

2025

Day 1

PLENARY 3

1:45 PM

Oct 22

A "Univer-City" Partnership to Expand Compost Access

Moderator: Caroline Eader

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Speakers: Angela Ober
Cara Murray



NATIONAL
ZERO
WASTE
CONFERENCE



A person wearing a grey jacket and a backpack is smiling while pouring compost from a white bag into a blue recycling bin. The background shows a paved area, a brick building, and a white van.

A Univer-City Partnership to Expand Compost Access

*Baltimore City Department of Public Works
Johns Hopkins University
University of Maryland, Baltimore*

National Zero Waste Conference
October 22, 2025

Univer-City Program Overview

USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) Grant

- Baltimore Food Waste Reduction-Working group
 - Requirement of Food Matters grant program in 2020
 - Group met to work on solutions for large-scale food waste and included higher ed participants
 - Higher ed participants partnered with DPW Office of Waste Diversion to draft an application to the CFWR grant program.
- The two-year grant period would expand food scrap drop off offerings to residents and higher education campus affiliates
- The grant program, which was awarded in Spring 2023, created the opportunity for collaboration between the following partners:



Baltimore City Department of Public Works

Food Waste in Baltimore

- Less Waste, Better Baltimore Plan, released in 2020
 - Outlines sources of waste in Baltimore and provides maximum diversion potential of each stream
 - Makes recommendations for improving waste management, including introducing composting infrastructure
- HB 264 Organic Waste Diversion
 - Went into effect January 1, 2023
 - Impacts producers of 1,000 lbs of organic waste per week – including higher education institutions
- Diversion Infrastructure
 - Prince George's County Commercial Compost facility
 - Private sector composting/digester, curbside collection
 - SWIFR-funded mid-size compost facility in Baltimore
 - Residential Recycling Centers in Baltimore

Expected Maximum Diversion Potential and Performance Timeframes for Task 5 Diversion/Recycling Options

Diversion/Recycling Option (Details provided in Task 5 Report)	Maximum Diversion Potential (tons)	Expected Performance Timeframe (years)
Food Waste Reduction	72,400	20
Residential Organics Diversion	42,800	20
Commercial Organics Diversion	35,500	20
Improved Recycling Collection	84,200	10
Expanded Recycling Collection	69,300	10
C&D Reuse and Reduction	28,400	10
C&D Diversion	200,100	20
Bulk Waste Diversion	4,100	10
Drop-Off Center Improvements	16,100	5
TOTAL	552,900	-

Baltimore City Department of Public Works

DPW's Food Waste Solutions

- Compost workshops and GROW centers
 - Spring and Fall events held across the city
 - Provide an opportunity to share information and resources with residents
 - Free backyard bins, geobins and food scrap countertop bins
- Food Matters grant program (NRDC)
 - Established food scrap drop off at RRCs
 - Food scrap drop off at 2 farmers markets
 - BFWR Working Group
- USDA CFWR grant program 2023-2025
 - Funding to support 5 drop off locations at 3 universities
 - Funding for compost workshops- intro to vermi composting
 - Purchase backyard bins and food scrap bins
 - Marketing:
 - Radio ads
 - Palm cards, canvas bags



