



CITY OF SHORELINE BUSINESS WASTE REDUCTION OUTREACH FINAL REPORT

March 2020

Overview

The City of Shoreline contracted with Cascadia Consulting Group to provide onsite outreach and engagement with local food service businesses from September 2019 - March 2020. The main goals of the outreach were to better understand current waste behaviors, identify in-language support needs, introduce the City of Shoreline's green business programs, and provide free resources to increase recycling and composting. The Cascadia team conducted surveys around composting and straw use, provided free onsite waste assessments and summary reports with recommendations, and provided support to complete the [EnviroStars Green Business Program](#) application onsite. Through this outreach and technical assistance, Cascadia helped food service businesses reduce straw use and sign the Skip the Straw Pledge, implement best practices to reduce waste and increase diversion to recycling and composting programs, and receive recognition for sustainable practices through the EnviroStars program.



Business Success Story Smokin' Pete's BBQ

The Cascadia team first met with Smokin' Pete's BBQ during initial survey visits. The owner of Smokin' Pete's BBQ, Julie, was excited to learn of the programs the City of Shoreline is offering for food service businesses. The Shoreline outreach team set up an appointment with Smokin' Pete's BBQ to fill out their EnviroStars application. The outreach team conducted a walkthrough of the business to assess current waste operations, offer additional resources, and complete the EnviroStars checklist application.

The Cascadia team provided ongoing assistance after Smokin' Pete's BBQ was recognized through EnviroStars by connecting them with Seattle City Light Energy Advisors to discuss rebates for a new water heater, and custom rebates through King County for durable dishware at catering events, which is one of their largest sources of garbage. Additionally, the Cascadia team worked with the restaurant's property manager to make recommendations around composting services for the entire building.

Outreach Strategy

The City set an outreach goal to visit a minimum of 75 restaurants to conduct composting and straw use surveys, perform 25 onsite waste assessments, and conduct 20 follow up visits with businesses interested in EnviroStars. Cascadia and the City of Shoreline teams worked together to develop a business survey to better understand their barriers and opportunities to implement sustainable actions. During the initial outreach visit, all businesses were given a two-page flyer, *Green Tips for Businesses*, with sustainable best practices for businesses and free resources available through the City of Shoreline to help implement sustainable actions.

Outreach staff introduced businesses to the City of Shoreline's *Skip the Straw Pledge*, the opportunity for a free waste assessment, and the EnviroStars program. The outreach team asked businesses for language preferences and if the business preferred to receive information in a language other than English for future communications from the City. Outreach staff supplied printed EnviroStars checklists and walked through the business and the EnviroStars checklist to help interested businesses complete the checklist.

The outreach team conducted initial visits to businesses between September and November, and follow up visits during December, January, and February to promote the EnviroStars, straw pledge, and waste assessment programs.

Program by the Numbers

The goal for the outreach was to conduct "complete" site visits for at least 75 businesses. A "complete" site visit included administering the survey, providing EnviroStars outreach, promoting the straw pledge, and offering a free on-site waste assessment. In addition to the "complete" site visits, the goal was to complete 20 waste assessments and follow up with 20 businesses to help them complete the EnviroStars checklist. Details on progress towards outreach goals are shown in the tables below. **For a detailed list of all businesses visited and information on all site visits, please visit the tracking form [here](#).**

In total, outreach staff completed 187 visits to 106 unique businesses. Of the businesses visited, 94 businesses participated in the survey and further engaged with available resources such as free waste assessments, the Straw Pledge, and EnviroStars Green Business Program.

Note: There were an additional five waste audits scheduled in March 2020 that had to be cancelled to reduce exposure to COVID-19.

| | # of businesses |
|---|-----------------|
|  Unique Businesses Visited | 106 |
|  Total visits | 187 |
| <i>Complete</i> | 106 |
| <i>Incomplete</i> | 0 |
|  Surveys Completed | 94 |
| Waste Assessments | 20 |
|  Straw Pledges Submitted | 11 |
|  EnviroStars registered | 8 |
| EnviroStars recognized | 4 |
|  EnviroStars follow-up calls and emails | 64 |
|  Pieces of collateral delivered | 210 |

| Language Preference | # of businesses |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| English | 83 |
| Spanish | 6 |
| Cantonese | 4 |
| Mandarin | 3 |
| Korean | 6 |
| Vietnamese | 3 |
| Hindi | 1 |

