



MUNICIPAL COMPOSTING READINESS REPORT

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) is committed to cultivating a sustainable, equitable, and resilient food system in Rhode Island. Through collaborative efforts, RIFPC unites diverse stakeholders to address food-related challenges, focusing on policy development, advocacy, and strategic initiatives that enhance the state’s food landscape. The Rhode Island Municipal Readiness Compost Research report was commissioned by RIFPC under the direction of Isaac Bearg and Josh Daly and was completed by Dana Ginestet and Maya Puffer of Dana Ginestet Consulting. This work was done with support from 11th Hour Racing’s grant program. It was designed to assess municipal interest, identify opportunities, and provide actionable recommendations to advance food waste composting initiatives across Rhode Island. The scope of the project included collecting data on existing composting programs, engaging with municipal leaders, documenting opportunities and potential barriers, and pinpointing municipalities with the highest potential for expansion of composting initiatives.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RIFPC aims to advance municipal composting across the state to enhance food waste diversion, support environmental sustainability, and bolster community engagement. This report summarizes the findings from meetings with municipal leaders from twelve Rhode Island municipalities, highlighting current composting practices, challenges, and opportunities. The data collected on socioeconomic and population factors provide additional context to tailor composting initiatives effectively.

Financial constraints pose significant challenges for many municipalities. While the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) offers project-based grants requiring a financial match from the municipality, there are some limitations and concerns about long-term sustainability. Additionally, staffing shortages complicate the research and application process for securing further funding, making it difficult to sustain and expand composting programs. Zoning and space limitations hinder the establishment of composting facilities in some municipalities. Additionally, there is a need for increased public education and awareness to drive participation in composting programs, with many municipalities relying on informal communication channels and needing more structured outreach.

Opportunities for advancement include collaboration between towns, which can optimize resources and infrastructure. Municipalities including South Kingstown are exploring these regional composting solutions with neighboring towns. Pilot programs funded by grants can demonstrate the viability of composting initiatives and encourage broader adoption. Public-private partnerships, such as those with Black Earth Compost, a Massachusetts-based company that collects food waste and organic materials to produce high-quality compost for local farms, gardens, and landscapes, provide expertise and operational support that many municipalities may lack. Enhanced community engagement through workshops, educational programs, and incentives can also boost participation and support for composting initiatives.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT.

RIFPC, in partnership with nonprofit, for-profit, and philanthropic partners, can support municipalities in securing additional grants and funding to establish and expand composting programs. By working with RIFPC, municipalities can better advocate for increased state and federal support, helping to overcome financial and staffing challenges. This collaboration can provide the resources needed to advance sustainable composting initiatives across Rhode Island. Developing comprehensive education campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of composting and utilizing diverse communication channels, including social media, local newspapers, and community events, is essential. Encouraging municipalities to collaborate on regional composting facilities and programs, leveraging shared resources and expertise, will also be beneficial. Implementing and monitoring pilot composting programs to gather data and refine best practices can provide successful models for broader implementation. Addressing zoning restrictions and identifying suitable locations for composting facilities, as well as exploring innovative solutions to optimize space usage, are necessary steps. Providing technical assistance and training to municipal staff will build capacity for managing composting programs effectively. Lastly, developing a comprehensive model that outlines available resources and how to access them will ease implementation across different municipalities.

In conclusion, with the support and resources leveraged by RIFPC and their partners, municipalities across Rhode Island are well-positioned to expand their composting programs. By addressing financial, staffing, and logistical challenges and leveraging community interest and political support, the council can significantly advance food waste diversion across the state. The findings and recommendations in this report provide a roadmap for achieving these goals, fostering a more sustainable and resilient Rhode Island.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this project involved a multi-faceted approach to gather comprehensive data on municipal composting practices and readiness across Rhode Island. The project began with email-based outreach to municipal leaders of all 39 Rhode Island municipalities, initiated through a blast email followed by targeted follow-up emails and phone calls to ensure a higher response rate. This outreach led to the scheduling of meetings with municipal leaders from each of the 12 responsive municipalities. Most of these meetings were conducted in person, with tours of waste management facilities, when possible, with two exceptions where meetings were held virtually.

In preparation for these meetings, extensive background research was conducted using publicly available resources. Key socioeconomic and demographic data were collected for each municipality, including population size, population density, college attainment levels, and median income. These data points were essential for understanding the context within which each municipality operates and identifying potential opportunities or challenges in implementing or expanding composting initiatives. A table with current landfill disposal costs by municipality can be found in Appendix A.

RIRRC's 2023 municipal matrix served as a crucial tool in this research, providing detailed background information on existing waste management programs within each municipality. This matrix includes insights into the communication methods employed by municipalities to engage with their communities and indicates whether any composting initiatives were already in place. To supplement this information, municipal websites were reviewed to ensure a complete and accurate understanding of each municipality's waste management strategies and public outreach efforts.

This methodical approach ensured that the data collected was both comprehensive and relevant, enabling RIFPC to develop targeted recommendations for advancing municipal composting initiatives across the state.

FINDINGS OVERVIEW

The findings section of this report presents an in-depth analysis of each municipality’s composting landscape, based on direct conversations with municipal leaders. For each municipality, this section includes a brief one-paragraph summary of the meeting, along with a description of environmental goals, existing infrastructure, community perspectives, perceived barriers, and additional resources. The section also provides a one-paragraph assessment of the municipality's readiness to expand composting programs. Additionally, each municipality is evaluated on a "scorecard," providing a quick snapshot of overall readiness to initiate or expand composting, taking into account community interest, political will, efforts made to date, and overall readiness on a scale of 1 to 5. The scorecard was developed by the consultants conducting this research; scores were based on qualitative input and reflect the consultants’ perception of the municipality’s readiness on a scale from 1 to 5. The 1-5 score for each category reflects varying levels of preparedness and enthusiasm for composting initiatives across the municipalities:

Community Interest:

- 1 – Little to no public interest
- 5 – Strong, widespread support for composting

Political Will:

- 1 – No political backing
- 5 – Active, strong support from local leaders

Efforts Made to Date:

- 1 – No initiatives or programs in place
- 5 – Significant composting programs already established

Overall Readiness:

- 1 – Not prepared to begin/expand composting
- 5 – Highly motivated and eager to implement or expand composting immediately

A general trend observed across the municipalities is a lack of interest in processing compost locally. While several municipalities expressed willingness to haul compost or promote composting programs, none demonstrated a strong inclination to take on the processing aspect. This reluctance is coupled with an overarching concern about the long-term sustainability of these programs—once started, there is apprehension about whether they can be maintained effectively over time. These insights are critical in shaping the recommendations and support strategies provided in this report, ensuring that municipalities are not only prepared to initiate composting programs but also to sustain them successfully.

FINDINGS: SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

To contextualize the readiness and potential for composting program expansion across the twelve municipalities, it is essential to consider their socioeconomic and demographic profiles. The following table presents key data points—population, population density, college attainment rates, and median income—that inform the understanding of each municipality's unique characteristics. These factors play a significant role in shaping community engagement, resource availability, and logistical considerations pertinent to the successful implementation of composting initiatives. A table with data from all 39 municipalities can be found in Appendix B.

Municipality	Population	Population Density	Median Income	% College Degree*
Bristol	22,420	2,290.5/sq mi	\$80,727	41.00%
East Greenwich	14,285	873.2/sq mi	\$133,373	63.40%
Johnston	29,545	1,262.0/sq mi	\$75,579	26.30%
Little Compton	3,622	176.2/sq mi	\$96,111	59.40%
Middletown	17,009	1,342.4/sq mi	\$88,211	47.90%
New Shoreham	1,410	103.8/sq mi	\$72,279	47.70%
Portsmouth	17,846	777.7/sq mi	\$104,073	54.40%
Providence	189,715	10,376.8/sq mi	\$55,787	33.30%
Smithfield	22,086	840.7/sq mi	\$87,819	38.10%
South Kingstown	31,928	565.7/sq mi	\$102,242	56.60%
Warwick	82,783	2,363.7/sq mi	\$77,110	33.30%
Woonsocket	43,029	5,586.6/sq mi	\$48,822	19.60%

*Including college attainment as a data point is informed by research showing its influence on the success of municipal composting programs: Chia-Yan Min, Kimberly. Municipal Composting Programs: A Comparative Study of Implementation in Massachusetts and California [Master's thesis, Wellesley College, 2019]. Wellesley College Digital Repository.