Drop-Off Site Locations

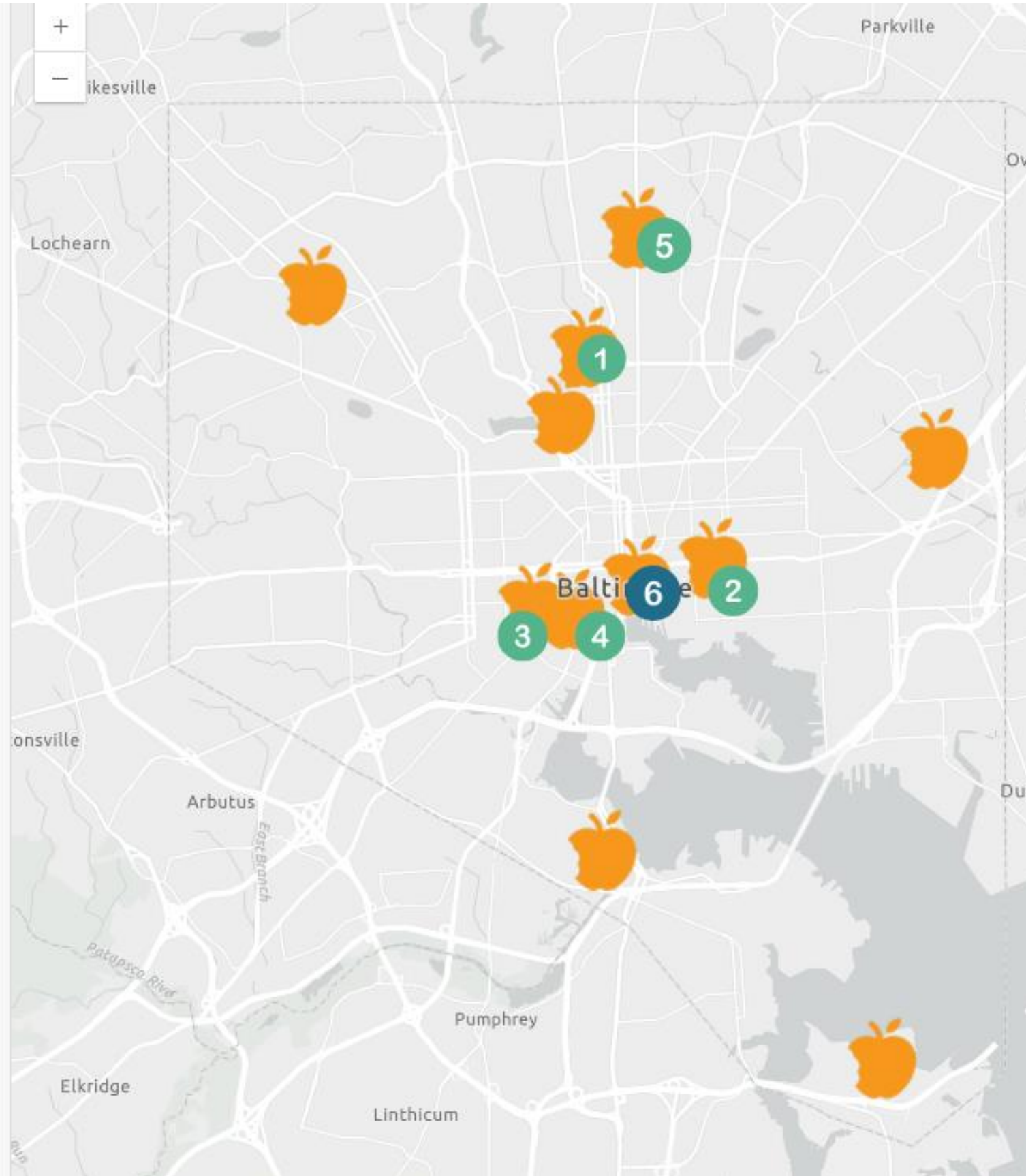
Food Scrap Drop Off Program

Baltimore City residents can drop-off food scraps for composting at one of DPW's five Residential Drop-Off locations. In addition to the DPW Residential Drop-off sites, residents can bring food waste to the JFX Farmers' Market on Sundays between April and December. Please note that Reedbird Residential Recycling Center is currently closed for renovations and is not available for residential drop off.

Location Key:

- 1-2: JHU
- 3-4: UMB
- 5: Loyola
- 6: Farmer's Market

[More Information](#)



Baltimore City Department of Public Works CHOOSE COMPOSTING – NOT LANDFILLS!



NEW Pilot Locations for Food Scrap Drop Off

Free for Baltimore City Residents and University Students

UMB Campus Center 621 W Lombard

Requires registration to access

UMB Community Engagement Center 16 S Poppleton St

Requires registration to access

JHU Homewood Campus Behind Mudd Hall

Available 24/7
Use bin marked "food scrap drop off"

Johns Hopkins East Baltimore Campus 1551 Jefferson St

Available 24/7*

Loyola Govans Farmers Market 5104 York Rd

Requires registration to access

✓ ACCEPTABLE FOOD

- Fruits and vegetables
- Eggshells
- Gourds
- Grains, bread, pasta
- Coffee grounds
- Paper Tea bags (no staples)
- Dairy
- Meats

