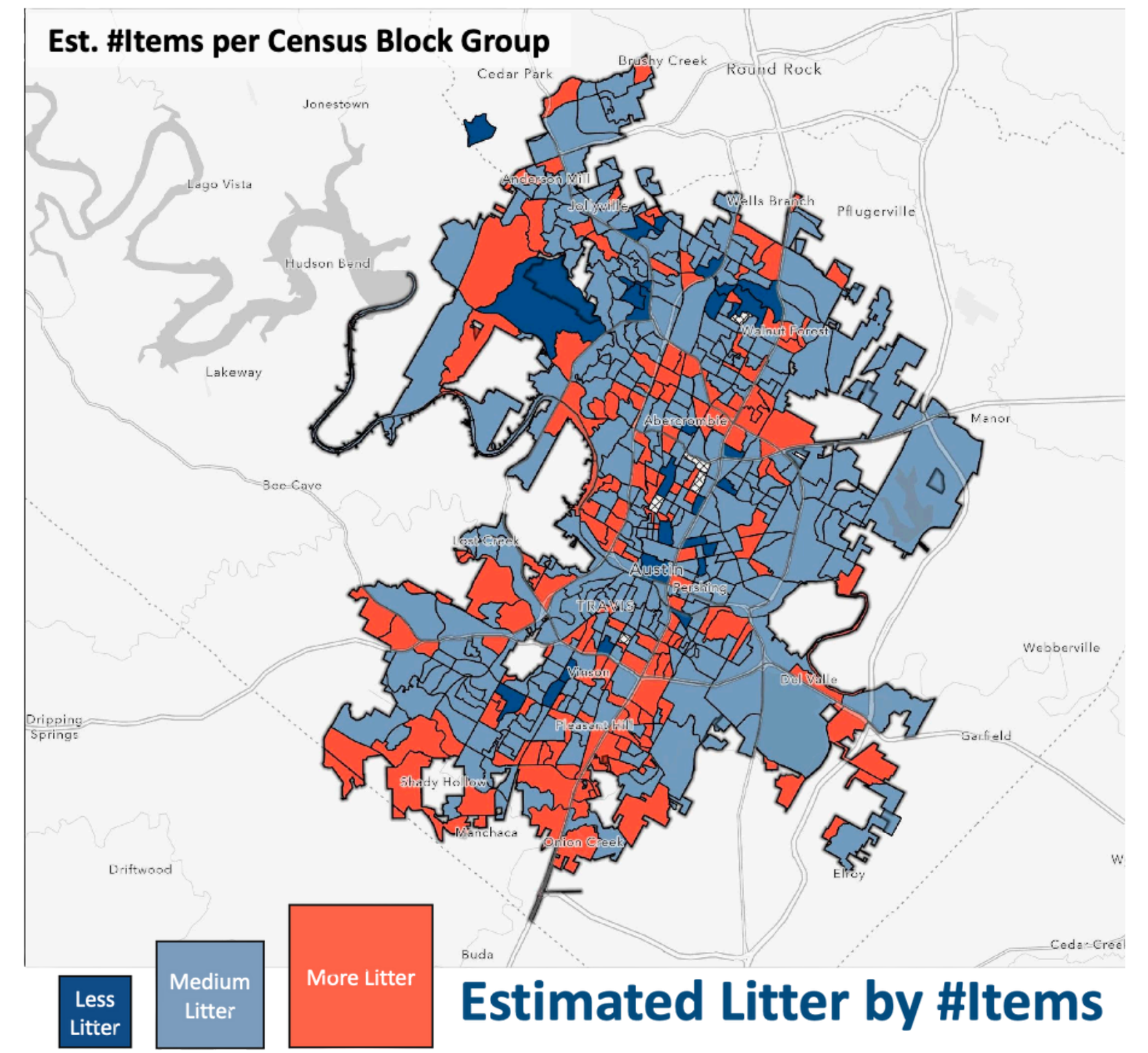


### Community Audit

In 2021, nearly 200  
volunteers surveyed  
the city using a  
random sampling  
method

## Results

Single-use foodware, drinkware, and smoking materials



# Case Study 1: Austin, TX

## OUTCOMES

austinreusecoalition  
St. Edward's University



## COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

- 200 volunteers conducted citywide waste audits using random sampling.
- Identified single-use foodware, drinkware, and smoking materials as top litter sources.
- Completed a three-year restaurant audit, surveying one quarter of all restaurants in Austin to assess reuse readiness and barriers.