BRISTOL

OVERVIEW

In a meeting with the town of Bristol, stakeholders discussed the existing waste management system and the potential expansion of composting programs. The town, which handles its own waste collection and transfer, has a strong environmental consciousness and political will to support sustainability initiatives. Challenges include logistical constraints at the transfer station and the need for clear metrics and models. There is interest in a two-year pilot project funded by a USDA grant to introduce a Black Earth composting program for 500 households, with a public awareness campaign to support it.

SUMMARY

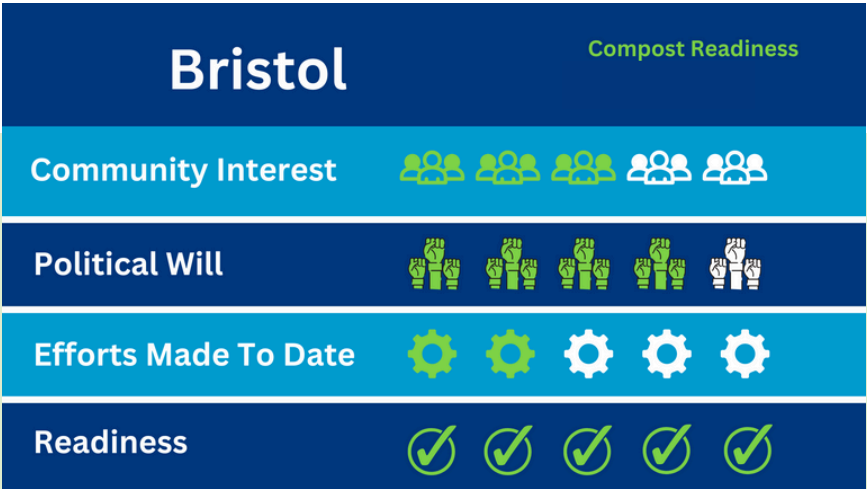
Meeting Date - With Who	July 22, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tony Morettini - Chair of Conservation Committee• Ed Tanner - Town Planner• Chris Parella - DPW Director• Diane Williamson - Director of Community Engagement
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive plan includes renewable energy goals (solar farm for transfer station, on-site solar for public buildings).• No stand-alone environmental sustainability plan.• Interest in reducing waste tonnage and methane emissions to sustain the life of the Johnston landfill.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fully functioning transfer station handling curbside trash and recycling pickup. Town manages pickup and hauling - no private company.• Three compactors operating daily to manage waste volume.• Composting unit at the sewage plant processes yard waste and dewatered solids.• Selling town-produced compost, though currently not for food use.• Considering using existing infrastructure for food composting.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong interest in composting and environmental consciousness among residents.• Past success with subsidized compost bin distribution and sold-out educational classes.• Community involvement from individuals more than organized groups.

BRISTOL

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logistical challenges at the transfer station, including space and capacity issues.• Need for clear metrics on the impact of food waste diversion on tipping fees and waste tonnage.• Minimal but existing community hesitancy due to concerns about smells and pests (e.g., rats).• Funding constraints for new technology and sustaining programs beyond pilot phases.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USDA grant for a two-year pilot project aiming to engage 500 households in Black Earth composting.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Grant covers 75% of costs, with the remaining 25% split between the town and the 11th Hour Project.◦ Includes a public awareness campaign.• Potential credits for meeting recycling goals, reducing over-cap fees.• Active pursuit of additional grant funding and support from the town administrator and council.

READINESS

Bristol demonstrates strong environmental consciousness and political support for expanding composting programs. The town has a well-established waste management system and a motivated community. However, logistical challenges at the transfer station and the need for clear metrics and sustained funding present significant hurdles. The proposed USDA-funded pilot project offers a promising start, but long-term success will depend on effective community engagement, continuous funding, and the ability to integrate composting into the town's existing infrastructure.



EAST GREENWICH

OVERVIEW

The meeting discussed the potential for expanding composting programs in the municipality. Anthony Vaccaro, the Director of Public Works, and Al Ranaldi, the Planning Director, highlighted the current waste management practices, which are contracted out, and the absence of composting. There is community interest and some political will, but practical and logistical challenges are significant. The municipality's infrastructure is limited, and there are concerns about the costs, aesthetics, and operational challenges of implementing a composting program. The discussion emphasized the need for a comprehensive educational campaign and political support to ensure the program's success and financial sustainability.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	July 2, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anthony Vaccaro - Director of Public Works• Al Ranaldi - Planning Director• Chelsea Burke - Administrative Assistant
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No specific environmental goals set.• Mitigation plan and municipal resiliency plan funded by FEMA and the state in progress.• Informal movement towards sustainability, such as converting street lights to LED
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trash, recycling, and yard waste contracted out for nearly \$1 million a year.• Weekly trash, bi-weekly recycling, and access to a transfer station included in taxes.• Transfer station may be moved, with space constraints being a significant issue.• No comprehensive infrastructure for composting.• Existing transfer station is on the waterfront with potential relocation near the highway garage to open waterfront space other projects.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community is split: some residents are resistant to change, while others are eager for composting.• Interest in free compost buckets and drop-off options.• Schools have parent-led composting initiatives but lack institutionalized commitment.• Practical challenges include rodents, aesthetics, and the need for proper monitoring.

EAST GREENWICH

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Space is extremely limited in the town's commercial area, where most businesses and restaurants lack room for trash and do not recycle, making curbside composting especially challenging.• Contract with waste contractor in place for another year, limiting immediate changes.• Regulatory uncertainties regarding zoning for composting facilities.• Lack of large planning staff to write and manage grants.• Concerns about long-term sustainability and financial viability without strong community buy-in.• Need for a significant political and educational campaign to ensure success.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders include the Town Council, DPW Director, planning staff, and town manager.• Communication channels: website (Engage EG), Facebook, EG news, and school connections.• Private contractors support e-waste and hazardous waste collection.• Potential to involve schools and larger businesses in composting initiatives.• Existing community engagement through events like shredding and eco-depot collections.

READINESS

The municipality exhibits low readiness to expand composting programs. While there is some community interest and political support, the practical and logistical barriers are substantial. The lack of comprehensive infrastructure, existing contractual obligations, and space constraints pose significant challenges. The municipality’s limited planning staff and resources further hinder the ability to acquire and manage necessary grants. Additionally, the need for a robust political and educational campaign to ensure financial sustainability and community participation is a significant hurdle. Overall, despite the potential for future success, the municipality is currently not well-prepared to implement a composting program.

EAST GREENWICH



JOHNSTON

OVERVIEW

The meeting with Thomas Deller, the Director of the Department of Development and Public Services, highlighted the challenges and potential opportunities for advancing environmental initiatives in Johnston. Despite a general resistance to regulation and green developments among the conservative, older, and economically disadvantaged population, there is some political will and environmental consciousness at the leadership level. Johnston benefits from hosting the state landfill, allowing residents to dispose of a wide range of items curbside for free, which reduces incentives to change waste management practices. The town faces numerous practical and logistical barriers, such as outdated environmental goals and lack of community engagement. However, there is an acknowledgment of the need for change, especially with the landfill nearing capacity and the importance of finding scalable solutions.

SUMMARY

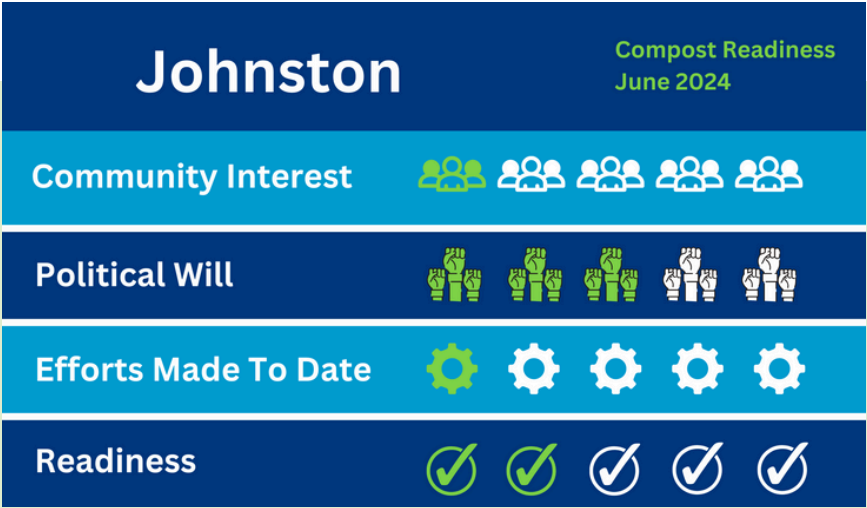
Meeting Date - With Who	July 8, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thomas Deller - Director of the Dept. Of Development and Public Service
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive plan is 8 years out of date.• Weak environmental goals, with attempts to update the plan to include more progressive elements.• Focus on incorporating environmental improvements into stormwater management plans.• Aim to acquire open space for flood management and recreational use.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly curbside trash and recycling services.• Seven large wind turbines with limited regulations on alternative power.• Zoning for agricultural land is classified as industrial.• No existing food waste compost programs.• Johnston hosts the state landfill, allowing free disposal of various items curbside (e.g., TVs, mattresses).
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Older, conservative demographic resistant to regulation.• Limited active community groups or push for composting.• Opposition to green developments and environmental initiatives.• General lack of awareness and education about environmental issues and the landfill's capacity.• Convenience of free curbside disposal reduces motivation for changes in waste management.