✗ UNACCEPTABLE ITEMS

- Oils
- Produce stickers
- Plastic bags
- Compostable tableware

Johns Hopkins University

- Stats
 - Tier 1 Research University in Baltimore, MD
 - 21K employees
 - 24K students
 - 7 campuses
- Goals for participation
 - Align with Climate Action & Sustainability Plan goal of 50% diversion by 2030
 - Build support for residential curbside compost service
 - Build connection between JHU and Baltimore community
- Institutional support
 - Facilities teams covered cost of added compost service



Photos above: JHU's Homewood Campus, below JHU affiliate dropping off compost at Homewood site

Johns Hopkins University

- DPW Resources
 - Funding for interns & supplies
- Program format
 - 2 Locations
 - Homewood
 - East Baltimore
 - Access
 - Initially 1 day/week with intern
 - Summer 24/7 access with no intern → QR code
 - Communication
 - Digital
 - Flyers
 - In person

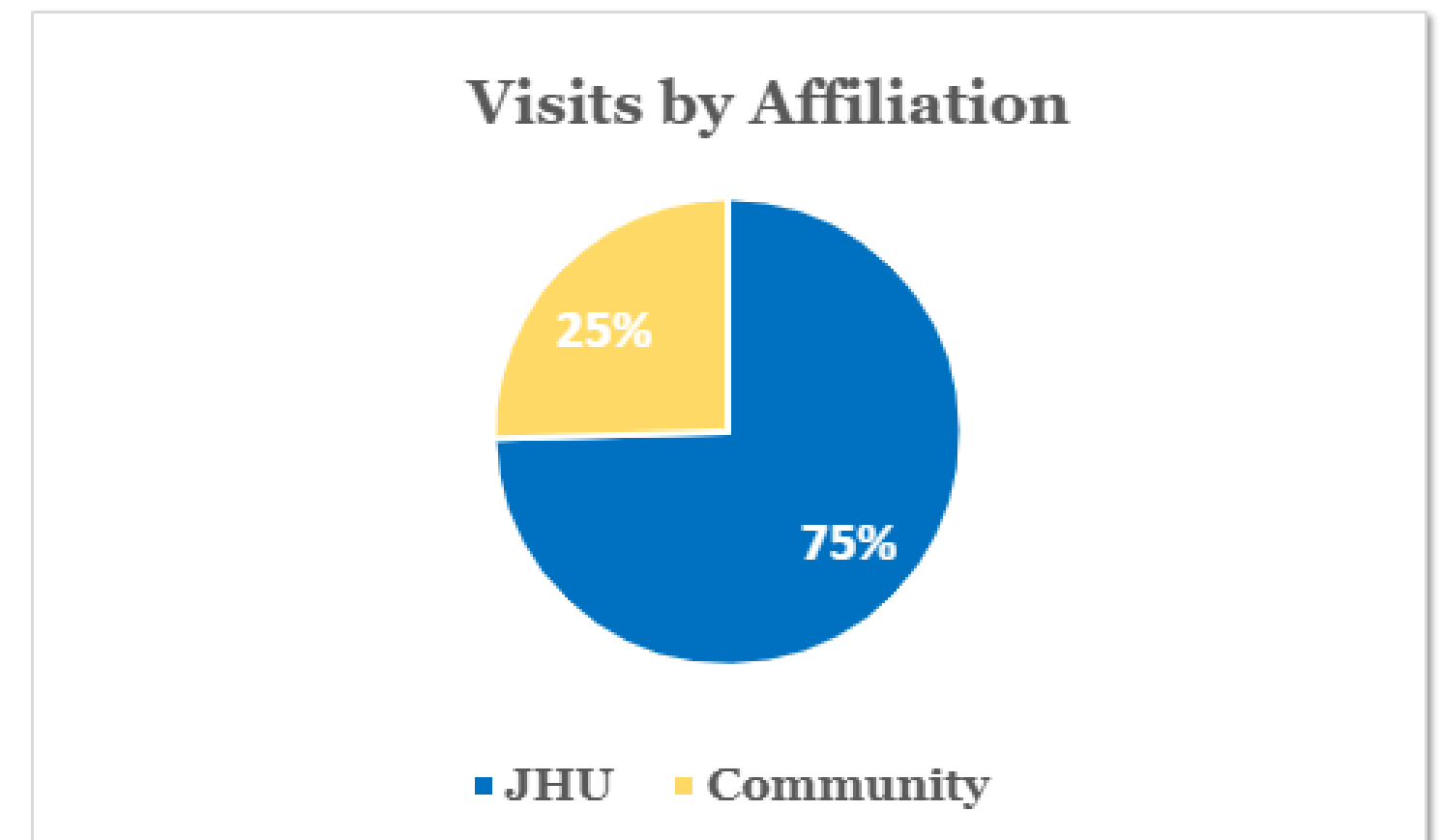


Photos left: Intern at Homewood site, right Sample IG post for East Baltimore site



Johns Hopkins University

- Stats (08/23 - 03/25)
 - Total visits: 626
 - Total pounds: 4,955
- Successes
 - Increased awareness, access, and diversion
 - Vendor partnership
- Opportunities for the future
 - Affiliate engagement
 - Expand to School of Public Health
 - Improve promotion
 - Community engagement
 - Baltimore City Public Schools
 - JHH Farmers' Market vendors
 - Community meetings & events



University of Maryland, Baltimore

- Goals for participation
 - Align with UMB's Sustainability Strategic Plan and Maryland's All StAR Program