## COALITION IMPACT

- Launched the Austin Reuse Coalition, uniting local cafés, schools, and sustainability orgs & volunteers
- Formed three working groups: Business Engagement, Community Outreach, and Marketing & Social Media.

## BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

- Installed “Reuse It Y’all” BYO signage at cafés and drive-thrus citywide.
- Businesses now welcome reusable cups and containers, helping normalize reuse behavior.

**3 Years of Data • 200 Volunteers • 25% of Restaurants Surveyed**



REUSABLE | LA

# Case Study 2:

## Los Angeles: Mobilizing a Region for Policy Change

- A regional branded waste audit united groups across LA to organize and become Reusable LA
- Reusable LA worked with both LA City and County to advance the most comprehensive plastics reduction and zero waste ordinances in the nation
- Local governments moved faster and bolder than the state, passing CEQA review and influencing other state bills, setting a statewide precedent for data-driven, community-powered legislation



# Case Study 2:

## Outcomes



LA advanced **six ordinances**, forming a model reuse framework for the nation



LA City's Comprehensive Plastics Reduction Program paves the way for **20 cradle-to-grave measures** addressing plastic pollution.



**CEQA-certified foundation** ensures these policies are **enforceable** and **scalable**



LA is positioned as a global showcase city for **reuse and circular systems** at the World Cup (2026), Super Bowl (2027), & Olympics (2028)

# Case Study 3:

## National Parks: Scaling Data to Federal Impact



01

Hundreds of volunteers collect branded waste data across national parks and federal lands via Plastic-Free Parks TrashBlitz each year.

02

An annual report is shared with Congress and DOI, thereby supporting the Reducing Waste in National Parks Act

03

The crowdsourced data is compiled by top items, materials, and brands. Results help inform recommendations for procurement and refill/reuse strategies.



## **Austin**

**Community Science →  
Culture Change**

Three years of data and volunteer-led audits built a visible reuse movement across Austin's cafés and restaurants.



## **Los Angeles**

**Coalition Power → Policy  
Leadership**

Reusable LA turned citizen data into six ordinances and a CEQA-certified program advancing 20 cradle-to-grave measures.



## **National Parks**

**Citizen Science → Systems  
Reform**

Crowdsourced trash data now informs federal policy, procurement standards, and refill across U.S. parks.



# THANK YOU

**Citizen science has shown that every data point matters.  
Coalitions have proven that people power can move policy.  
Together, we're building a zero-waste future.**



**Battery Park  
City Authority**

# **Battery Park City parks & Zero Waste**



A Deep Dive into BPCA Zero Waste Initiatives in its parks  
Speaker: Ryan Torres, V.P. of Parks Operations