JOHNSTON

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community resistance to change and regulation.• Political considerations influencing decisions• Limited practical understanding and education among residents about environmental issues.• Perception of rats and pest issues without proper waste management solutions.• Regulatory uncertainty and lack of a proactive system to manage environmental goals.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders include the DPW Director, Mayor, Chief of Staff, and Town Council.• Communication channels include town Facebook, webpage, Instagram, local newspaper, and electronic signs.• Need for external groups like RIRRC to help scale solutions and adopt local ordinances.• Potential involvement of educational efforts and regulatory changes to support composting and waste management.

READINESS

The municipality exhibits low readiness to expand composting programs. The community's resistance to regulation and green initiatives, coupled with a lack of active civic and community groups, pose significant challenges. Despite some political will and acknowledgment of environmental sustainability concerns, the outdated comprehensive plan and limited practical understanding among residents hinder progress. The convenience of free curbside disposal due to hosting the state landfill further reduces incentives for change. Effective expansion of composting programs would require substantial education, community engagement, and external support to overcome logistical and regulatory barriers. As it stands, the municipality is not well-prepared to implement and sustain a composting program.



LITTLE COMPTON

OVERVIEW

In a meeting with the town of Little Compton, key stakeholders discussed the current state and future prospects of municipal composting. The town, with a population of 3,500 (increasing to 7,500 in summer), lacks set sustainability policies due to staff turnover but has a supportive town council and a culture inclined towards environmental efforts. A pilot composting program with Black Earth is underway, though its effectiveness is yet to be assessed. While the town administrator and other officials are generally supportive, they face challenges in policy direction, funding, and logistical barriers. The involvement of the local school in sustainability efforts and the support from various advocacy groups were also highlighted.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	July 22, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Lavinia Gadsden - Volunteer AdvocateTony Teixeira - Town Administrator
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No set policy goals; sustainability ingrained in town culture.Aim for widespread composting participation, ideally half the population.School initiatives to eliminate single-use plastics.Potential future initiatives include weight-based pay-to-throw programs.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Waste and recycling managed at the transfer station.Black Earth Program:<ul style="list-style-type: none">6-month trial period currently underway.K-8 School has compost set up with Black EarthTwo bins at the transfer stationFree for residents, town covers transportation costs.Growing interest and participation from residents.No current capacity issues; planning to reorganize the transfer station to increase efficiency.Residents can access compost, but details are unclear.Need for assessing volume collected and cost offset.Ongoing improvements to transfer station and DPW facilities.Water access and renovations at the transfer station are upcoming projectSolar project to support the school.

LITTLE COMPTON

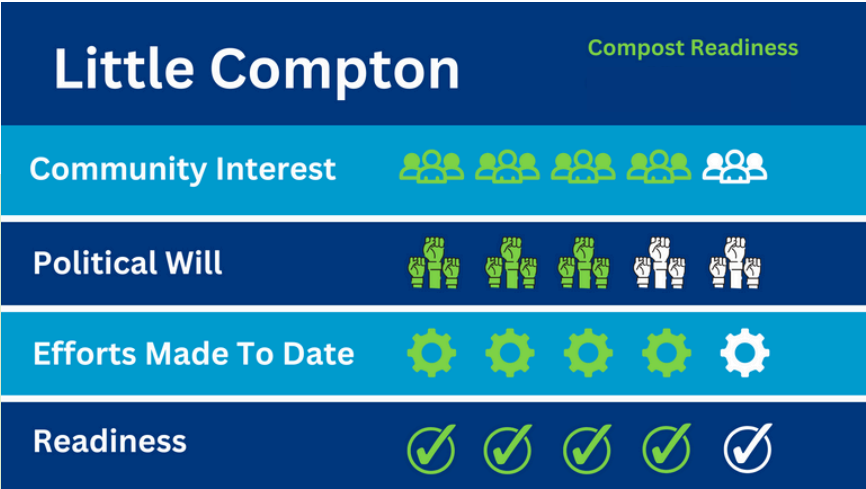
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town council is very supportive of environmental efforts.• Residents involved in backyard composting; some concerns about animals.• Community advocacy through the Garden Club, Preservation Association, and school involvement.
Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need for clear direction and assessment of pilot program’s effectiveness.• Financial constraints and need for haulers.• Seasonal population changes impacting waste management.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large school grant to support environmental programs:Received a \$134k grant to eliminate plastic plates, cups, and trays in the school.• Persistent outreach for additional grant funding.• Advocacy groups like the Garden Club and Preservation Association.

READINESS

Little Compton shows a strong community inclination towards sustainability and has supportive local government and advocacy groups. However, the municipality faces challenges in staff turnover, financial constraints, and logistical barriers. The ongoing Black Earth pilot program and school initiatives demonstrate a commitment to environmental goals, yet the effectiveness and scalability of these efforts remain uncertain. For successful expansion of composting programs, the town will need to secure consistent funding, streamline waste management logistics, and enhance community engagement and compliance.



LITTLE COMPTON COMPOST DROP OFF BINS



MIDDLETOWN

OVERVIEW

The meeting covered Middletown's recycling and waste management efforts, focusing on the Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program, seasonal yard waste collection, and potential composting initiatives. The PAYT program, implemented in 2007 after the Navy ceased funding the transfer station, requires residents to pay an annual fee and use specific trash bags, emphasizing recycling to reduce waste. Challenges discussed included cost, logistics, and community buy-in. The town is exploring grants and partnerships to expand composting, particularly curbside collection, despite past issues with food waste programs. The Town Council and community are supportive, but sustainability and educational outreach remain crucial for future success.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	<p>July 1, 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will Cronin - Recycling Coordinator
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase recycling rates to 34-35% to receive financial incentives. Introduce curbside composting in partnership with Black Earth. Sustain PAYT program while reducing waste sent to Johnston Landfill. Secure grants to fund composting initiatives and infrastructure.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAYT Program (since 2007): Residents pay an annual fee of \$180, use specific yellow bags for trash, and receive stickers for bins. The program emphasizes recycling, achieving a 32-24% recycling rate. Seasonal Yard Waste Collection: 23 weeks of collection annually, with waste taken to Rhode Island Nurseries. Current Composting Participation: 150-160 households using Black Earth for composting. Recycling and Waste Disposal: Solid waste sent to Johnston Landfill, ongoing partnership with Rhode Island Nurseries for yard waste.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Council is supportive of composting initiatives. Community shows interest, with the highest rate of customers using Black Earth compared to other island towns. Past community engagement through Clean Ocean Access and school programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pushed for school programs, especially in Portsmouth. Shut down during COVID and never came back. Established drop off sites which also dissolved during COVID. Need for increased community buy-in and educational outreach for new composting programs.

