



How to Divert Waste at Community Events

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Citizens Advisory Committee

To the Bartholomew County Solid Waste Management District
Columbus, Indiana

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Overview

Materials that end up in landfills are missed opportunities. Many items that are thrown away are still usable, or are made of materials that could be recycled into new products. Even organic waste like food scraps and floral remnants can be turned into nutrient-rich compost. Composting is one of the most effective ways of reducing the environmental impacts of our food scraps, which emit millions of tons of greenhouse gasses each year in landfills. In addition to emitting greenhouse gasses, this also means that nutrients that would have been returned to the soil are instead rotting in landfills.

Throwing items away drives the demand for new production and the extraction of new natural resources. It takes energy and natural resources to produce any of the supplies we use. The more times we reuse an item, the more those sunk costs are distributed, reducing the environmental cost per use. The longer we reuse our supplies, and the fewer supplies we use & throw away overall, the lower the demand is for the energy-intensive process of mining, farming, or otherwise extracting resources from the earth, and manufacturing those materials into new products.

Specifications

The Citizens Advisory Committee of the Bartholomew County Solid Waste Management District, made up of community volunteers interested in educating the public on reducing the amount of trash that is deposited in our local landfill, in partnership with local non-profit Energy Matters Community Coalition, an organization of citizens of Columbus, Indiana focusing on public education and local actions that support sustainability, with a special emphasis on energy conservation and global warming, supported the waste diversion efforts at all four weekends of Ethnic Expo 2021. We did so by focusing on increasing recycling rates and piloting a zero waste event during the final cultural weekend and by utilizing the services of Ecosystem Events who is an Indianapolis based business specializing in sustainable and zero waste events. The BCSWMD Citizens Advisory Committee recruited local residents to serve as waste station volunteers for each event to help attendees appropriately sort their trash into recycling, landfill, and composting (October event only).

Columbus boasts a sophisticated population and already shows commitment to sustainability through the Columbus Recycles program. By continuing to develop event sustainability programs that yield credible, quantified results, we want to boost the city's image by demonstrating integrity and commitment to values. It is our hope that attendees will feel like environmental heroes for participating in our green event and that we will connect with millennials and Generation Z attendees, as well as more mature lifelong environmentalists, all of whom have high expectations for sustainability.

Through this waste diversion project utilizing increased recycling, composting, and education, this event pilot serves as a model for future City and community events. Through the efforts of this project, we are documenting below the best practices and guidelines that can be utilized by other organizations when hosting local events. In addition, the project can be a model for the City to use for future Ethnic Expo events.

2021 Ethnic Expo Sustainability Results - the reason to divert waste!

1. 49% of the events' waste was kept out of the landfill via recycling and composting. These results dramatically exceed the nationwide recycling rate of 34.7% (per EPA data, 2015).
2. The four events diverted 950 pounds of waste from the landfill.

Waste Diversion Event Planning Guide

Best practices and guidelines that can be utilized in the planning of waste diversion efforts at local community and City events. This guide serves as a model for future City of Columbus, Indiana Ethnic Expo events.

Checklist

6 months before event

- Develop a budget for waste diversion efforts.
- Possibly apply for grant funding, if necessary. Ideas include IDEM & Heritage Fund.
- Contact Ray's Recycling for a list of items acceptable for recycling specifically related to cups.
- Contact the compost facility regarding requirements for what can be composted.
- Develop a comprehensive list of items that can be purchased and used to serve food at events. Make sure to include:
 - Different sized plates
 - Different sized bowls
 - Utensils
 - Clamshell or carry out containers
- Develop a vendor contract/agreement that includes the types of compostables and recyclables that can be used at an event.
 - If requiring vendors to purchase their own products, make sure to have these listed clearly on the vendor form with expectations of what can and cannot be used.
 - In order to be successful, it will have to be required that no Styrofoam, plastic straws, and outside containers can be used.
 - If placing a large order for all vendors, this can be done 2 months from the date of the event.
 - *For purposes of a 2022 Ethnic Expo event, the CAC has leftover service ware that can be provided to vendors. Inventory is attached. Once this is gone, vendors will need to be required to purchase serviceware to use for their items.
 - Include recyclable materials vendors should use specifically for drinks, such as #1, #2, and #5 plastics *only*.