OCTOBER 14, 2025

# Battery Park City Authority (BPCA)

## Mission Statement:

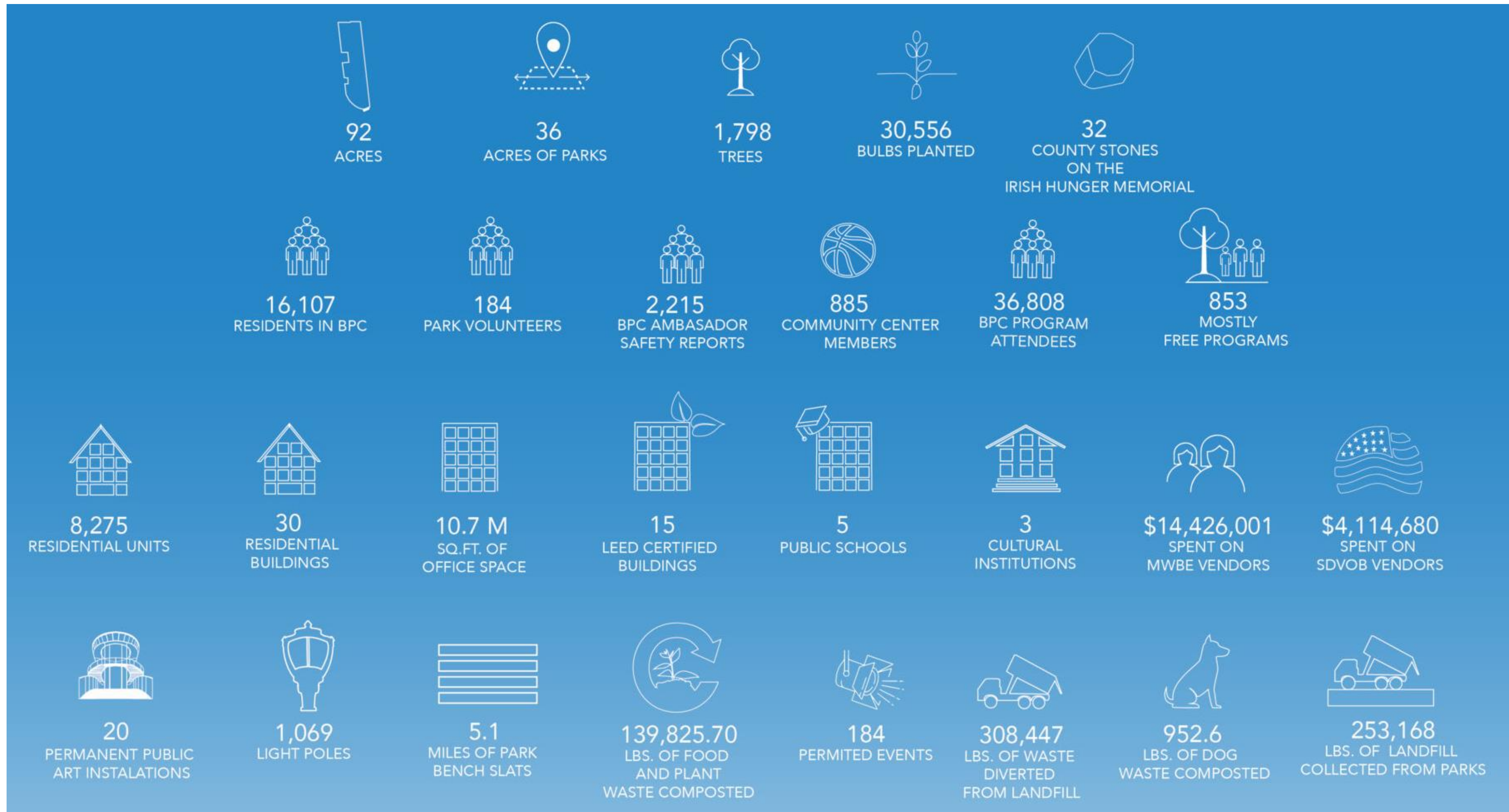
The Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority is a New York State public benefit corporation whose mission is to plan, create, coordinate, and sustain a balanced community of commercial, residential, retail, and park space within its designated 92-acre site on the Lower West Side of Manhattan.

92- acre site including:

- Commercial buildings
- Residential buildings
- Retail
- 36 acres of open park space