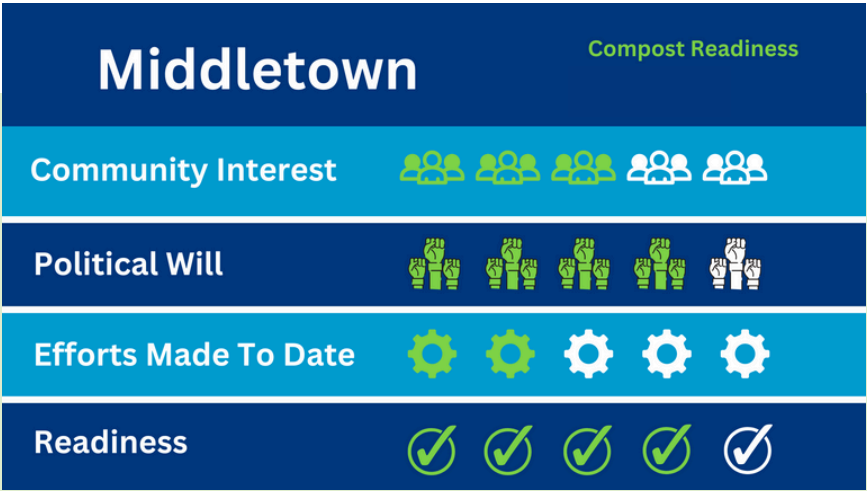
MIDDLETOWN

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If composting is managed internally, there is a high cost of new hauling materials and setting up new routes (~\$1400+ a week).• Seasonal contamination issues in recycling, exacerbated by short-term rentals and housing crisis as prices increase.• Past issues with food waste programs at Rhode Island Nurseries due to neighbor complaints and scavenger animals.• Lack of proper zoning for composting facilities and no current composting education in schools.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential grants from RI DEM, RIRRC, and other sources.• Technical assistance and educational support needed for program implementation.• Existing PAYT program savings could help sustain new initiatives.• Potential partnership with Waste Zero for compostable green bags (explored in the past, no progress)• Stakeholders: Will Cronin (Recycling Coordinator), Town Administrator (Shawn Brown), Town Council, and potential partners like Kristen Littlefield from RIRRC and Waste Zero.

READINESS

Middletown demonstrates a high level of readiness to expand its composting programs. The well-established PAYT program underscores the town's commitment to waste reduction and recycling. With strong support from the Town Council and a receptive community, Middletown has a solid foundation for growth. Existing infrastructure, such as seasonal yard waste collection and current composting participation, further bolsters this readiness. However, challenges remain, including the high costs of new routes, seasonal contamination issues, and the need for educational outreach and technical assistance. Despite these hurdles, the town is actively seeking grants, particularly from RI DEM, and exploring partnerships to enhance its composting capabilities. Should they secure the DEM grant, Middletown is poised to address these challenges, ensuring long-term sustainability and community engagement for its expanded composting initiatives.

MIDDLETOWN



NEW SHOREHAM

OVERVIEW

The meeting focused on the early stages of a food scrap composting program at the town's transfer station, initiated by the Block Island Conservancy (BIC). Mike Shea, the DPW Director, and Alison Ring, the Town Planner, discussed the success of the initial pilot involving 150 households and two restaurants, with plans for expansion. The project, funded by BIC, has faced challenges such as securing additional grants and addressing long-term sustainability. The program benefits from strong community interest and political support, although practical and logistical issues, such as transportation and staffing, remain concerns.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	<p>July 3, 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Shea - Director of Public Works • Alison Ring - Town Planner
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive plan includes environmental and sustainability goals. • 10-year plan outlines goals, policies, and implementation plans, including recycling rates. • Schools are intended to be included in the program once it is more established.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Scrap Composting System: Currently, the system is located at the transfer station and uses an eco-drum, primarily funded and initiated by BIC. • Pilot Program: Involves 150 households and two restaurants, has been operational for one month and is showing success. It is mixed with yard waste and brush chippings. • Transfer Station: Residents use the transfer station to drop off trash and compost waste, making it convenient as there is little curbside pickup. • Pay-per-Pound Trash System: Trash is charged by weight (approximately 14 cents per pound) and is shipped off the island by a private contractor who has been servicing the area for over 20 years.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Consciousness: A significant portion of the population is environmentally conscious and supportive of sustainability initiatives. • Education and Outreach: At the program launch, residents received buckets and information on what can be composted and how to use the transfer station. • Resident Participation: The program primarily targets year-round residents, as involving transient renters poses additional challenges. • Ease of Access: The established habit of using the transfer station for trash disposal means residents do not find it inconvenient to participate in the composting program.

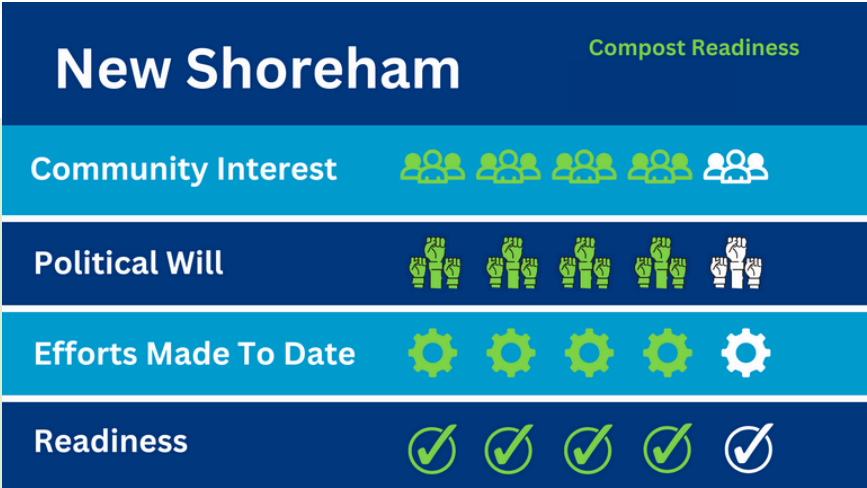
NEW SHOREHAM

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding Challenges: The town failed to secure a large grant that would have expanded the composting program and reduced transportation costs. Future expansion depends on obtaining similar grants.• Sustainability Concerns: The program's reliance on BIC for funding and staff raises questions about its long-term sustainability, especially as they have only tested the system for a short period.• Logistical Issues: Transporting waste off the island is a significant cost and challenge, and there is a need for equipment to compact trash to reduce the number of trips.• Seasonal Variations: The program has not yet been tested through different seasons, which may affect its viability and effectiveness. Additionally, the focus is on year-round residents as participation and commitment by seasonal or short-term visitors will be difficult to encourage.• Staffing Needs: There is a need for more staff to handle outreach and run the program efficiently, which may strain current resources.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders: Key stakeholders include the DPW Director, Town Planner, Block Island Conservancy, and town council. Their support is crucial for the program's success.• Non-Profit Support: BIC has been instrumental in funding and facilitating the composting program. Their ongoing support is vital.• Regulatory Environment: There are no zoning issues as the composting facility operates within the transfer station. The facility's indoor location helps mitigate concerns about odors and rodents.• Community Involvement: Schools and larger businesses are potential future participants, and there is interest in involving the local grocery store.• Communication Channels: Information about the program is disseminated through the town's website, social media, and direct outreach to residents.

NEW SHOREHAM

READINESS

The municipality exhibits high readiness to expand composting programs. The pilot program has been successfully initiated with strong community support and political backing. Existing infrastructure is being effectively utilized, and the community is environmentally conscious and engaged. While funding challenges and logistical issues remain, the program has demonstrated initial success and scalability. The involvement of schools and businesses, along with ongoing support from non-profit organizations, positions the municipality well for sustainable expansion. With continued strategic planning and resource allocation, the program is poised for growth and long-term viability.



PORTSMOUTH

OVERVIEW

The meeting with Paul Rodrigues, Deputy Director of DPW and temporary Recycling Coordinator, and Brian Woodhead, Director of DPW, focused on the town's current waste management infrastructure, sustainability goals, and the challenges they face in expanding their composting and recycling programs. The town operates on an enterprise fund model, where residents pay a yearly fee and purchase trash bags, while recycling is free. Despite limited space at the transfer station, the town is moving towards curbside recycling, with a 35% recycling rate and a 50% diversion rate as key goals. Community interest in sustainability is strong, but barriers such as space limitations, costs, and education present challenges to expanding composting initiatives.