 - 30% recycling rate
 - Expand composting opportunities on campus
 - Create a program that serves the campus community and UMB's neighbors
 - Gather data to justify a permanent program
- Institution approval process
 - Buy-in from Facilities & Operations and building managers at bin drop-off locations



Waste and Procurement

Promote source reduction, reuse, and recycling & composting across UMB's campus.



University of Maryland, Baltimore

- Resources from DPW
 - Funding for Compost Crew pick-up at two sites
 - 50 bags of compost to give to community members and participants
- Program format
 - Locations at UMB's SMC Campus Center and Community Engagement Center
 - Staffed Drop-Off Times
 - Asynchronous Model: QR Code with quiz
 - 1st time users: demographics and 4 quiz questions on what items are acceptable
 - Regular users: demographics only
 - Bin code given after quiz is complete



**THIS BIN IS FOR
FOOD SCRAPS ONLY**

The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) Office of Sustainability, Community Engagement Center (CEC), and Baltimore City of Public Works have partnered together to add a community drop-off site for your **vegetable and fruit scraps and cores, tea bags, coffee grounds, egg shells, breads, and pasta** to be diverted from the landfill and composted.



Whether you're a first-time participant or a seasoned pro, **please scan the QR code** on the left to allow us to get demographic data for the UMB Compost Collection Pilot and to get access to the bin's code.

