

## **Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council**

### **Municipal and Neighborhood Composting Policy Recommendations**

#### **Composting Definition**

Composting is the decomposition of organic materials achieved through a proper balance of soil organisms, water, heat, and oxygen. There are many types of composting, with the most common forms being backyard composting, vermicomposting (using tropical red worms for material breakdown), aerated windrow composting (commercial scale), aerated static pile composting, and in-vessel composting.

#### **Benefits of Composting**

Composting operations provide green job opportunities while reducing pressure on landfills, modernizing the waste sector, mitigating climate change, and producing a high-quality soil amendment. Compost can be used at construction sites to prevent soil runoff, reduce hillside erosion, and enhance the re-growth of denuded landscape. Backyard and community composting decentralizes the waste stream, builds community assets, and engages residents in local sustainability initiatives. Composting saves energy and reduces pollution associated with our dependence on petro-chemical fertilizers. Encouraging backyard and small community composting sites reduces organic waste being collected and sent to the landfill, reducing landfill tipping fees and associated fuel costs. Compost application increases cover crop re-vegetation, reduces soil loss in road embankments, and acts as an effective bio-filter for reducing pesticide contamination spills in water. Compost can be used in storm water infrastructure projects to increase water infiltration and retention can be used in bioremediation projects to clean contaminated sites. Finally, compost can reinvigorate degraded urban soils, improving resident's ability to grow gardens and increasing the productivity of community gardens and urban agriculture.

#### **Composting Program Challenges**

There are several barriers to creating and operating successful composting programs. First, improper maintenance of a composting site can lead to nuisance issues of odor, run off, pests, and poor aesthetics. Properly maintained composting sites reduce or eliminate these nuisances. Second, we must work with existing governmental regulations from municipal Health Departments and State Environmental Protection Agencies to meet their requirements. Third, for commercial scale composting, existing collection and transportation infrastructure would need to adapt to include composting as an outlet. These challenges are related to economic incentives including funding streams, tipping fees, and existing low cost waste disposal options, as well as poor management practices. These challenges are not as prevalent for community and backyard composting operations. Finally, there is low market demand for finished compost products. Many of these issues can be solved with proper education about composting benefits and best practices.

#### **Best Practices:**

- [Ohio EPA Guidelines](#)
- [San Francisco Mandatory Composting Ordinance](#)
- [Best Management Practices in Food Scraps Programs – US EPA Report](#)

## **Recommendations:**

1. The Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council (GCRFPC) supports legislation, ordinances, and policies that promote the adoption of composting programs as strategies to save resources and money, generate green jobs, reduce waste sent to landfills, decrease environmental degradation, and restore soil health in urban areas.

2. The GCRFPC supports the development of commercial, community-based, and backyard composting programs and businesses.

The GCRFPC supports the rights of all residences and communities to have access to composting operations (in their backyard, neighborhood, and region, that provide drop off and/or processing locations for organic materials).

The GCRFPC supports community level composting programs that provide opportunities for local businesses to develop partnerships with farms, restaurants, community gardens, and other food related venture.

3. The GCRFPC supports composting best practices that eliminate or substantially reduce issues with rodents, odors, contaminants, and storm water runoff.

5. The GCRFPC supports the collaboration between governments, businesses, institutions, non-profits, and community residents for developing composting programs and infrastructure.

Government involvement and private sector investment is key to infrastructure creation, as these actors have the power to establish mandates, set regulations, and funnel investment dollars that create market demand for composting infrastructure. Encouraging composting infrastructure also shapes public behavior because it facilitates the transition to a new and unfamiliar method of waste disposal.

6. The GCRFPC supports waste policies and regulations that incentivize the adoption of composting practices as part of larger zero waste strategies, which reduce our dependence on incinerators and landfills.

7. The GCRFPC supports composting education that highlights the benefits and best practices.

8. The GCRFPC supports all viable use of finished compost production across sectors.