SUMMARY

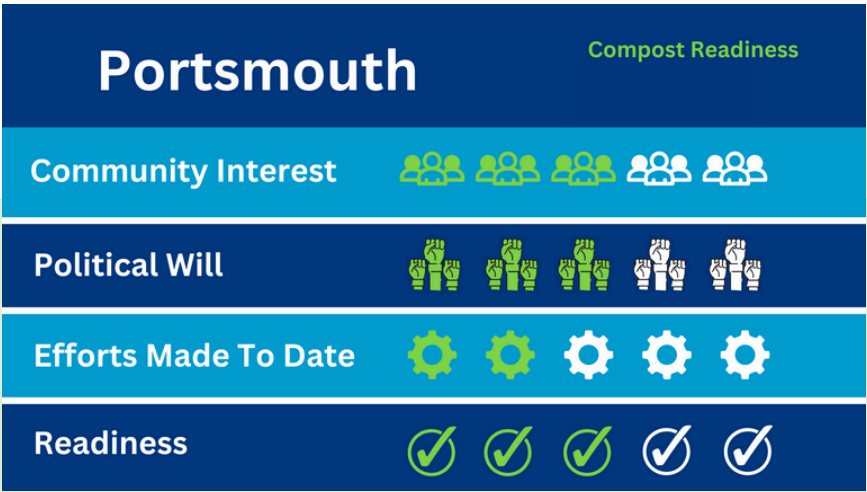
Meeting Date - With Who	<p>July 10, 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul Rodrigues - Deputy Director of DPW, Temporary Recycling Coordinator Brian Woodhead - Director of DPW
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve 35% recycling rate and 50% diversion rate in line with RIRRC goals. Successfully implement the curbside recycling program. Consider introducing composting after curbside recycling is established.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town operates on an enterprise fund, not through taxes. Transfer station is currently operating at capacity with limited space. Curbside recycling will be initiated next year; MTG has won the contract. New buildings and compactors; infrastructure is in good condition.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong community interest in sustainability, with past efforts by the recycling committee. Approximately 2,000 out of 7,000 residents actively use the transfer station. Residents previously dropped out of recycling programs due to the convenience of private curbside services.
Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited space at the transfer station, necessitating external contractors for composting, which would be costly. High sticker costs for residents (e.g., \$400 for curbside composting). Challenges in education and communication, although efforts are underway with RIRRC and grant support. Political will exists, but financial constraints and past budget cuts complicate expansion efforts.

PORTSMOUTH

Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with RIRRC on educational initiatives and grant funding (\$3 per cart for information).• Possibility of re-establishing the recycling committee.• Limited local environmental group involvement; potential interest from Black Earth.
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READINESS

The municipality demonstrates a moderate level of readiness to expand composting programs, given its strong community interest and political will. However, significant barriers, including limited space, high costs for residents, and the need for robust educational outreach, must be addressed. The town's existing infrastructure is well-maintained, but current capacity constraints and reliance on an enterprise fund model present challenges that will require careful planning and external support to overcome. Expanding composting may be feasible in the future, but the town should first focus on stabilizing and optimizing its curbside recycling program.



PROVIDENCE

OVERVIEW

During the meeting, we discussed the current state and future potential of composting programs in the City of Providence. Key points included the existence of 16 drop-off bins, grants received for food diversion, and the role of various stakeholders like the Department of Public Works (DPW), Zero Waste Providence, and community members. To date, a community composting approach has proven successful and the desire to support an ecosystem of community-based composting resources and approaches was expressed. Challenges highlighted included low recycling rates, space constraints in multi-family neighborhoods, and concerns over financial sustainability and community engagement. There was significant interest in expanding composting programs through pilots, improved infrastructure, and community involvement, though barriers such as political will, financial constraints, and public awareness were noted.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	June 25, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Kevin Proft - Deputy Director of Sustainability
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Focus on food diversion as the main sustainability effort.Increase recycling rates from the current 3%. (Current rate is poor in comparison to other urban areas across Rhode Island.)Expand composting programs through community engagement and pilot projects.Aim for uniformity in bin sizes and types to facilitate better recycling and composting.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">16 compost drop-off bins throughout the city.55,000 households served by trash and recycling, excluding larger multi-family homes.Various composting options including Harvest Cycle, Bootstrap, and individual efforts like Compost Depot.USDA and EPA grants supporting composting initiatives.Audit of recycling practices every five weeks to monitor and improve recycling efforts.

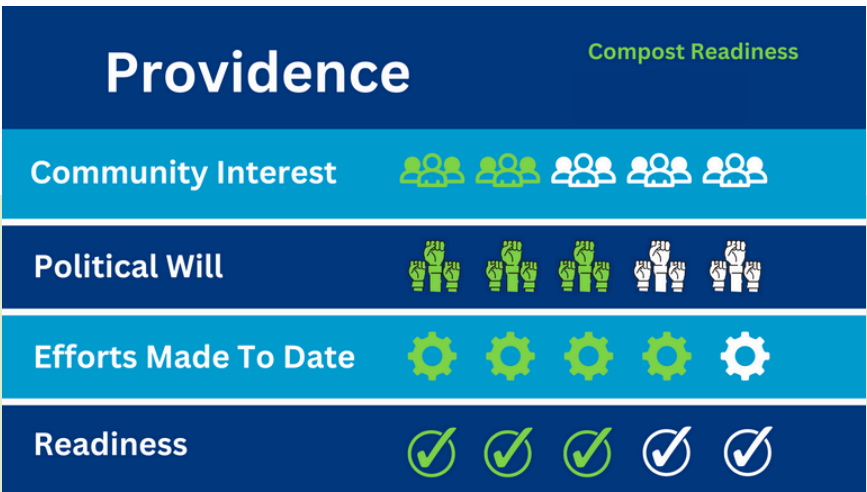
PROVIDENCE

Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General interest in community-based composting, but not widely recognized as a major priority. • Satisfaction with existing community programs among participants. • Community engagement planned with a communication blitz and surveys. • Zero Waste Providence advocating for community composting over hauling services. • Concerns about rat infestation affecting public perception of composting programs.
Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low recycling rates worsened by side-loading carts. • Space constraints in multi-family neighborhoods leading to misuse of recycling bins. • Financial sustainability concerns for medium-scale composters. • Public awareness and education on composting are limited. • Limited movement on a state-wide composting solution. • 10+ year effort by a private-sector composting team to identify and develop a local processing site was unsuccessful, proving how challenging this can be. • Zoning and community resistance (NIMBYism) hindering the establishment of new composting facilities.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPA, SWIFR, and USDA grants supporting various composting and recycling initiatives. • Potential new drop-off sites and increased capacity through Groundworks. • Commercial composting efforts hampered by zoning and community resistance (NIMBYism). • Support from the Chief of Operations for a compost pilot managed by an ecosystem of compost groups. • Funding for specific compost-related equipment and infrastructure improvements, such as larger capacity trucks and drop-off sites.

PROVIDENCE

READINESS

Despite taking the lead on existing programs, the municipality shows moderate readiness to continue expanding its composting programs or internally process, driven by community interest, grant support, and the commitment of sustainability leaders. Expansion efforts would start with an “opt-in” approach, engaging residents who are motivated to participate. However, significant barriers such as low recycling rates, logistical challenges in multi-family neighborhoods, and limited public awareness need to be addressed. The political will is present but requires further alignment and tangible evidence of success to secure broader administrative support. With targeted pilot programs and increased community engagement, the municipality can build a strong foundation for a more extensive and effective composting initiative.



HARVEST CYCLE COMPOST COLLECTION BINS

SMITHFIELD

OVERVIEW

In the meeting, key stakeholders discussed the current status and future prospects of composting programs in the municipality. The conversation covered various existing programs, challenges in logistics and funding, and the political and community interest in expanding composting efforts. While there are established programs and facilities, issues such as staffing, funding, and adequate infrastructure persist. There is a desire to expand composting initiatives, supported by community interest and political will, but significant barriers need to be addressed to realize these goals.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	<p>June 25, 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gene Allen - Director of Public Works • Melissa Chaput - Recycling Coordinator
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand composting programs to include post-consumption waste. • Achieve a 35% recycling rate as per RIRRC goals. • Increase public awareness and participation in composting programs.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metals, plastics, electronics, and oil recycling programs in place. • Three annual events for mattress and shredding. • Medium-sized yard waste compost facility established, but facing challenges such as moisture issues and lack of staffing. • A school composting program, in partnership with the Fidelity Corporation (headquartered in Smithfield) has been piloted and is ongoing. The town processes school waste at Fidelity's digester facility, a service Fidelity is offering pro-bono. Compost from schools is hauled using municipal resources. This program has potential for expansion, leveraging Fidelity's capacity and interest in community involvement, but faces limitations due to capacity constraints and maintaining compost quality with post-consumption waste. • Backyard compost bins available for purchase with workshops provided through RIRRC grant. • Providence drop-off bins organization, Harvest Cycle, looking to expand into Smithfield
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some public interest in composting, with approximately 70 bins sold at discounted rates. • Le Perche school student families offered pickup service with Bootstrap. • Residents interested in quick and cost-effective solutions. • Existing communication channels: town website, social media, local newspapers, and mailers.