# BPC By The Numbers 2024



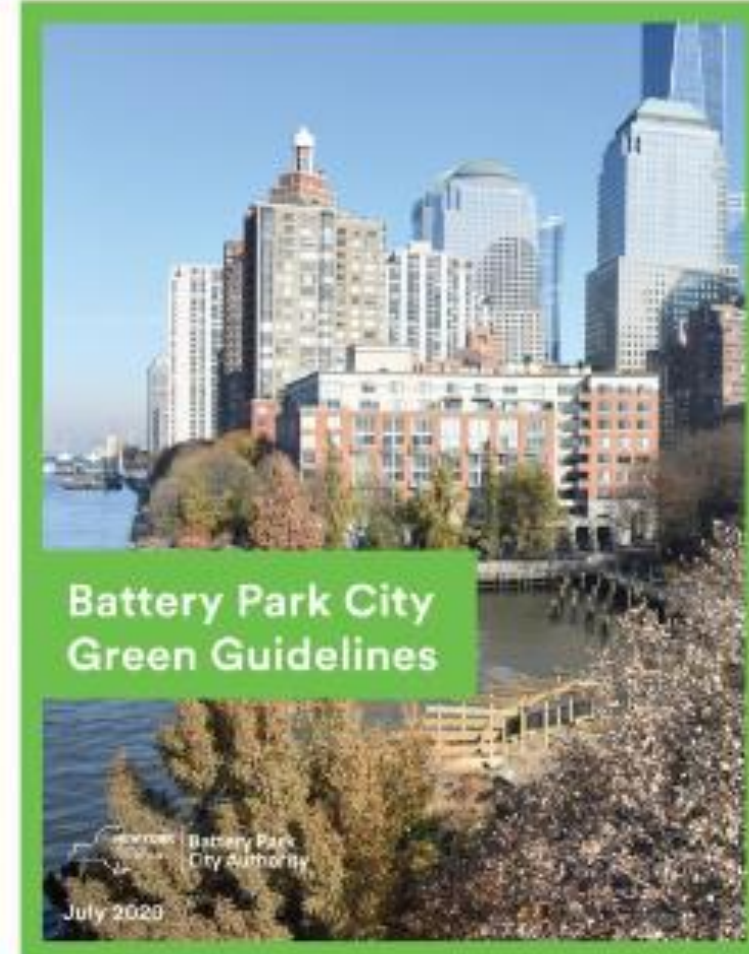
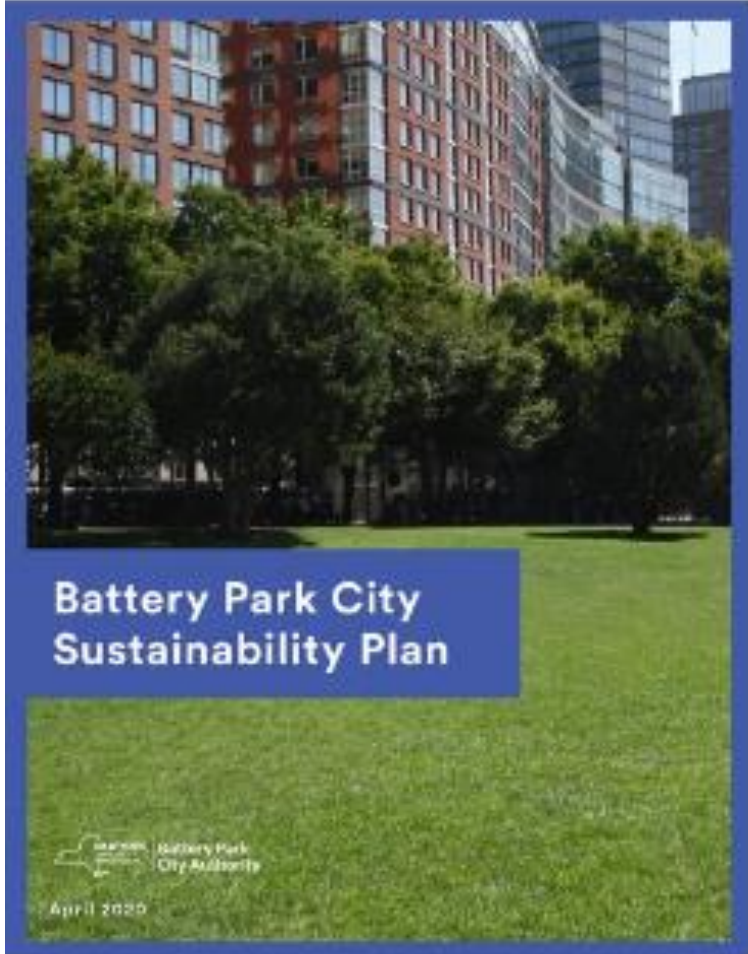
# Parks & Open Spaces



# Parks Operations – The Team



# BPCA Sustainability Implementation Plan



“

We envision a Battery Park City that will serve as an innovative model for urban climate action, where all of us who live, work, and spend time here mobilize to create a sustainable future.

## Battery Park City Sustainability Plan

# Sustainability Implementation Plan

## [M&W-3] Waste diversion

Baseline	2022	2024	2026	2028	2030
<p><b>BPCA Spaces</b> 90% of 75 Battery Place waste was diverted from landfills in 2019</p>	10 recycling bins stationed throughout Battery Park City parks	A program for quarterly waste audits for waste sent to compactors established	30 building staff members with zero waste training from TRUE, NYC, or another comparable program	6 reuse and donation centric events held annually by BPCA or individual buildings	<p><b>BPCA Spaces Target</b> Zero waste sent to landfills from BPCA-managed spaces by 2030</p>
<p><b>BPC</b> 8.5 million pounds of residential landfill waste compacted in 2019</p>					<p><b>BPC Target</b> 50% reduction in landfill waste sent to compactors by 2030</p>

## Materials and Waste Strategies

- Strategy 1: Sustainable consumption
- Strategy 2: Sustainable building materials
- Strategy 3: Waste diversion
- Strategy 4: Organics collection and composting
- Strategy 5: Construction and demolition activities

## [M&W-4] Organics collection and composting

Baseline	2022	2024	2026	2028	2030
<p><b>BPC</b> An estimated 1% of Battery Park City organic waste was diverted from landfills in 2019</p>	BPCA compost program able to accept all organic waste materials	20 buildings with compost collection programs that are connected to the BPCA compost program	10 events held that educate about organic waste disposal and composting	All buildings have compost collection programs that are connected to the BPCA compost program	<p><b>BPC Target</b> 80% of Battery Park City organic waste to be diverted from landfills in 2030</p>