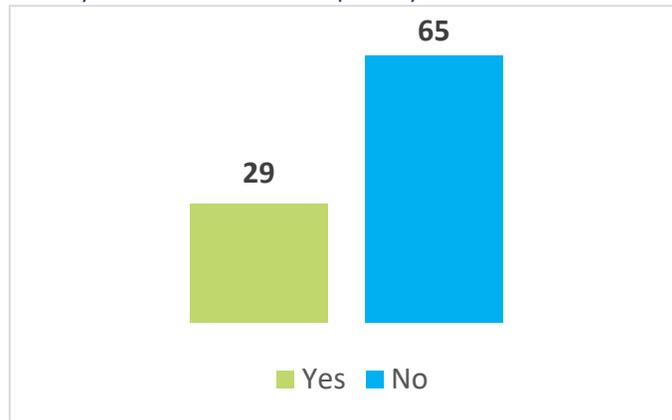
Survey Results

The Cascadia team administered a survey during outreach visits to understand barriers and opportunities for businesses to implement sustainable actions. The survey questions are listed below.

- Do you currently collect food scraps at your business for composting?
- Do you currently use compostable plates, utensils, cups, to-go containers, etc. at your business?
- Do you currently serve food in-house on disposable or reusable plates, etc.?
- Do you offer customers plastic straws on default?

The survey was administered at 94 businesses who were willing to participate. 12 businesses did not participate in the survey due to lack of time or unwillingness. Not all businesses responded to all survey questions due to a lack of knowledge of the employee present or an unwillingness to provide information. Responses to the questions are shown below.

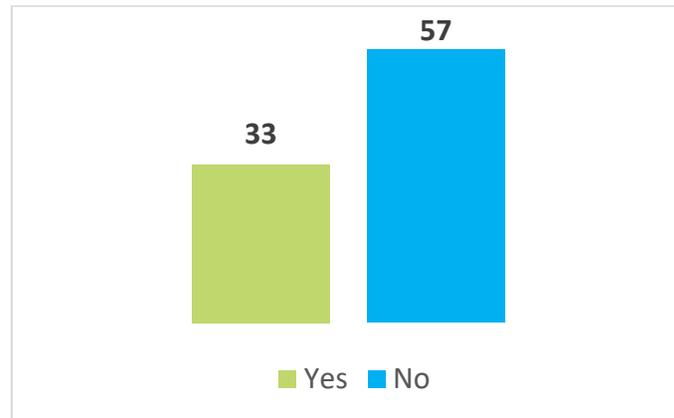
Do you currently collect food scraps at your business for composting?



Findings

- 29 businesses self-reported that they are currently composting.
 - 8 businesses reported their values around sustainability as the driver behind adding compost service.
 - 5 businesses noted that policies by the company or property manager were the driver behind adding compost service.
- 65 businesses are not currently composting.
 - 10 of those businesses said that they do not compost since it is not required by the City of Shoreline.
 - 7 businesses said that the cost to add compost service is prohibitive.
 - Additional costs included the time and work required to set up composting, staff training, and additional time for staff to sort food into the compost.
 - 5 businesses were unaware of the opportunity to add compost collection and cited that as a barrier to adding the service.
 - 5 businesses that are not currently composting said they would like to add compost, and that their property manager manages the waste collection services for the building and has been unwilling to add it. Cascadia staff provided technical assistance to make recommendations around compost adoption at these businesses.
 - Primary barriers were lack of power to make the decision to add compost either from the Property Manager or Owner.

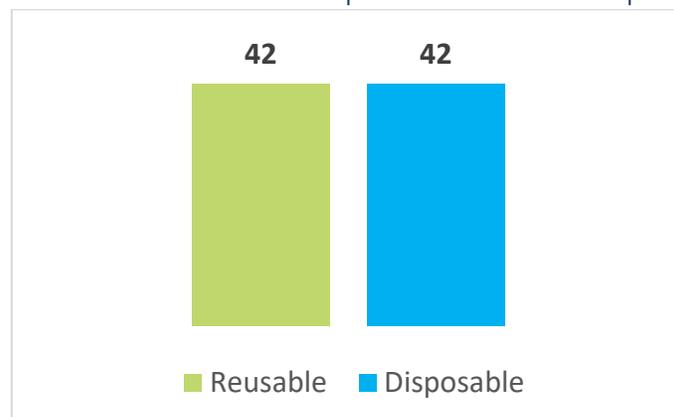
Do you currently use compostable plates, utensils, cups, to-go containers, etc. at your business?