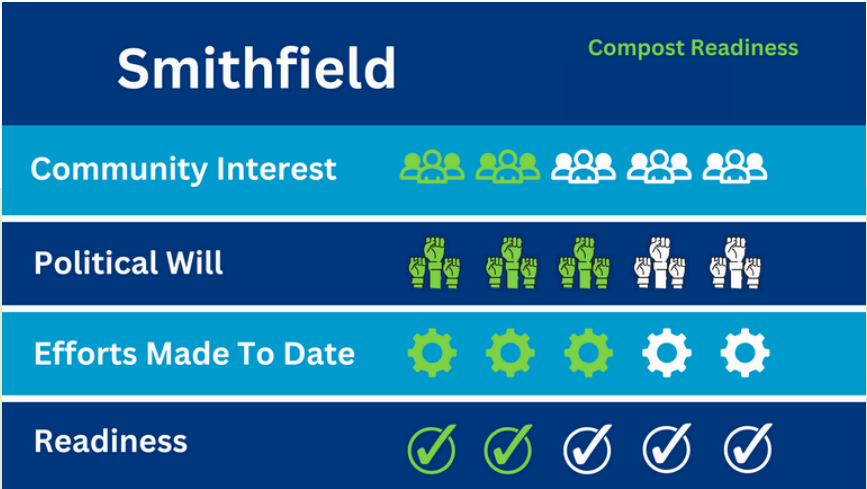
SMITHFIELD

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staffing issues, with DPW workers managing composting processes.• Lack of storage and processing capacity for compost materials.• Funding challenges, needing local, state, and federal support.• Concerns about maintaining compost quality with post-consumption waste.• Limited capacity at Fidelity's compost facility.• Potential proximity issues with available land for composting facilities (i.e. NIMBY).• Need for increased public awareness to secure additional funding.• Sustainability concerns with initiating a program they cannot support long-term.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant applications in progress, including RIRRC grant and support from Fidelity.• Potential for curbside pickup if staffing and funding are secured.• Existing partnerships with private organizations and local farms.• Communication efforts to boost program participation and awareness.

READINESS

The municipality demonstrates a moderate readiness to expand its composting programs. There is some community interest and political will, supported by existing infrastructure and successful pilot programs like the Fidelity school composting initiative. However, significant barriers, including staffing, funding, and capacity issues, need to be addressed. The municipality has the transportation capabilities and some established partnerships, but needs to secure additional resources and increase public awareness to fully realize its composting expansion goals. Improved communication and strategic planning will be crucial to overcoming these challenges and achieving a sustainable, scalable composting program. Municipal staff indicated an interest in learning from “best practices” from other municipalities that have successfully launched food composting programs.

SMITHFIELD



SMITHFIELD’S ON-SITE YARD WASTE COMPOSTING FACILITY



SOUTH KINGSTOWN

OVERVIEW

The meeting discussed the implementation and challenges of a private curbside compost pickup service with Black Earth, municipal coordination on waste management, and efforts to establish a regional compost facility. Despite community interest and grant-supported initiatives like bin giveaways and workshops, issues such as funding, space, and zoning restrictions persist. The Sustainability Committee continues to advocate for solutions, while local schools and employee programs also promote composting. Effective communication and stakeholder engagement are essential as the town explores potential options for expanding and improving its composting and waste diversion efforts.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	<p>June 24, 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bonnie Blair, SK + Narragansett Recycling Coordinator Rich Bourbonnais - DPW Director
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sustainability Committee is advocating for a regional compost facility but don't have a specific course of action. Incentives to compost include every bin deducting 500 pounds from municipal tonnage. Emphasis on increasing recycling and waste diversion rates to meet RIRRC goals and receive benefits.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private Curbside Pickup Service: Black Earth currently serves 100 customers. South Kingstown has waived Black Earth's hauler fee as they don't process through the Rose Hill transfer site. Regional Coordination: Shared services with Narragansett for senior services; Rose Hill Regional Transfer Station is a regional operation. Grant-Funded Initiatives: Received a grant from RIRRC for 100 compost bins and educational workshops. Employee Wellness Program: Program distributing compost bins, seeds, and starter kits to 50 participating employees. Transfer Station Management: Managed by Waste Connections, with a model requiring residents pay per bag. Public Engagement: Uses websites, newspapers, flyers, and Facebook for promotion and education.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant community interest in an independently run municipal compost facility. Local schools, including high school, are eager to start composting programs. The community is supportive of composting initiatives but concerned about potential cost increases. Positive reception to Black Earth's curbside composting, with residents appreciating the simplicity.

SOUTH KINGSTOWN

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Space and Zoning: Limited space at the transfer station and zoning restrictions prevent new composting facilities.• Funding Constraints: The transfer station must be self-funded, with no tax dollars allocated, and there is no budget to support additional staffing to expand composting programs.• Operational Challenges: High transient summer population complicates consistent composting participation; unable to satisfy staffing requirements to further education campaigns if composting program with Black Earth grows.• Economic Concerns: Residents do not want to see costs increase; composting yard waste is not economical due to hauling costs to RIRRC.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants and Funding: RIRRC grant providing bins and workshops; town covers half of the \$3,500 grant.• Workshops and Education: Workshops for residents as part of the RIRRC grant; public education efforts through various media.• Stakeholder Engagement: Involvement of town officials and regular attendance at sustainability committee meetings to discuss financing and waste management solutions.• Potential Options: Considering future vendors for the transfer station that include compost drop-off services and exploring private companies to implement composting programs.• Additional Stakeholders: Collaboration with Rhode Island Trust (RIRRC Grant), Bonnie, Rich, the town manager, and the Director of Administrative Services, as well as input from Narragansett for regional solutions.• Land: South Kingstown owns land that could be utilized in expanding compost programs as the Rose Hill Transfer site does not have the capacity.

READINESS

South Kingstown is actively preparing to expand its compost programs, driven by strong community interest and supported by recent initiatives such as private curbside compost pickup with Black Earth and grant-funded bin giveaways. The Sustainability Committee is pushing for a regional compost facility, and local schools are showing enthusiasm for starting their own composting programs. However, challenges remain, including space limitations, funding constraints, and zoning restrictions. The town is focused on public education, effective communication, and stakeholder engagement to navigate these hurdles, while exploring feasible options for enhancing its composting and waste diversion efforts.

SOUTH KINGSTOWN



WARWICK

OVERVIEW

The meeting focused on the municipality's current waste management practices and the potential expansion into food waste composting. Thomas Rourke, the Sanitation Supervisor, detailed the existing infrastructure for recycling and yard waste management, noting that the municipality is just beginning to explore food waste composting. Key stakeholders, including the DPW Director and Mayor, support the initiative. The municipality's environmental goals align with state-set diversion targets, though funding, particularly grants, is a critical barrier. Community enthusiasm and political support are strong, but practical and educational challenges need to be addressed.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	<p>July 2, 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas Rourke - Sanitation Supervisor
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-set diversion goals with recycling, no other specific environmental goals. Current recycling rate is 24-28%. Diversion rate goal of 50%; currently at ~49.5%.
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing recycling facility on the property handles various recyclables and bulk pickups. Own fleet of recycling trucks; managed internally. Yard waste managed by the highway department; compost available to residents and for municipal use. Compost station at the current transfer station being explored. Potential to process compost themselves if funding were not an issue.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents are passionate about sustainable changes and love the city. Community needs to be educated about the benefits and financial aspects of composting. Concerns about rodent and odor issues that need to be addressed through education.
Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant availability is a major hurdle; sustainability concerns if grants run out. Educational boundary: need to inform residents about composting benefits and manage potential issues. Compost is just in preliminary talks and low priority without grant support.

WARWICK

Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders: Thomas Rourke, DPW Director, Mayor.• Spoke with RIFPC and Black Earth.• Knowledge of \$2/ton grant through DEM.• Working with Black Earth on potential grants.• Communication methods: in bills, flyers, door-to-door, door hangers, and social media.
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READINESS

The municipality shows moderate-to-low readiness to expand its composting programs. Existing infrastructure for recycling and yard waste management provides a solid foundation. There is strong community enthusiasm and political support for sustainable initiatives. However, significant barriers, including funding and education, must be addressed. The municipality is in the preliminary stages of planning and needs to secure grants and enhance community awareness to ensure a program's success and sustainability.