4 months before event

- Meet with City Garage employees to discuss goals of events for recycling/composting/waste diversion. Set expectations for employees to help in this effort including serving as waste stations volunteers to help sort trash/recycling/composting and expectations that all waste is to be weighed and provided to event organizers after the event.
- Get confirmation that City Garage can truck compost to a local facility:
 - GreenCycle <https://greencycleindy.com/> 317-769-5668
 - Smith Creek, 8991 Louis Smith Rd, Borden, IN 47106, msmith@smithcreek.com

3 months before event

- Reserve Clear Stream recycling containers from Columbus Recycling Center to be used for recycling and composting OR use clear Stream containers for compost only while using the City of Columbus recycling totes to collect recyclables.
- Confirm that recycling bags are available for use with the Clear Stream recycling containers or purchase for the events.
- Purchase Clear Stream recycling bags for containers.
- Purchase clear composting bags for containers, confirming what is acceptable at the final compost destination.
- Develop and publish press release of sustainability efforts.

2 months before event

- Using an event map, develop the layout of waste stations at your event.
- Develop a volunteer sign up form and publicize the need for volunteers.. An easy one to consider is the Sign Up Genius. Volunteers can sign up for slots to volunteer and will receive reminders. Require both email and cell phone number from all volunteers. Makes shifts about 2-hours in length with a 15-minute overlap from one shift to the next in order to make sure to have time to train new volunteers. *See attached example of what to say in your volunteer sign up form.
- Get confirmation from each food vendor the types of foods they will serve and containers they will need for serving.
- Talk to restaurants/bars who might be serving alcohol at event and encourage to use recyclable plastic cups #1, #2, #5 or aluminum cans or glass bottles.

1 month before event

- Continue to recruit volunteers.
- Order compostables if necessary.
- Develop signage based on the types of recyclables and compostables being utilized at the event (see example in photo at top of document).
- Gather 5-gal buckets to be used for liquids to be poured out at waste stations.
- Confirm the use of grabbers and vests from the BCSWMD, Recycling Center.

2 weeks before event

- Continue to finalize signage for recycling and composting containers.
- Continue with volunteer recruitment. Typically volunteers wait until a week before the event to sign up.

1 week before event

- Send volunteers email regarding responsibilities at the event, what to bring, where to park, where to meet, etc. Include a map of the event with the meeting location clearly identified. *see below example.
- Gather volunteer grabbers, gloves, and vests for use at the event.

Day of event

- Set up a booth for the distribution of compostables (if passing out to vendors). Do so based on the previously agreed number of items each vendor required.
- Consider including a booth for the Bartholomew County Solid Waste Management District and City of Columbus Recycling program to talk to event attendees about the importance of diverting waste from our local landfill with ideas of how to do that.
- Set up a waste weighing station and/or waste collection behind the scenes.

After event

- Tally weights of compostables, recyclables, and landfill collected at the event.
- Publish the amount of waste diverted from the landfill via a press release.
- Inventory compostables left over from events for future use.
- Schedule wrap-up meeting with the planning committee to discuss what went well and what could be improved upon.

Volunteer Publicity Example

Thank you for your interest in helping reduce the waste that goes into the Bartholomew County landfill. The _____ event planning group is incorporating waste diversion in this year's _____ Event, held on _____ at _____ venue from _____ to _____.

We are in need of _____ volunteers to support these efforts. See shift times below.

As a waste station volunteer, you will assist event attendees in sorting their trash into landfill/recycling/composting. In addition, you will also be in charge of removing trash from the recycling and composting bins, and rescuing recyclable and compostable items from the trash. Each volunteer will be given gloves, a grabber, and a yellow vest to wear to identify them as a waste station volunteer. A short training will be given to volunteers when they arrive at the event and check in.

Please direct questions to _____ at _____ or _____

Suggested Signage Set up of Waste Stations-Examples



Suggested Information to Share with Vendors

Recycling Information:

Thank you for participating in the recycling program for the Ganesh Festival! To minimize the amount of waste sent to landfill, we ask that all booths providing beverages please use **aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass bottles, or plastic cups**. If you are serving a beverage in a plastic cup, please choose a cup that has the **number 1, 5, or 6 inside the recycling symbol on the bottom**. Please do not use any cups made of thick, rigid plastic.

Recycling bins will be provided for the event, along with signs depicting the items that are accepted for recycling. **Please use the recycling bins for any plastic bottles and cups, glass bottles, aluminum cans, paper, and cardboard you generate during the event.** For cardboard boxes, please flatten and stack next to a recycling bin or behind your booth, and someone from the event waste team will pick them up to be recycled.

If you have any questions about the event recycling program, please contact _____ at _____. Thanks for helping us put on a green event!

Composting Product Information Gathering:

Hi Event Vendor/Main Contact,

Thank you for your help collecting information from the food vendors! The following is attached:

1. List of compostable product options with photos (list acceptable products with photos)
2. Spreadsheet for tracking orders from each vendor (develop a spreadsheet for vendors to enter in what they need)

I included the available pack sizes for each item as well. For sanitation purposes, I would like to not split any of the product packs between vendors, so please round up to the nearest pack size if needed. (For example, if someone wants 825 plates, round up to 850, because they come in packs of 50.)