Scan QR Code or go to bit.ly/UMBcompostQuiz

Additional Resources



Learn about what's accepted



Learn how to collect and store scraps at home



Learn more about the terms



Learn more about the program



**BALTIMORE CITY
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC WORKS**

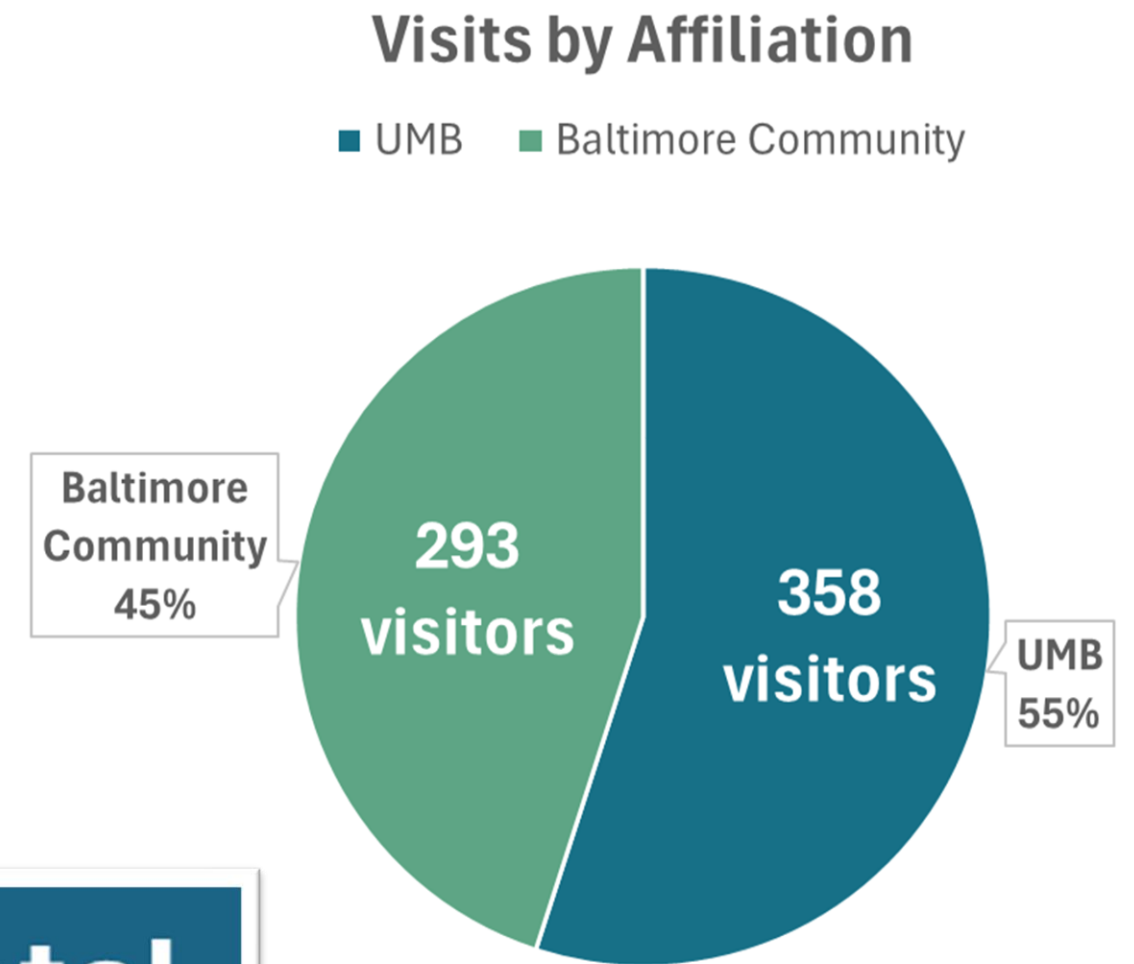
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE
**OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY**

Questions? Email sustainability@umb.edu or call 410-706-1474

University of Maryland, Baltimore

- Successes/Opportunities for the future
 - Transition to internal operations July 1, 2025
 - UMB EVS to collect, and existing waste hauler to take to PG County Industrial Composting Facility
 - Partnership with UMB's USGA to purchase:
 - MetroSTOR enclosures for the two existing UMB sites
 - compostable wares to support student-led Zero-Waste Events
 - personal compost bins for students on campus

**13,647 lbs total
food scraps collected**



Loyola University

- Goals for participation
 - Increase awareness of composting
 - Engage community about how food waste is prevalent and problematic.
- Resources from DPW
 - Funding for staff support and education materials
- Program format
 - Located at Community Hub for Office of Community, Service, and Justice
 - Used QR code for a compost quiz, lock code, and to track participation (paper copy too)
 - Removed lock



Loyola University

- Successes
 - Over 2,000lbs composted
 - Community engagement & participation
 - Compost bin made permanent at CCSJ
- Opportunities for the future
 - Accuracy of participant tracking
 - Loyola affiliate participation



Univer-City Partnership Wrap Up

5

Additional
composting sites
established

7

Meetings between
higher ed and city
partners

34

Zip codes represented
from Baltimore City &
beyond

40

Percent of community
members who
participated

1,437

Visits to drop off
residential food
scraps

22,000

Pounds of food waste
diverted from the
incinerator

Working with Municipal Government

- Work with University of Maryland Baltimore was made possible by a partnership with Compost Crew
 - Added to an existing PO for drop off collections
 - No need to re-do procurement
- Flexibility and creativity
 - Patience with procurement processes
 - Build programs that are good pilots with options to continue if funding is identified
 - Capture data to build your case- each partner will have their own way of getting the same info
 - Find champions within the agency
- Planning
 - Bring partners into grant writing and budgeting early- build off existing working groups and partnerships
 - Link proposals to big planning documents or mayoral initiatives
 - Be realistic about what data you can capture and what metrics tell your story

QUESTIONS?

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