WOONSOCKET

OVERVIEW

Liz Kerrigan, who has served the city for 14 years and has managed waste for the past two years, provided insights into the city's waste management practices and the challenges of expanding composting programs. She highlighted the city's existing recycling infrastructure, including weekly curbside recycling for smaller households and a facility for larger recyclable items. Despite previous efforts to promote composting with discounted bins and a partnership with a farmer who collected school food waste, community engagement remains low due to a lack of knowledge and interest. Major concerns include pervasive rodent issues, significant language barriers, and educational challenges, particularly in schools. Additionally, staffing limitations and the need to avoid regulatory complications further hinder the city's ability to implement a robust composting program. While a USDA grant has been identified as a potential resource, the overall readiness for expanding composting remains low due to these challenges, especially lack of political and community will.

SUMMARY

Meeting Date - With Who	July 16, 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Liz Kerrigan - Parks & Rec Superintendent, Solid Waste Coordinator
Environmental Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Desire to reduce waste and manage food waste better.Interest in starting composting in schools.No formal environmental goals
Existing Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Weekly curbside recycling for houses with less than three units.Recycling facility for larger items and other recyclables.Facility processes a wide range of items: mattresses, televisions, anything with a power cord, shredded paper, large plastics, metal furniture, paper, cardboard, appliances, and textiles.Separate facility for lawn and leaf waste in Blackstone with curbside collection during certain months.Past efforts included offering discounted compost bins and having a farmer collect food waste from schools. These are no longer operational.
Community Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Large transient population with significant language barriers.Educational challenges, especially needing materials in Spanish.Some residents are indifferent to waste management guidelines, high rates of non-compliance with recycling regulations.Extensive need for 1-on-1 education to ensure compliance.Challenges in reaching renters and multi-family households.

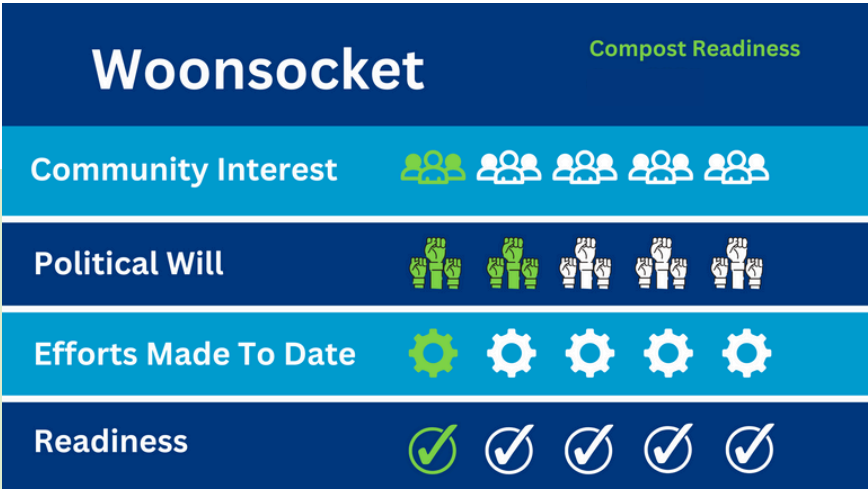
WOONSOCKET

Perceived Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rodent and filth issues, especially in schools.• Recycling contamination and rejections at an all-time high.• Low community knowledge and compliance with recycling and composting practices.• Staffing limitations and uncertainty about whether composting savings could support additional staff.• Current recycling center is not licensed as a transfer station and therefore has limitations in what can be dropped. Any changes to collected material need to keep the center licensed as-is, it can not change to a transfer station.
Additional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USDA grant identified by grant writer for potential funding.• Recycling inspectors and limited educational materials.• Potential space at the recycling facility for compost management, though it would require proper oversight.

READINESS

The municipality demonstrates low readiness to expand composting programs. Despite having some infrastructure for recycling and a general openness to the concept, significant barriers impede progress. Rodent infestations, poor community compliance and knowledge, and serious educational challenges present major hurdles (It’s important to note that the perception that compost causes increases in rodents is false; properly managed compost can actually reduce rodent populations). Additionally, the transient population and language barriers complicate outreach and engagement efforts. Staffing constraints and a recycling facility that is not licensed as a transfer station further limit the municipality’s capacity to implement and sustain an expanded composting program effectively. Addressing these issues is essential before any significant expansion can be considered.

WOONSOCKET



WOONSOCKET TRANSFER STATION



LIMITATIONS

Of the 39 municipalities in Rhode Island, only 12 agreed to participate in this research project. We note that these communities share certain community characteristics, including relative low-population density, high level of educational attainment, and higher than average income when compared to communities across the state.

Of the five municipalities that showed the highest level of readiness, we find racial demographics of these communities not representative of the demographics across the state. These communities have higher average household income levels and lower proportions of Black, Hispanic and other non-white residents than communities that did not participate in this project.

This speaks to the challenges to be faced in providing the resources, and support to more densely populated, urban communities that would allow and encourage them to prioritize composting. While this report identifies communities that are well-positioned for the expansion of composting programs, where success is more likely, the greater challenge lies in demonstrating the viability of composting in Rhode Island's diverse urban core communities. It is in these areas where scaling composting initiatives could have a truly transformative impact on the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CUSTOMIZE PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO SPECIFIC MUNICIPAL NEEDS AND INTERESTS

RIFPC recognizes that one solution or program design will not meet the interests and needs of the diverse communities across Rhode Island. As documented above, each municipality has its own unique set of characteristics, including varying levels of political and community interest, different waste management practices, and a range of existing and leverageable resources/infrastructure. It is critical that composting programs are tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of each community, which take into account existing resources, demographics, behavior patterns, and linguistic needs of a given community.

PROVIDE MUNICIPALITIES WITH ACTIONABLE MODELS OF SUCCESSFUL COMPOSTING PROGRAMS

Municipal leaders have expressed a clear need to learn from best practices in order to establish and manage effective composting initiatives. Therefore, to effectively advance municipal composting programs across Rhode Island, it is imperative to provide municipalities with actionable models of successful composting programs. These models should include detailed guidelines on program design, operational best practices, and advice on how to make the program financially sustainable to avoid leaving municipalities to navigate these complexities on their own.

PASS STATE LEGISLATION TO CREATE A FUND FOR MUNICIPAL COMPOSTING PROGRAMS

Incorporating the proposed legislation and financial incentives, such as those outlined in Rhode Island bill H7856, is crucial for understanding their potential impact on advancing municipal composting programs. The bill aims to promote composting by offering grants, technical assistance, and funding for municipalities to develop or expand their composting programs. These incentives are designed to encourage the establishment of composting infrastructure, support education and outreach efforts, and help municipalities manage organic waste more sustainably. However, it is uncertain whether these incentives will effectively drive composting initiatives in dense, diverse, urban communities, as most of these municipalities did not participate in this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CREATE AND DISSEMINATE A MUNICIPAL COMPOSTING PROGRAM TOOLKIT

We recommend the development and dissemination of a robust composting program toolkit. This toolkit should feature:

1. Program Options: A detailed description of various program structures, including waste segregation procedures, composting processes, and community engagement strategies.
2. Resource Directories: A curated list of available resources such as funding opportunities, grant deadlines, and partnerships with composting experts.
3. Case Studies: Examples of successful composting programs from other municipalities (and other states) to provide practical insights and inspire adaptation.
4. Training Materials: Educational content and workshops designed to build municipal staff capacity for managing and scaling composting initiatives.

ESTABLISH A CENTRALIZED MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT NETWORK

Additionally, establishing a centralized support network offering technical assistance and troubleshooting will be crucial. This network should provide municipalities with ongoing guidance and problem-solving resources, ensuring they are well-supported throughout the implementation and maintenance phases of their composting programs.



MUNICIPAL-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the readiness assessments, we see potential for program expansion in the following municipalities (information about other towns in communication with RIFPC but not a part of this research can be found in Appendix C):

BRISTOL

Bristol demonstrates strong environmental consciousness and political support for expanding composting programs. The town has a well-established waste management system and a motivated community. Although there are logistical challenges and a need for clear metrics and sustained funding, Bristol's strong commitment and existing infrastructure make it an ideal candidate for implementing a comprehensive composting program. The proposed USDA-funded pilot project provides a promising starting point, but long-term success will depend on effective community engagement, continuous funding, and the ability to address logistical challenges.

MIDDLETOWN

With a strong commitment to waste reduction, an established Pay As You Throw (PAYT) program, and community receptiveness, Middletown is well-positioned for composting program expansion. The town's readiness is bolstered by existing infrastructure and active grant-seeking efforts. Targeting Middletown for a comprehensive composting model can leverage its existing strengths while addressing challenges such as high costs and contamination issues.