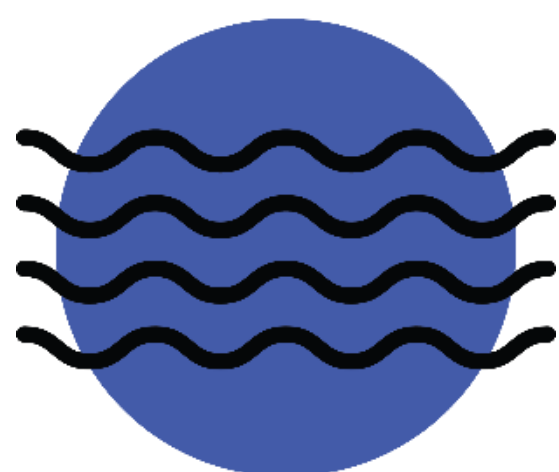
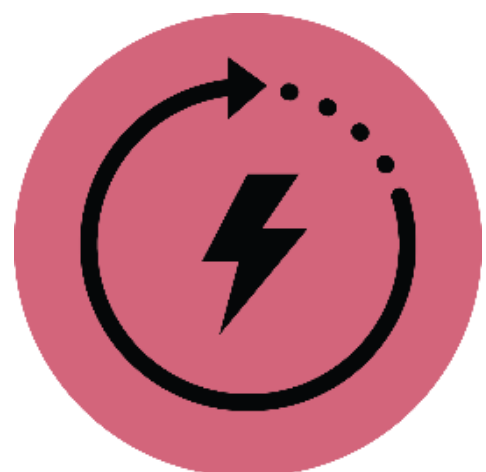
# Beginning our Zero Waste Initiative

## Zero Waste Goals include:

- Educate employees on consumption patterns
- Develop processes that encouraged waste diversion
- Educate and encourage all those who worked at BPCA

## Areas of focus:

- Focusing on behavioral change
- Increasing reuse and upcycling programs
- Converting gas powered tools/vehicles to electric



# Zero Waste Pledge Days

Hosted an annual Pledge Day where staff could recommit to BPCA's zero waste goals and receive a "success kit" (a reusable silverware, metal straw, water bottle, and tote).

## The Zero Waste Pledge:

"I pledge to do my part for the BPCA "Zero Waste Initiative" and commit to manage waste responsibly through reuse, recycling and landfill reduction. As an environmental steward for future generations, I will encourage and help other to do the same".



# BPCA Waste Working Group

## 2018, formed a Zero Waste Advisory Committee (ZWAC)

- Focused internally on educating ourselves on key concepts and making sure we had a clear understanding of what zero waste meant

## Began with an initial obtainable goal

- Achieving the TRUE Certification for our 75 Battery Place operations facility

## 2019, formed a Dog Waste Composting Team to oversee the pilot dog waste composting program

## 2025, combined the ZWAC with Dog Waste Composting Team to create the Waste Working Group

- Continued focus on staff culture around these zero waste practices



# Waste Audits

A key component to staying on top of our waste diversion progress is through conducting regular waste audits both internally and in the parks.

2021, park & street trash waste audits were done to establish a baseline for the TRUE Zero-Waste Certification

As of 2022, there has been a **16% reduction in compacted landfill waste** in BPC compared to 2019 (with a target of 50% reduction in compacted landfill waste by 2030)



# Waste Audit Findings

4

Waste audits

of park spaces conducted during 2023

About **10%** of the waste in BPC park landfill cans **is food waste** that could have been composted

About **1/3** of the waste in BPC park landfill cans **is dog waste** that could have been composted

173,000+

Pounds

of waste was diverted from BPCA operations in 2023

**2024**  
Composted over 1,000 lbs. of dog waste

**2024**  
Composted 79,825 lbs. of food waste

60

Recycling bins

have been installed across the neighborhood



# Composting Programs

BPCA's Composting Program has **increased** its processed weight of organic waste **by 57%** from 2020 to 2023.

2024, composted **79,825 lbs. of food waste** and **953 lbs. of dog waste**.

