

City of Austin Parks & Recreation Department

Zero Waste Events Guide

Goal: PARD's stated mission is to "inspire Austin to learn, play, protect, and connect by creating diverse programs and experiences in sustainable natural spaces and public places." One of the seven adopted values is "Sustainability", with the description "We work to improve environmental and recreational functions and improve the connection between people and the environment." As PARD employees, we have the opportunity to model internally what we'd like to see our park users doing—which means recycling and composting at our own events. We plan for sustainable events by reducing waste before, during, and after the event. We keep material out of the landfill wherever possible and offer recycling and composting options with clear labels for event attendees.



Guidelines:

- 1) Provide Receptacles/Containers:** Provide the same capacity for recycling as landfill trash (1:1 ratio). Photo below shows Recycling Only and Trash Only bins at Asian American Resource Center event – contact Sonia Freeland to borrow. If the event is one where food will be served provide temporary composting receptacles, either pop-up X-frames with liner bags, composting bins with liner bags, or green carts from Austin Resource Recovery.



- 2) **Clear Signage:** Use clear signage if using non-labelled bins, with English and Spanish language. Use Austin Resource Recovery’s Signmaker tool to make custom Recycle, Compost and Landfill signs showing which specific items go in which bin:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/signmaker>



- 3) **Pre-Event Messaging:** Communicate ahead of time to attendees that this is a Zero Waste event. Encourage attendees to bring reusable cups and cutlery (if possible) and be mindful of where they place their waste.



- 4) **Reduce Contamination:** Contamination of recycling or compost by other materials is a major issue for large events – one plate of cake can result in an entire bag of recycling getting

thrown into landfill trash. Consider recruiting volunteers or staff to stand near the recycling and composting containers to ensure there is no contamination.

- 5) Plan for Disposal: Plan for additional waste hauler/recycling hauler/compost hauler, particularly if there will be more waste generated than typical for your site.
- Recycling Diversion: Discuss options with PARD Recycling Program Manager or request additional Operations and Maintenance assistance.
 - Organics Diversion: See PARD Organics Diversion Guidelines for comprehensive information on food donation, food for animals, and composting.
 - i. Staff or volunteers can take compost to Organics By Gosh or nearby community garden (note some community gardens cannot accept meat)
 - ii. Austin Resource Recovery can deliver green carts for compost (for a fee)

- 6) Follow [Austin Resource Recovery Guidelines](#), shown below:

Before the Event

- Check with your event venue about on-site recycling and waste management.
- Plan for the types of waste your event may generate.
- Talk with vendors about how to meet the ordinance requirements.
- Arrange for services from a [licensed private hauler](#).
- Make sure your landfill trash and recycling dumpsters are large enough for your event.
- Find free reuse and recycling solutions through the [Austin Materials Marketplace](#).
- Use different colored bags in collection areas (clear for recycling, black for trash, green for compost).
- Coordinate with [Keep Austin Beautiful](#) for event clean-ups or free recycling bins.
- Create [signs](#) for your collection bins.
- Consider [donating](#) extra food.

During the Event

- Announce recycling and/or compost bin locations.
- Train volunteers show attendees how to properly discard waste.
- Empty dumpsters and bins throughout the event, as needed.

After the Event

- Ensure dumpsters are picked up on schedule.
- Submit proof of services to Austin Resource Recovery.
- Review your waste reduction and diversion efforts with Austin Resource Recovery and discuss goals for your next event.

Additional Resources

- Austin Resource Recovery - <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/zero-waste-events>
Austin Resource Recovery Zero Waste Event Rebate of \$750