

# The City of Alexandria takes pilot to a new peak

A Composting Success Story



## Quick Summary:

- ➡ The City launched a curbside collection program in 2023
- ➡ Residents received free service during the pilot period
- ➡ After a successful pilot, the City now offers residents a subsidized service

## The Opportunity

In 2008, the City of Alexandria initiated a strategy to address climate change by promoting a greener economy and maintaining a high quality of life for its residents.

Just one year later, [Eco-City Alexandria](#) adopted and initiated the [Environmental Action Plan 2030 \(EAP\)](#), coinciding with its effort to decrease the City's carbon footprint. With a charter of over 50 goals, this roadmap guides and encourages the community and its leaders towards a more sustainable future. Managing waste more efficiently, improving waterways, building biker-friendly areas, achieving LEED Gold standard for buildings, and reducing air pollution are just a few of these goals. As of 2024, the City has fulfilled over 300 actions with positive results to follow.

Among various accolades, the City was notably recognized as a Certified Green Government by the Virginia Municipal League. It was also honored with a milestone award from ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability for completing a GHG Emissions

Inventory and Setting Sustainability Improvement Goals as a part of the Eco-City Alexandria initiative.

The charter not only mentions Solid Waste but recognizes that there is a hierarchy for disposing of it. EPA notes that the landfill is the final option for waste with the City taking the same motion to prioritize reducing, reusing, recycling and recovery waste before sending it to its local landfill. One effective option for recovery includes composting food waste into nutrient-rich soil.

Over 20,000 residents receive City recycling and trash services that are eligible for composting services with local food scrap haulers available to service the area.

## The Solution

The City of Alexandria launched a curbside food scrap collection program in 2023 after the USDA selected the City for its Composting and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreement. This federal funding allowed the City to offer residents six months of curbside service at no cost, which was later extended to a longer time period.

The City put out a request for proposals and selected Compost Crew as its vendor to provide the curbside service.

Free 7-gallon bins were delivered to hundreds of households equipped with BPI certified liners and a flyer that listed tips and points of contact. The City also provided a magnet to keep in the kitchen to help guide first-time composters on what does and does not belong in a compost bin.



In the first year, 1,112 residents registered for the program making the City one of the fastest growing municipal programs in Compost Crew history. This equated to over 230,000 pounds of food scraps collected to be made into compost. When the City reached capacity for its pilot, residents were still encouraged to register to be put on the waitlist until more spots opened up in 2024. Since then, small increments of registrars are steadily receiving their bins to begin service, maintaining a smooth expansion of service for the collection team.

The City sent out a questionnaire to hear directly from their residents whether this effort to compost could be a sustainable solution for the City’s food waste. 98% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the program with 93% indicating that Compost Crew’s service functioned consistently and met their expectations.

“As part of our Environmental Action Plan 2030, we’ve made real progress cutting down landfill waste, but we knew food waste was the next challenge. With strong community interest, active urban farmers, and a network of community gardens, the demand for nutrient-rich compost was clear. By removing cost barriers during the pilot phase, the City achieved strong adoption rates, building a compelling case for continuing with a subsidized model. The resulting program is a win for residents, the environment, and our local food system!”

- Flavio Goncalves, *Division Chief of Resource Recovery for the City of Alexandria*

## The Rollout

After a two-year successful pilot, the City announced it would move to a subsidized weekly service beginning in Summer 2025. Residents pay just \$5 per month, or \$55 per year, and the City covers the balance of the cost. Residents who currently receive City trash and recycling services can opt in to the Curbside Food Waste Composting program. Eligible households that sign up will be enrolled on a rolling basis until the maximum capacity of the program is reached.



The City of Alexandria’s official website has a [dedicated page](#) for the program where residents can register and refer to frequently asked questions. The do’s and don’ts flyer is available for download in multiple languages. Registration is also available at [compostcrew.com](https://compostcrew.com) where people can also log in to the Compost Crew customer portal.

## The Results

Since the start of the pilot, the City has diverted approximately 950,000 pounds of organic waste through curbside composting. Residents are offered complimentary compost on a yearly basis. Currently, nearly 1,500 households in the City are participating, which is approximately 8% of homes in the area. The City aims to expand the program to service more households that have yet to take advantage of this low-cost opportunity to reduce waste in their community that will contribute to the EAP 2030 goal for a greener community with reduced air pollution, cleaner waterways, and healthy green spaces. This percentage will continue to climb as households on the waitlist receive their bins and with the City’s continued education efforts. In addition, word-of-mouth from neighbors of great customer service and a growing awareness of the importance of composting encourage registration.

We look forward to the City’s [EAP 2040](#) that introduces steeper goals, like growing this program, to effectively continue this years-long effort to mitigate climate change.