Reminders & questions for vendors:

1. How many of each of these items would you have purchased for this event?
 1. Don't forget to request eating utensils, sauce cups & lids, or deli wrap if needed
 2. Please use clamshells only for "to-go" customers. Use plates for guests eating at the festival.
2. Do you need any of these items before the event date in order to pre-package food? (Ex: Salsa cups). If yes, when do you need them by?
3. NO aluminum foil. Use deli wrap instead.
4. You will not be able to make any changes to your order after **date**.

If a vendor needs an item early, please enter the date needed in the same box as the quantity in the spreadsheet.

Finally, below is the information about the recycling & composting program to share with the vendors. Note that I have addressed napkins in the blurb, as this is likely to be a common question. Please share this info with all of the vendors.

Composting Information (to use when offering compostables free of charge):

Thank you for participating in the green program for Fiesta Latina! To minimize the amount of waste sent to landfill, we are providing **FREE compostable food containers and utensils** to all food vendors. All food vendors are **required** to use these free materials; no other food containers or utensils are allowed.

We will NOT be providing free napkins. **Please provide your own paper napkins.** Any type of paper napkin is OK.

We also ask that all booths providing beverages please use **aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass bottles, or plastic cups**. If you are selling a beverage in a plastic cup, please choose a cup that has the **number 1, 5, or 6 inside the recycling symbol on the bottom**. Please do not use any cups made of thick, rigid plastic. We will NOT be providing free beverage containers.

Recycling and composting bins will be provided for the event, along with signs depicting the items that are accepted in each bin. We are working to make sure recycling and composting bins are conveniently located for both guests and vendors. **We encourage you to recycle and compost as much of your waste as possible!** For cardboard boxes, please flatten and stack next to a recycling bin or behind your booth, and someone from the event waste team will pick them up to be recycled.

If you have any questions about the event waste program, please contact _____ at (email). Thanks for helping us put on a green event

Suggested Email to Volunteers One-week prior to event

Thank you for volunteering for the recycling program at _____. My name is _____ and I will be the on-site coordinator of the recycling program.

Immediate actions:

- If you are no longer available to volunteer, **please respond ASAP** and let me know.
- [Please review the shift time you signed up for here.](#) If you are switching your shift time from the shift you signed up for, **please respond ASAP** and let me know.

Please review the following information prior to your volunteer shift:

Parking: There is no dedicated volunteer parking. 4th Street will be closed to traffic between Jackson and Franklin. You can park on nearby streets for free, or in the parking garage at your own expense.

Where to Go: At the start of your shift, meet me at the entrance of the alley on 4th St. across the street from 4th St. Bar & Grill. **I have attached a map showing the meeting location.** At the end of your shift, please come back to the alley to return your supplies for the next shift of volunteers.

What You'll Be Doing: When you arrive, I will give you a vest, a trash grabber, and gloves, plus a brief training of your responsibilities. In short, you will be assigned a zone of waste stations. You will be responsible for helping guests sort their trash and recycling correctly, rescuing recyclables from the trash, and removing any trash from the recycling bins. You will also be responsible for changing waste bags when they are full. The event has staff that will take care of hauling the bags away for disposal. I will give you more detailed information during the on-site training.

What to Wear: Casual, comfortable clothing. Please check the weather on the day of the event and dress accordingly. Wear comfortable shoes you can walk in for your entire shift. If you have long hair, please tie it back. Avoid wearing long necklaces. Bring appropriate sun protection such as sunglasses, a hat, and/or sunscreen.

What to Bring: Bring a water bottle and a snack if needed. Food and beverages will also be available for sale at the event. There will not be a secure area to store personal items, so please plan to keep any valuable items on your person or in your vehicle.

Please let me know if you have any questions, or if you are no longer able to volunteer. My cell phone is _____ and I will be available all day on _____ date..

Thank you for helping us reduce event waste!

_____ Event Contact

Inventory of Compostables for Ethnic Expo 2022

These items are currently being stored at Dennis Tibbetts home, and are available for use at the next Ethnic Expo event. Please contact Dennis at 812-669-2207 to have them delivered for future use.

Spoons	4000
Forks	5000
Clamshell 9	3400
Lid for soup	1000
Soup 10 oz	1500
Hot cup 8 oz	400
Plates 6 in	1700
Plates 10 in	2000
Clamshell 6 in	2000
Plates 9 in	1500
Portion cup	500
Sandwich paper	4000