Findings

- 33 businesses currently use compostable packaging. Businesses that use compostable packaging cited numerous reasons for doing so:
 - 4 businesses reported values around sustainability as a driver behind switching packaging.
 - 4 have company policies that require compostable packaging.
 - 2 businesses said that customers demanded they switch from Styrofoam to a more sustainable alternative.
 - 10 businesses noted that they use some compostable packaging, such as paper wraps or bags.
- 57 businesses are not currently using compostable packaging.
 - 13 businesses cited cost as the main barrier to using compostable packaging.
 - 8 businesses mentioned that they have not adopted compostable packaging since it is not required by the City of Shoreline.

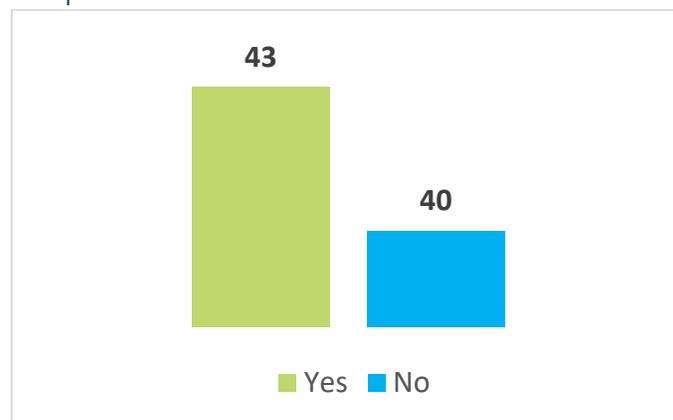
Do you currently serve food in-house on disposable or reusable plates, etc.?



Findings

- 42 businesses use reusable food packaging and serveware to serve food in-house.
 - All of these businesses are sit-down restaurants or offer the choice to sit down. They cited that it is more economical to reuse plates, cutlery, and other food serveware than to use disposable items.
- 42 businesses use disposable food packaging and serveware to serve food in-house.
 - All of these businesses were quick-serve restaurants where their primary business operations are take-out. These businesses stated that it is a company policy to use all disposable items.

Do you offer customers plastic straws on default?



Findings

- 43 businesses currently offer plastic straws on default. This includes businesses who have straws directly accessible to customers.
 - The businesses that offer plastic straws on default are quick-serve restaurants, where all packaging is disposable and plastic straws are directly accessible to customers.
 - One business expressed concern over enacting policies to not offer straws on default because they have many staff who speak English as a second language and have concerns over initiating conversations with customers on why they do not offer straws.
- 40 businesses do not offer plastic straws on default.
 - 3 businesses who do not offer plastic straws on default use compostable straws.
 - 10 businesses have a policy of only providing straws when customers request them. These businesses enacted these policies due to values around sustainability and company policies.
 - 6 businesses said they do not offer straws at all because they do not serve drinks that require them.

Waste Assessments

Outreach staff identified 36 businesses as priorities for a waste assessment visit. Outreach staff were able to complete 15 visual waste assessments for businesses by inspecting outside dumpsters and inside bins. Following each waste assessment, businesses received an individualized report detailing findings and recommendations for waste service levels. *Note: an additional 5 waste assessments were scheduled but canceled due to COVID-19.*

Common recommendations included:

- Increasing recycling bin capacity to match garbage levels (a free service offered by Recology)
- Adding compost service
- Enrolling in cooking oil recycling programs
- Keeping recyclables clean
- Providing staff education to ensure proper sorting of material

Success Stories

Outreach staff were able to successfully engage with many businesses, share knowledge and resources, and enroll businesses in the Green Business Programs offered by the City.