NEW SHOREHAM

The successful initiation of a pilot program and strong community and political support highlight New Shoreham as a prime candidate for expanded composting efforts. Continued support and strategic resource allocation can enhance the scalability of its current programs, making it a valuable example of successful municipal composting.

SOUTH KINGSTOWN

The town's active preparation for compost program expansion, coupled with recent initiatives and a focus on regional collaboration, positions it well for further development. Addressing space limitations and zoning restrictions through targeted support and regional solutions will be crucial for successful expansion.

MUNICIPAL-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

LITTLE COMPTON

Despite some logistical and financial constraints, Little Compton's strong community inclination towards sustainability and supportive local government make it a viable candidate for program expansion. Ensuring consistent funding and streamlining waste management logistics will be essential for advancing composting efforts.

CONTINUED ANALYSIS

For the above municipalities, RIFPC should provide tailored resources and support, including the proposed composting program toolkit, which will help address specific needs and overcome barriers. Establishing a centralized support network for ongoing technical assistance will further ensure successful implementation and sustainability.

Municipalities such as Portsmouth and Smithfield, while demonstrating some readiness, require significant additional support and resources to overcome barriers. They should be targeted for pilot programs or phased approaches to address specific challenges and build a foundation for future expansion.

Providence presents a unique case when compared to other municipalities. With extensive drop-off composting programs already in place, any further expansion will be complex and challenging. The city faces significant logistical issues, especially in multi-family neighborhoods, and low public awareness about composting. To move forward, Providence will need substantial investment in public education and targeted pilot programs to build on its existing foundation.

Municipalities like East Greenwich, Johnston, Woonsocket, and Warwick, exhibiting lower readiness, will need substantial community engagement, educational campaigns, and infrastructure development before meaningful composting programs can be introduced. Johnston's economic benefits from hosting the landfill create a disincentive for implementing composting initiatives, as the municipality may not see the immediate value in pursuing such programs. Addressing these foundational issues will be crucial for any future efforts in these areas.

By focusing on municipalities with high readiness and providing targeted support through the comprehensive toolkit, the RIFPC can effectively drive the expansion of composting programs across Rhode Island, fostering a more sustainable and resilient food waste management system.

APPENDIX A

CURRENT LANDFILL DISPOSAL COSTS

Municipality	Current landfill disposal cost
Barrington	\$366,805.50
Bristol	\$433,355.50
Burrillville	\$283,432.50
Central Falls	\$375,453.00
Charlestown	\$38,376.00
Coventry	\$709,366.50
Cranston	\$1,498,226.00
Cumberland	\$628,752.00
East Greenwich	\$267,937.50
East Providence	\$869,359.50
Exeter	\$106,996.50
Foster	\$137,364.50
Glocester	\$148,648.50
Jamestown	\$152,197.50
Johnston	\$1,512,612.00
Lincoln	\$479,356.00
Little Compton	\$109,759.00
Middletown	\$166,725.00
Narragansett	\$298,291.50

Municipality	Current landfill disposal cost
New Shoreham	\$163,265.00
Newport	\$348,016.50
North Kingstown	\$368,199.00
North Providence	\$670,426.50
North Smithfield	\$209,722.50
Pawtucket	\$2,016,607.50
Portsmouth	\$78,858.00
Providence	\$4,908,554.00
Richmond	\$75,289.50
Scituate	\$265,115.50
Smithfield	\$346,554.00
South Kingstown	\$323,154.00
Tiverton (estimate)	\$701,205.00
Warren	\$250,649.50
Warwick	\$1,710,045.50
West Greenwich	\$72,715.50
West Warwick	\$591,853.50
Westerly + Hopkinton	\$1,288,959.50
Woonsocket	\$708,142.50

This table is from the RIFPC document "An Act Concerning Composting & Organic Waste Diversion," based on municipal data from RIRRC

APPENDIX B

Municipality	Population	Population Density	Median Income	% College Degree
Barrington	17,121	2,086.7/sq mi	\$130,455	71.8%
Bristol	22,420	2,290.5/sq mi	\$80,727	41.0%
Burrillville	16,205	293.6/sq mi	\$96,824	25.7%
Central Falls	22,359	18,819.2/sq mi	\$40,235	9.2%
Charleston	7,998	219.4/sq mi	\$86,023	38.6%
Conventry	35,656	604.4/sq mi	\$88,777	28.5%
Cranston	82,691	2,926.4/sq mi	\$77,145	33.9%
Cumberland	36,276	1,376.4/sq mi	\$104,613	40.8%
East Greenwich	14,285	873.2/sq mi	\$133,373	63.4%
East Providence	47,012	3,560.3/sq mi	\$65,016	30.8%
Exeter	6,952	112.4/sq mi	\$95,053	48.9%
Foster	4,491	88.0/sq mi	\$99,892	35.9%
Glocester	10,039	184.1/sq mi	\$97,752	33.3%
Hopkington	8,402	195.5/sq mi	\$87,712	29.5%
Jamestown	5,554	588.3/sq mi	\$120,129	61.0%
Johnston	29,545	1,262.0/sq mi	\$75,579	26.30%
Lincoln	22,376	1243.3/sq mi	\$94,571	44.6%
Little Compton	3,622	176.2/sq mi	\$96,111	59.4%
Middletown	17,009	1,342.4/sq mi	\$88,211	47.9%

APPENDIX B

Municipality	Population	Population Density	Median Income	% College Degree
Narragansett	14,623	1,046.2/sq mi	\$82,211	55.6%
New Shoreham	1,410	103.8/sq mi	\$72,279	47.7%
Newport	25,087	3,307.55/sq mi	\$77,092	54.8%
North Kingstown	27,719	642.8/sq mi	\$104,026	48.7%
North Providence	33,945	6,070.1/sq mi	\$68,821	32.5%
North Smithfield	12,535	528.9/sq mi	\$87,121	29.5%
Pawtucket	75,176	8,710.1/sq mi	\$56,427	22.3%
Portsmouth	17,846	777.7/sq mi	\$104,073	54.4%
Providence	189,715	10,376.8/sq mi	\$55,787	33.3%
Richmond	8,077	199.1/sq mi	\$100,493	39.3%
Scituate	10,404	215.6/sq mi	\$104,388	32.4%
Smithfield	22,086	840.7/sq mi	\$87,819	38.1%
South Kingstown	31,928	565.7/sq mi	\$102,242	56.6%
Tiverton	16,324	563.1/sq mi	\$85,522	37.8%
Warren	11,117	1,821.4/sq mi	\$75,755	34.0%
Warwick	82,783	2,363.7/sq mi	\$77,110	33.3%
West Greenwich	6,535	791.3/sq mi	\$126,402	38.7%
West Warwick	30,909	129.9/sq mi	\$62,649	22.8%
Westerly	23,337	3,981.0/sq mi	\$48,822	36.0%
Woonsocket	43,029	5,586.6/sq mi	\$48,822	19.6%

APPENDIX C

OTHER TOWNS IN CONSIDERATION

Through the process of applying for a multi-partner high-value (\$10-\$20M) EPA Environmental Justice Community change grant program and the USDA Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) grant the Staff at RIFPC had many conversations with municipal leaders who were unable to participate in this report. We thought it important not to ignore their feedback during those conversations:

BARRINGTON

The town and staff are very supportive of composting, a drop-off program is being run the the Barrington Farm School which also works with schools in the community. They are close to capacity. They worked with the RIFPC and partners to submit a CFWR grant centered around expanding capacity for the farm school and starting a curbside pickup program with a private hauler. Throughout the process they expressed concerns around staff capacity issues but RIFPC and partners were able to assist with support for staff capacity and the City remained supportive of the project and were able to provide meaningful matching funds for the application

NEWPORT

Having been part of the Clean Ocean Action program in the past their leadership is understandably hesitant to get involved in programs with many moving pieces and worried it may shut down if funding is discontinued. Given the timeline of application and their concerns they were unable to support the EPA grant application. However, they were supportive of a simplified CFWR grant application centered around a curbside pickup program and provided meaningful matching funds for the application.

CENTRAL FALLS

RIFPC staff had many conversations with Central Falls regarding the EPA grant. They were very keen to add a sustainability coordinator to help with composting and other sustainability goals. However their concerns centered around staff capacity and long term funding of both the program and potential staffers.

PAWTUCKET

Outreach and conversations were also had with Pawtucket staff regarding the EPA grant; they shared capacity concerns about building the capacity to move a program forward.