## Organics Composting Programs:

- Food waste
- Dog waste
- Horticultural garden debris
- Holiday season - pumpkins and Christmas trees



# Sustainable Purchasing

## Procurement Guidance:

- Sustainability Implementation Plan
- Green Guidelines
- Procurement Guidelines
- NYS Executive Order 22

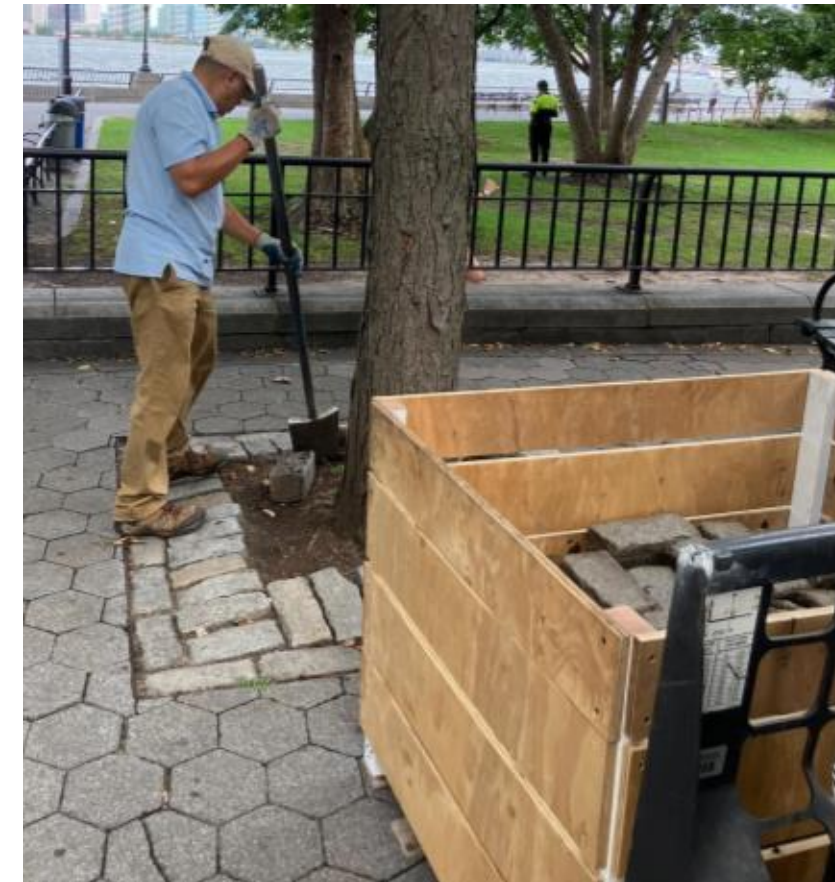
## Operations Actions:

- Procuring more sustainable or environmentally friendly materials (such as office and janitorial paper products)
- Converting gas-powered equipment to electric when possible
- Altering ordering habits to be more sustainable (steel drums, larger containers)
- Researching recycling or takeback programs for potential items



# Reuse, Recycling, Upcycling Programs

- Nitrile gloves upcycling program
- Old and outdated uniform recycling
- Plastic planting pot takeback program
- Meet the Breeds – dog waste compost collaboration
- Creating Native Bee Hotels from garden debris
- Office toilet cores for dog waste compost
- Scrap metal recycling
- Shipping pallet recycling



# Public Engagement

- Public tabling events (zero waste, compost, dog waste)
- Partnering with Parks Programming department on events
- Annual Summer Sustainability Interns
- Connecting with local community garden on composting
- Educating with local school children on compost and zero waste
- Public e-waste drives



# Challenges and Solutions

## The Sheer Amount of Waste

- Reaching 90% Diversion for public waste



Continuing Waste Audits to identify high trash areas

## Changing Public Behavior

- Correctly sorting waste into receptacles
- Participating in food waste and dog waste composting



Placing Additional cans

- (food compost, dog waste, and recycling)

Updating signage

- Internally and in the parks

## Keeping the team engaged over time



Keeping the conversation going in new ways

Educating new hires on BPCA's zero waste goals

## Connecting with the larger public on our Zero Waste Goals



Connecting through park communications

Public engagement events

Designated Sustainability Coordinator

- Residents, visitors, businesses

# Learn More and Stay Connected


Website: <https://bpca.ny.gov/>

YouTube: [Battery Park City Sustainability Tour 2025](#)

Email: [Ryan.Torres@bpca.ny.gov](mailto:Ryan.Torres@bpca.ny.gov)

Social Media:

[www.bpca.ny.gov](http://www.bpca.ny.gov)

 [facebook.com/batteryparkcityparks](https://facebook.com/batteryparkcityparks)

 [twitter.com/bpca\\_ny](https://twitter.com/bpca_ny)

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