Skip the Straw Pledge

- Shake N Go
- Black Pearl
- Monka Brewing Co.
- Patty Pan Cooperative
- Le's Pho Thai
- Jersey's
- Smokin' Pete's BBQ
- Wake N Bacon BBQ
- Ridgecrest Public House
- Suni's Pizza & Burgers
- Spiro's Pizza and Pasta

Recognized EnviroStars

- Smokin' Pete's BBQ
- Black Pearl
- Ridgecrest Public House
- Pagliacci - Ballinger

Successful Strategies and Recommendations

The Cascadia outreach team conducted 187 onsite visits to 106 businesses. Through these visits, we identified the following strategies and recommendations for successful engagement.

- **Plan for multiple visits.** Businesses often need more than one site visit to build a meaningful relationship, answer survey questions, and complete actions around waste reduction and sustainability.
- **Get owner or manager contact information during the first visit.** It is important to get the manager or owner's email information so you can follow up after employees express initial interest when an owner or manager is not present. Information does not always get passed on from employees to decision-makers.
- **Avoid scheduling outreach during peak times for businesses.** As anticipated, foodservice businesses were much less responsive from mid-November through December, as it is their busiest season.
- **Provide in-language assistance.** Outreach staff offered onsite, in-language support in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Korean. Providing information in-language for all program materials helps reduce barriers and ensures that programs are equitable.
- **Provide a general infographic on the potential financial savings for adding composting service.** For small businesses, it is key to highlight the cost savings that can be realized through right-sizing garbage, recycling, and compost service levels. Conducting a quick visual inspection of current garbage contents and sharing a visual summary of composition helped business owners conceptualize the amount of their garbage that could be diverted to recycling and compost. See this [example](#) from Recology.



Business Success Story Le's Pho Thai

The outreach team conducted an initial visit to Le's Pho Thai and spoke with the owner, Anne, about their current waste services. Le's Pho Thai recently switched from Styrofoam to plastic take-out containers based on customer feedback. Anne believes it is the right thing to do, but the switch was costly. Currently, Le's Pho Thai offers durables for in-house dining and signed onto the Skip the Straw Pledge. Le's Pho Thai expressed willingness to implement more green actions if they were required by the City.

Outreach staff then conducted a follow-up visit and on-site waste assessment. The outreach team sent Le's Pho Thai a Waste Assessment Report outlining recommendations for their current waste services, including adding compost service and the associated potential financial savings. The team found that the garbage stream was largely made up of food scraps. The team provided staff education to ensure all recyclables are clean, empty, and dry while also communicating the potential to realize cost savings from diverting food scraps to the compost stream and eventually downsizing the garbage dumpster.

- **Create a list of pre-approved compostable take-out containers and straws.** Provide a list of pre-approved options available at local food service supply stores or online for restaurants to make it easier for those who are considering switching to compostable packaging.

In addition to the recommended strategies for successful engagement, the Cascadia team recommends the following potential policy and programmatic actions based on interviews and feedback from businesses.

- **Encourage community-wide waste prevention programs.** A common barrier to adding compost service and switching to compostable packaging is the cost associated with these services. Programs like the *Skip the Straw* Pledge encourage businesses to use fewer disposable products and result in cost savings. Similar recognition programs could be introduced for both businesses and residents to encourage the use of reusable food service packaging, serviceware, and bags.
- **Deepen resident knowledge of the City's Green Businesses.** Many businesses cited customer feedback as a motivator for switching to more sustainable products or practices. Expanding Shoreline residents' knowledge of sustainable businesses and their actions in their community could help increase the number of residents who request sustainable action directly from their business community. Additional resident awareness and recognition of businesses participating in sustainable actions in their community will help to support those businesses as well as encourage other businesses to participate in green business programs.
- **Consider expanding commercial compost programs and incentives.** Most businesses who are not currently composting said they would not do so unless required. Currently, the costs to add compost service are prohibitive for many small food service businesses. In order to ensure equitable service, consider ways to offset the costs by offering different service levels or providing additional financial incentives.
- **Provide additional education on what is compostable and what is not.** Businesses expressed confusion around what is compostable, often not realizing that majority of what ends in their garbage is able to be composted. There was additional confusion around using compostable packing equating to composting.
- **Implement City policies requiring compost service and/or compostable serviceware.** Businesses did not seem opposed to adding compost service and/or serviceware but were unwilling to bear the initial cost if it was not required. Businesses expressed that if all were required to incur the costs associated with compost service and/or serviceware, that it would spread the price increase across all food service businesses so customers would be used to the additional fees incurred.

Report prepared by Cascadia Consulting Group.