

# BUSINESS COMPOSTING CASE STUDY

## Pi Beta Phi Sorority House – Winter 2016

Austin, Texas



*“We thought getting people on board would be very difficult, but they realized how easy composting is and are doing a terrific job!”*

- Vicki Copeland, House Director, Pi Beta Phi

### **PI BETA PHI HOUSE – Business Overview:**

- University of Texas Panhellenic Sorority
- Houses 70 ladies
- Serves on average 1,000 meals weekly
- Commercial kitchen with 4 staff

### COMPOSTING HIGHLIGHTS:

- » Decreased weekly landfill trash capacity by 67%
- » Doubled recycling capacity
- » Added composting services
- » Cost savings over \$1,400 yearly
- » Flexible diversion services during move-in/out
- » Spurred nearby houses to start composting
- » Created a Green Team to educate members and reward good diversion behavior

**Challenges.** The UT-Austin West Campus sorority house faced multiple obstacles implementing recycling and composting. Challenges included increasing participation, educating new residents and getting effective programs in place.

**Solutions.** Pi Beta Phi applied for the Zero Waste Business Rebate and received an onsite assessment from Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) staff. The House Director implemented most suggestions that staff provided. Some of the most impactful solutions include:

- Adding compost collection services
- Reducing trash collection services
- Replacing Styrofoam to-go containers with compostable products
- In-room recycling containers for residents

**Success Factors.** Participation for the recycling and composting program increased given several efforts across the house, including:

- Paired containers and accompanying signs.
- Color coordinated bins for trash (black), recycling (blue) and compost (green)
- Composting training for staff and house members from compost hauler
- Green Team created to provide weekly education at meetings and reward sorority members for outstanding recycling behavior. The Team also uses material from [Austin Creative Reuse](#) for signs.

**Results.** Pi Beta Phi used a phased approach to update their waste programs:

- Cut trash services and cost in half after realizing how empty containers were when picked up
- Reduced trash services more after increasing recycling and adding composting
- Lowered trash service capacity by 67% in 7 months overall
- Saving over \$1,400 annually – that is a 12% cost savings!
- Kitchen staff on board with the composting program after proper training
- Sorority members receptive to composting and new Green Team

**Looking Forward.** Pi Beta Phi is leading the way for the University of Texas' Greek community. They now provide advice to other houses interested in starting or improving their diversion programs. The sorority hopes to work with the neighboring houses to share services, and possibly increase recycling capacity. They also plan to work with their waste hauler to reduce collection services during winter and summer breaks to lower costs.

### BUSINESS PROFILE

**Type of Business** » Sorority house  
**Neighborhood** » West Campus  
**Zip Code** » 78705  
**Building** » 27 units, 66 occupants  
**New to recycling?** » No  
**Started composting** » 2016

### AUSTIN RESOURCE RECOVERY

**Austin Resource Recovery's Business Outreach Team** offers free consulting services to help businesses reduce waste, recycle materials and comply with Austin's Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO).

Please contact us at:

**Phone** » (512) 974-9727

**E-mail** »

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Paired containers in hallway with signs and labels.



Reminder to compost paper towels in the bathroom.