



Subject: Universal Recycling Ordinance Phase 2 – Administrative Rules Development
#4 Stakeholder Group Meeting – Grocery

Date: September 9, 2013 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Location: One Texas Center, Room 325; 505 Barton Springs Road; Austin, TX 78704

Introduction

Austin Resource Recovery held a stakeholder meeting intended for grocery stores to discuss the Universal Recycling Ordinance. The purpose of this meeting was to educate stakeholders about the ordinance, to learn about recycling and organics diversion in the grocery industry. The goal was to gather information necessary to develop a set of recommended amendments to the Universal Recycling Ordinance Administrative Rules.

Stakeholders were provided with information on Austin Resource Recovery's Strategic Initiatives' planning and business outreach teams. Stakeholders then introduced themselves. Staff walked meeting participants through the meeting agenda and transitioned to the education component of the discussion.

Part One – Staff presentation on URO and Administrative Rules

Staff made a presentation to stakeholders on the City's Zero Waste goals, the Universal Recycling Ordinance, the relationship between the URO and ARR's Administrative Rules and the process to amend the Administrative Rules. Staff clarified basic questions in regards to the presentation.

Part Two – URO Phase 2 Information Exchange and Facilitated Discussion

Staff outlined the facilitated discussion portion of the meeting and described the questions they would be asking.

Existing Grocery Recycling Programs

Fiesta Mart has two stores within Austin city limits, both with square footages over 50,000 square feet. Fiesta Mart currently:

- Bales and sells cardboard for recycling
- Initiated established plastic bag recycling stations for customers
- Estimates that the primary materials in their waste stream are plastic containers for produce and wax boxes for meat shipping
- Recycles cooking oil grease from the kitchen

Fiesta Mart does not currently measure and track their recycling.

H.E.B. estimates they have 29 or 30 stores within Austin (H.E.B. and Central Market). H.E.B. currently:

- backhauls all recyclable cardboard, plastics, paper, grease, pharmacy bottles, and metals to San Antonio as part of their delivery schedule
- donates to local food banks and works with a local hauler to compost
- does not recycle glass due to safety concerns and limited market
- runs pilots to increase sustainable efforts
- tracks all recycling by company and not individual store





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Whole Foods currently:

- backhauls recyclables to a distribution center in Austin
- recycles cardboard, metals, plastics, paper, cork, and cardboard
- does not backhaul glass for recycling due to safety concerns
- achieves around 97% diversion at the distribution center
- educates new team members through orientation, team meetings and emails

Whole Foods conducted weekly waste audits when the program was implemented and shared the results with the team members in staff meetings. Photographs were taken of the waste assessments as part of the audit. Whole Foods tracks all recycling by company and not individual store. Many individual stores have local recycling programs that are tracked individually for items such as ink cartridges. The 3% of the remaining waste material is estimated to be contaminated plastic.

Lonestar has 6 Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) stores under 5,000 square feet in size. Lonestar currently:

- pays for a recycling dumpster at each of their locations
- has one location in which they worked out an agreement with neighboring store in which they pay for use of the trailer
- Send all produce to the local warehouse and farmers come by and pick up
- Recycles all plastics
- Pays approximately \$100 a month for cardboard dumpsters and has found that vendors will pay for paper and not cardboard.
- Estimates they produce one small bag of trash per day per store
- Does not currently measure or track their recycling

Grocery Recycling Program Concerns

- Material storage space, as backhouse space in grocery stores is limited.
- Recycling glass due to safety issues for workers.
- Un-rinsed containers attracting pests. Some facilities have had to increase pest control services as a result.
- Recycling of packaged foods, for example strawberries are delivered in plastic, but it takes man power to open up packaging. This affects the labor costs.
- Cost of equipment.





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- Multiple grocers have utilized Craigslist to find a market for items they could not recycle such as bubble wrap with foil backing.

Existing Grocery Organics Diversion Programs

Stakeholder asked for clarification between the Texas Manufactures Food Services Permit and the CoA/Travis County Food Permit. ARR staff will work in conjunction with Health Department to clarify section 10.3.61 of the City code. *Code section 10.3.61 provided below.*

§ 10-3-61 PERMIT REQUIRED.

- (A) Except as provided in Subsection (C), a person must hold a permit issued by the health authority to operate a food enterprise.
- (B) A person must hold a permit issued by the health authority to operate a group residence:
 - (1) with six or more residents when food is provided to the residents; or
 - (2) with 25 or more residents, when all food is not bought and prepared by the residents.
- (C) A vending machine that only dispenses non- potentially hazardous food does not require a permit.
- (D) A person must comply with the requirements of this chapter to receive or retain a permit.
- (E) A permit issued under this chapter is not transferable.

Source: Ord. 20051201-013; Ord. 20080925-028.

H.E.B currently:

- contracts to compost with a local hauler
- donates food to local food banks within the Austin area
- estimates they donated 26 million pounds of food in 2012
- partners with local food banks to determine what is eligible for donation and what will need to be composted
- H.E.B. typically has organics picked up by a hauler two or three times a week. The hauler weighs the bins to measure and track.

Whole Foods hauls most compost back to a distribution centers, though some individual stores handle their own composting. The store in Bee Caves works with local pig farmers to haul compostable material. Approximately thirty Whole Foods stores send their compost to the distribution center. Individual stores collect the compost in watermelon bins or pumpkins boxes. All of material gets compacted and taken out and composted by Whole Foods. Lonestar Market currents works with local farmers to pick up compostable material from their warehouse.





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Fiesta Mart does currently not have an organics composting program. Fiesta Mart sends non-perishable products to the reclamation center in Houston. The Grocery Supplies Division then reviews the products and determines food bank donations.

Future Organics Diversion at Grocery Stores

- Stakeholders:
 - have concerns over infrastructure being in place to meet their diversion needs when the URO goes into effect for them.
 - had questions about Food Banks and their procedures for dealing with spoiled food.
 - recommended that *composting* be referred to as *organics diversion*.
 - felt that keeping pests away from the compost should be a minimum standard.
 - would like to see increased City involvement with smaller businesses to aide in their composting development.
 - supported the idea of landscaping and grass clippings being part of the diversion plan. Many stakeholders had separate contacts with landscapers. Measuring this diversion weight or volume would need to be calculated thru the landscapers.
- The volume and frequency of hauler pickup had to be greatly increased at the Mueller H.E.B. to keep up with the increased diversion rates. The Mueller H.E.B. provides composting at the in-store Café. Compostable service ware, organic meat trays, packaging, and produce are composted at the store.
- Some grocery stores were storing material in a walk in freezer or cooler due to low frequency of pick up. Stakeholders shared thoughts on *at what point does the material become waste?*
- Composting onsite is covered in the health codes and should not be defined in the URO.
- State law requires waste containing any putrescible materials to be collected once per week.
- Staff will research City Code as it pertains to farmers and pig ranchers being identified as licensed composting facilities.

Conclusion

Staff called the meeting to close by reviewing next steps, staff contact information and announcing upcoming stakeholder input opportunities.

