

Pennsylvania Resources Council

**Response to
City of Philadelphia**

**Office of Clean & Green Initiatives, Sanitation Department, and Office of Sustainability
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

1. General Information		
1.1	Organization Name	Pennsylvania Resources Council
1.2	Street Address	1521 N. Providence Road
1.3	City, State, Zip	Media, PA 19063
1.4	Primary Business	Waste reduction and diversion
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2. Proposal Introduction

Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC), founded in 1939, is one of Pennsylvania's oldest nonprofit environmental organizations. Since our founding we have worked to protect the interests of Pennsylvania's residents by stewarding our commonly held resources. From combatting billboard proliferation in our earliest years to providing critical waste diversion opportunities today, we have sought to find practical solutions to often complex problems. With 12 full-time and four part-time employees, PRC manages a diverse portfolio of programs ranging from litter prevention, waste reduction and diversion, watershed protection, and environmental education, to the development of regional food waste composting initiatives. As a mission driven organization, we are free of the conflicts of interest common in the waste diversion industry and have found great success as a result.

PRC today is home to several innovative programs. Our professional team is regarded as a thought leader in the waste sector. We have cultivated well regarded specialties in a variety of waste sectors including hazardous waste, e-waste, container glass, municipal and commercial recycling, special events and waste minimization and avoidance. These program areas range from delivering direct services to residential consumers up to the provision of Zero Waste consulting services to municipal and commercial clients.

Our team members have extensive experience managing food waste across different sectors, including residential, business, and one-day events. PRC's Zero Waste Events Program works with and trains

vendors, identifies green purchasing opportunities, coordinates day-of-event strategies, conducts behind-the-scenes material sorting, and provides event data analysis to recommend improvements to event reduction and diversion in the future. Our education and outreach programming includes k12 education, online webinars, in-person workshops, guides for residents, businesses, and governments alike on waste reduction and diversion, recycling, watershed protection, how to compost and what is compostable. PRC's technical assistance, including our waste audit programming, provides support to local governments and businesses to design and implement waste reduction and diversion systems, food waste collection systems, and glass collection systems. We are skilled at conveying information clearly, concisely, and accurately. PRC excels at writing reports and summarizing data for organizations to use and share easily.

PRC has more than 20 years of experience conducting household hazardous waste (HHW), hard to recycle (HTR), and e-waste collections, and has operated a source separated glass recycling network since 2019. Our HHW events have collected more than 7.4 million lbs. of household chemicals, serving 68,000+ households. Our HTR and e-waste events have collected 4.3 million lbs. of hard-to-recycle materials, serving 52,000+ households. Our glass recycling network now serves 50,000 households per year and has collected more than 8 million pounds of glass, 98% of which has been recycled and returned to regional shelves as products. We currently conduct all of Allegheny County's and the City of Pittsburgh's HHW, HTR, and e-waste event. We also operate Pennsylvania DEP's Recycling Hotline.

PRC Current Programs

- Zero Waste Event services and rentals
- Zero Waste technical assistance and waste auditing
- City of Pittsburgh curbside compost pilot implementation agent
- Household hazardous waste collections
- E-waste and hard to recycle collections
- Source separated container glass recycling network (traveling glass bin and permanent drop-off sites)
- PA DEP Recycling Hotline
- Adult education workshops: waste reduction and recycling, food waste reduction, composting, and watershed awareness and rain barrel
- Community recycling and waste minimization education
- In-school programs on resource conservation, waste minimization, recycling, watershed awareness and protection, and food waste reduction, and composting

3.3.3 General Information on Zero Waste Strategies

Create as many opportunities for source separated recycling as possible. In PRC's ideal world, the City would convert to source separated curbside recycling. Practically, we understand that, for several reasons, the City is committed to single stream recycling. Nonetheless, the City has the opportunity to create source separated options for residents. There are multiple ways to establish these opportunities – which would co-exist with the single stream system. If the City would consider building such services, PRC would be happy to help with planning, education, and execution.

Source separated recycling substantially increases the proportion of waste that is recycled¹ -- rather than collected in recycling bins, hauled to material recovery facilities, and then hauled to landfills and incinerators.

To use glass as an example, according to an analysis published in *Chemical and Engineering News*, 40% of glass from single stream collection is recycled into new products, compared with 90% of glass from source separated collections (Jacoby, 2019). PRC's own practice yields even stronger results. **Ninety-eight percent of the glass we collect in our glass only bins is recycled into new products.** Meanwhile, much of the glass collected for recycling in Pennsylvania is used as alternative daily cover in landfills and not recycled at all.

For context, PRC launched source separated glass recycling in 2019. What began as a series of pop-up events is now a network of 15 permanent and 20 "traveling" glass bins that serve 50,000+ households per year and have collected more than 8 million lbs. of glass. Traveling glass bins are one-week to one-month+ placements where bins are placed, collected, emptied at a consolidation point, and moved to a new location at the end of the engagement. PRC works with regional haulers and glass processors. We facilitate the deployment of bins, from setting up sites, to creating signage, to intensive resident education, to scheduling.

Along with establishing systems, multi-channel education is core to the success of any recycling effort. Establishing source separated recycling would present a new opportunity to draw attention to recycling and educate residents.

Zero Waste Events. Traditional events produce countless tons of waste every year. Road races, festivals, fairs, celebrations and gatherings of all kinds create a pound+ of waste per person. Most of that waste winds up in landfills or incinerators.

Events do not need to happen this way. It is possible to conduct events that produce far less waste, and to implement systems that divert up to 90% of the waste that is produced to recovery and reuse, compost, and recycling – minimizing waste to landfill and incineration.

The City has an opportunity to take an aggressive Zero Waste approach to its many excellent events.

PRC has a great deal of success managing Zero Waste events, dramatically reducing and optimally diverting waste, and has seen the impact firsthand.

PRC has provided comprehensive waste diversion services to special events for 16 years. Since 2009, PRC's Zero Waste program has provided event waste management services towards a Zero Waste goal to hundreds of events of all sizes and scopes. All events that work with PRC achieve at least a 50% diversion rate from the landfill, with an average rate of 84% diversion.

At Zero Waste Events, PRC manages all aspects of the waste stream from landfill to recovery and reuse to recycling to composting. PRC staff work with event organizers as part of the event planning to ensure that as much material as possible will be diverted from landfill and incineration. This includes the collection and sorting of food waste and compostable serviceware. PRC educates food vendors at events on what types of serviceware are acceptable for composting and recycling and works with them to ensure any food scraps or excess food is collected and processed for composting.

On event day, PRC staff are present on site to collect event waste using PRC's inventory of x clearstreams as well as educational signage to guide attendees on what is recyclable and compostable. To ensure, however, that the compostable material does not become contaminated with non-compostable

materials, PRC staff sort through all the material collected. This ensures a clean stream of compostable materials for our downstream processor.

PRC compiles data on the amounts of material generated at the event, detailing how much was recycled, composted, or reused. PRC then provides recommendations to the event organizers based on this data on how they can reduce the amount of waste produced, and continue to improve their diversion rate, at future events.

Related strategies. PRC also has 25 years of experience conducting waste audits, assessing organizations' waste production, and helping them find ways to minimize the amount of waste they produce and optimally divert what they do produce. We provide composting technical assistance, for example, supporting Pittsburgh's curbside compost pilot, building a compost corridor that created a "compost co-op" among a group of small businesses, among many projects. For more than 20 years, PRC has educated the public about composting and food waste reduction, including comprehensive materials detailing how to compost at home, in schools, businesses, and events.