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Assessing the Shelburne Falls Collaborative Composting Program

A Program Administered by:
Shelburne Falls Area Business Association
(SFABA)

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Context: Shelburne Falls/Buckland Central Business District



Greening Your Bottom Line



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Context: Bridge of Flowers, Eateries & Arts – An International Tourist Destination



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Sustainability Assessment Leads to Pilot Composting Program

- > Sustainability Assessment – Winter 2010
 - Comprehensive assessment of energy, waste and water systems for five local businesses
 - Reducing waste disposal costs emerged as high priority and attainable item for businesses

- > Pilot Composting Program – Summer 2010
 - Five participating food establishments
 - Two offices added early on

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

- > Program Assessment – Spring/Summer 2011
 - MA Dept. of Housing and Community Development funded, under Downtown Initiative Program Grant

- > Surveyed participating businesses including:
 - Two restaurants
 - Two cafes
 - One sweet shop
 - Two offices

Participating Businesses

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Participating Businesses

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Compostable Waste Dumpster

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Composting Facility

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

> Conducted Survey to Identify:

- Weekly trash volume
- Weekly compostable waste volume
- Components of the compostable waste
- Cost effectiveness
- Convenience
- Available times for training staff

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

> Survey to Determine if the Program is:

- Still supported by participating businesses
- Cost effective for businesses
- Likely to remain viable at current scale
- Expandable to include additional businesses
- In need of improvement and how

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

> Weekly Trash vs. Compostable Waste:

- Trash = 0.25 – 6 cubic yards per business
- Compostables average 2 cubic yards +/-
- Existing Dumpster holds 4 cubic yards
- Compostable waste to 2 tons +/-
- Program is diverting roughly 50% of solid waste produced by participating businesses on average
- Diverting up to 75% of solid waste per business
- Roughly 50% dumpster volume is paper waste

Compostable Waste Stream

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

> Cost Effectiveness:

- Monthly hauling fee for dumpster = \$140.00
- Most businesses have realized some disposal cost savings, up to 30% reduction annually
- Likely that business have saved more then survey results suggest
- Challenges to cost savings include:
 - » Pre-existing trash disposal contracts lack flexibility
 - » Trash disposal contract running with property owner not the business tenant

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

> Direct Participant Feedback -

Successes:

- Strong support to continue the program
- Support program expansion
- **Sense of pride**

Challenges and Areas for Improvement:

- Improve cost effectiveness
- Illegal dumping and lock vandalism/misuse
- Pests/Nuisance odors/Clean-up
- Dumpster access during winter months
- Recognition of program participants and overall marketing of program

Program Challenges

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

> Survey to Determine if the Program is:

- Still supported by participating businesses *Yes*
- Cost effective for businesses *In most cases*
- Likely to remain viable at current scale *Maybe*
- Expandable to include additional businesses *Hopefully*
- In need of improvement and how

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Pilot Compost Program Assessment

> Future Strategies for long-term Feasibility:

- Direct business-to-farm pickup and disposal
- Provides potential cost savings and additional convenience to businesses
- Provides much needed “free” compost feedstock to farms
- *Challenge:* How to coordinate multiple parties for consistency??

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Questions?

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