

Council Briefing

Proposed Food Waste Composting Requirement

SPU & Neighborhoods Committee

September 9, 2014

Where Does Seattle Stand with Respect to its Recycling Goals?

- 56.2% in 2013 (about 28,000 tons short of our 2015 goal of 60%)
- If the City settles for the average recycling rate of growth experienced from 2011 to 2013 (55.4% to 56.2%), Seattle would not reach its 60% goal until 2023
- Food waste and compostable paper is the largest component of readily divertible material in both residential and commercial sectors' garbage

Recycling Goals, cont'd

- A composting requirement in all sectors, projected to ultimately yield 38,000 tons, would be the single largest increase our recycling rate
- Endorsed in Solid Waste Management Plan adopted by Council in 2013
- Included in SPU's Strategic Business Plan

Recent Investigations

Sampling of the garbage of 100+ businesses with food waste collection

Finding: Garbage still contained almost 50% compostables, despite the presence of compost collection

Conclusion: Merely requiring that businesses have compost service is not sufficient to achieve the diversion that we need

Recent Investigations, pt. 2

SPU surveyed 600 randomly selected Seattle adults with this question:

“Seattle still sends more than 300,000 tons of garbage to the landfill each year and 30 percent of this waste is leftover food and food-soiled paper. Seattle is now considering a requirement that all businesses and residents put leftover food scraps and compostable paper in their food and yard waste carts or backyard compost bin, to increase composting and further cut waste sent to the landfill. To what extent would you support or oppose this requirement? Would you strongly support it? Support it? Are you neutral? Would you oppose? Or strongly oppose?”

Recent Investigations, pt. 3

Findings: (1=strongly oppose to 5=strongly support.)

	Strong Support	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Overall Rating*
All	47%	29%	13%	5%	6%	4.1
Household	54%	27%	9%	5%	6%	4.2
Apt/Condo	43%	31%	16%	5%	6%	4.0
Male	40%	33%	15%	6%	7%	3.9
Female	56%	25%	12%	4%	5%	4.3
Under 50	44%	34%	13%	3%	6%	4.1
50 or over	53%	20%	14%	7%	5%	4.1
White	49%	28%	13%	4%	6%	4.1
Non-white	43%	33%	14%	8%	7%	4.1
Latino	40%	43%	12%	3%	2%	4.2
<\$50K	48%	28%	16%	6%	3%	4.2
\$50-100K	56%	26%	10%	3%	6%	4.3
>\$100K	57%	22%	4.1%	6%	11%	4.1

Recent Investigations, pt. 4

Findings, cont'd:

- Supporters outnumber opponents by 7:1
- For non-whites the ratio is 5:1 supporters over opponents
- For Latino/Latinas the ratio is 16:1

Conclusion: Residents' support for this requirement is deep and wide.

Recent Investigations, pt. 5

Consultations with Zero Waste Seattle, Zero Waste Washington, Starbucks, Unico, Chamber of Commerce, Washington Restaurant Association, BOMA, our Solid Waste (Citizen) Advisory Committee, composting processors, residential and business focus groups, interviewed apartment managers, interviewed 50+ small ethnic restaurants and groceries

Recent Investigations, pt. 6

Findings:

- Many groups were supportive of increasing composting and even requiring it

Recent Investigations, pt. 7

Concerns

Findings, cont'd:

Concern we heard	SPU response
1. Have requirement to have composting service rather than a disposal ban	Availability of service by itself still leaves a lot of compostables in the garbage
2. Enforcement based on small amounts of food waste is inappropriate	Enforcement only after major outreach and assistance and then only for “significant” amounts of compostables (to be defined by rule as 10% or more)

Recent Investigations, pt. 8

Findings, cont'd:

Concern we heard	SPU response
3. Financial consequence for single family violation should be more like \$5 or more	A \$1 fee seemed to strike the appropriate balance between setting an incentive to comply while not creating too large of an impact on customers
4. There should be no financial consequence for single family violation at all	
5. There should be no financial consequences for apartments or businesses	Consequences are identical to those of existing recycling requirement

Recent Investigations, pt. 9

Findings, cont'd:

Concern we heard	SPU response
6. Cost	High use of composting can generally decrease overall solid waste bill
7. Possibility of inconsistent enforcement	SPU will enforce consistently and aggressively after 2 warnings
8. Contamination of “public” bins should not be held against the business	Have covered these with exemptions in the ordinance
9. Lack of space can make composting impractical	

Recent Investigations, pt. 10

Findings, cont'd

Concern we heard	SPU response
10. Resistance from property owners/managers can leave tenants unable to comply	Ordinance will require property owners to either provide composting service or to make space available for commercial tenants' composting service
11. Need for communication with haulers on customer service issues	SPU will facilitate this customer service communication

Recent Investigations, pt. 11

Findings, cont'd

Concern we heard	SPU response
12. Small ethnic food service businesses feel challenged by many new City requirements of various types.	SPU will create \$100,000 fund for small ethnic food service businesses for signage, bins, training, etc., for successful implementation of this program SPU will conduct general education campaign about the requirement
13. Odors and cleanliness	Proper handling and frequent pickup will minimize odor problems, just as it does for food waste in the garbage

Recent Investigations, pt. 12

Conclusion: Almost all concerns can be adequately addressed or mitigated

Summary of Proposal

1. Prohibit disposal of food waste and compostable paper in residential, commercial, and self-haul sectors
2. SPU to start education on October 1, 2014
3. Disposal prohibition starts 1/1/2015, at first without consequences for non-compliance
4. SPU to do only education and informational tagging for the first half of 2015

Summary of Proposal, pt. 2

5. Businesses that generate compostables shall:
 - subscribe to a composting service or
 - process their food waste onsite or
 - self-haul their food waste for processing.

6. All commercial building owners shall provide:
 - composting service for their tenants or
 - space for tenants' own containers.

Summary of Proposal, pt. 3

7. Starting July 1, 2015:

- Any observed violation of the separation requirement by residential can customers shall result in an additional collection fee of \$1.
- Any observed violation of the separation requirement by dumpster customers shall result in an additional collection fee of \$50 (after 2 warnings).

Summary of Proposal, pt. 4

8. Exemptions from the separation requirement:
- Lack of space in multifamily or commercial buildings (ordinance)
 - Garbage containers which are made available to members of the general public (ordinance)
 - Threshold of recyclables/compostables below 10% of the garbage container's contents (rule)

Reasons to Support this Ordinance?

1. Best means to improve Seattle's stalled recycling rate quickly. Compostables are the biggest remaining target
2. Not adopting it will delay the achievement of recycling goals by many years
3. Key way to control greenhouse gases
4. Strongly supported by Seattle residents
5. City has successful history implementing a very similar ordinance: the recycling requirement of the mid 2000s
6. Implementation challenges can be addressed via exemptions and a robust education/technical assistance program
7. Implementation funds *and disposal savings* are factored into SPU's proposed 2015 budget and adopted Strategic Business plan

Questions?