

City Government Zero Waste Policies for Gainesville Briefing Paper

Prepared by Maia Crook for Commissioner Hayes-Santos

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Executive Summary

In accordance with Gainesville's goal of zero waste by 2040 and the city's recent climate emergency proclamation, the city should implement policies to reduce the waste output and carbon footprint of their own buildings. A few of such measures include:

- Green Purchasing Policy
- Orientation for New Employees
- Recycling Cans At Least As Convenient as Garbage Bins
- Composting Bins in Select Locations
- Green Manager Evaluations

Implementing these measures would not only reduce the city's waste and greenhouse gas emissions, but would also establish the city as a model of sustainability to businesses, households, and other municipalities.

Green Purchasing Policy

The city should implement a Green Purchasing Policy that is, purchasing products that have less of a negative effect on the environment than similar products.¹ This lessened negative effect can result from the product being recycled or made in such a way that limits greenhouse gas emissions. Such products include recycled paper and envelopes, energy efficient lighting and

¹ <https://www.naspo.org/green/index.html>

air conditioning, and other environmentally preferable products and services (a list of such products can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/smm/comprehensive-procurement-guideline-cpg-program>).

Several states and municipalities have passed such policies, including Massachusetts², Sacramento³, Seattle⁴, and Oregon⁵, among others. These policies do not require a complete overhaul of items purchased by local governments; rather, they encourage governments to choose the sustainable option whenever possible.

Beyond reducing the city's waste and carbon footprint, this initiative has the added benefit of lowering demand for unsustainable products, thus utilizing the city's purchasing power to promote green products.

Recycling Cans At Least As Convenient as Garbage Bins

To ensure that city employees and visitors to Gainesville are recycling whenever possible, the city should provide recycling bins that are at least as conveniently located as any publicly accessible, city-owned garbage bins. By doing so, the city both removes the barrier of inconvenience when it comes to recycling materials and promotes a culture of recycling at home, at work, and when walking around.

Composting Bins in Select Locations Pilot Program

The city should have a pilot program to provide composting bins in city owned areas where food is often eaten (e.g. the city hall , Depot Park, Bo Diddley Park, Smokey Bear Park, etc.), with specific locations to be decided by city staff. When food is thrown away, it eventually decomposes in a landfill. This creates methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide,⁶ and a major contributor to global warming. By providing composting receptacles, the city not only limits its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, but also encourages a culture of composting.

² <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/qj/eo515.pdf>

³ <http://www.cityofsacramento.org/Finance/Procurement/Sustainability-Options>

⁴ <http://www.seattle.gov/purchasing-and-contracting/city-purchasing/green-purchasing>

⁵ https://www.oregon.gov/gov/Documents/executive_orders/eo_12-05.pdf

⁶ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/overview-greenhouse-gases>

Orientation for New Employees

New employees of the city should be informed of sustainable measures available to them. This should include what can and cannot be recycled, where they can access composting receptacles, the buses that run nearest to the office, the importance of using creating as little waste as possible, and any other initiatives the city may implement.

Green Manager Evaluations

Whether a department is following the previously stated green initiatives should be included as part of evaluations of the managers at city departments.

Pros and Cons of Proposed Initiatives

Pros of Green Purchasing Policy

- The city uses its purchasing power to strengthen markets for sustainable and recycled products.
- The city reduces its contribution to landfills and greenhouse gas emissions.

Cons of Green Purchasing Policy

- Sustainable products are typically more costly than their less environmentally friendly counterparts.
- A city employee would have to spend time researching the best alternatives to products used now.

Pros of Orientation for New Employees

- Removes any confusion among new employees as to where they can recycle, compost, etc.
- Immediately establishes a culture of acting sustainably within city government

Cons of Orientation for New Employees

- Time would have to be spent on the orientation

Pros of Recycling Cans At Least As Convenient as Garbage Bins

- City employees and visitors could easily recycle waste
- Encourages people to recycle everywhere, not just at home
- Removes recyclables from landfills, thus reducing overall waste output

Cons of Recycling Cans At Least As Convenient as Garbage Bins

- The city would have to purchase more recycling bins

Pros of Composting Bins in Select Locations Pilot Program

- Encourages city employees and visitors to city parks to compost
- Removes organics from landfills, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Cons of Composting Bins in Select Locations Pilot Program

- Some people complain that compost smells bad and attracts flies
- The city would have to purchase compost receptacles

Pros of Green Manager Evaluations

- Ensures that all city departments are making every effort to operate sustainably

Cons of Green Manager Evaluations

- May take extra time during evaluations

Costs of Proposed Initiatives

Green Purchasing Policy

- Increased costs of buying green materials rather than unsustainable but cheaper alternatives
- Cost of staff time spent finding green alternatives to current materials

Orientation for New Employees

- Cost of time spent on orientation, both for trainee and trainer

Recycling Cans At Least As Convenient as Garbage Bins

- Cost of buying new recycling bins

Composting Bins in Select Locations Pilot Program

- Cost of buying composting bins
- Cost of collecting compost waste from bins

Green Manager Evaluations

- May see increase in staff time being spent on evaluations