

A close-up, top-down view of a green plastic lid, likely for a trash can, resting on a surface of dark gravel. The lid features the words "NO TRASH!" in large, white, sans-serif capital letters. The text is arranged with "NO" at the top, "TRASH!" at the bottom, and a central circular opening. Faint, embossed text "LEAKPROOF" and "LEOMINSTER, MA" is visible in the upper right quadrant. A recycling symbol and the text "HDPE" are embossed in the lower left quadrant. The lid has a central circular opening and several small, rectangular indentations around its perimeter.

And I Would Walk A Third
of a Mile: Lessons in
Community Composting
From Providence, Rhode
Island

Tyson Birch
Harvest Cycle Compost



Harvest Cycle Compost is:

100% Bicycle Powered food scrap collection program.

Community composting service in Providence, RI with two options: residential drop off and individual pickup.

As of March 2025:

380 pickup customers

430 residential dropoff

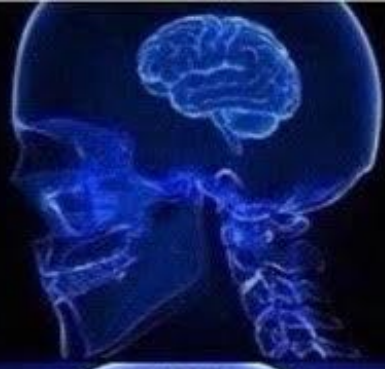
THE PROBLEM

A photograph of a large landfill filled with various types of trash, including plastic bags, bottles, and other debris. In the background, a yellow tractor is visible on a pile of dark soil or compost. Several birds, likely seagulls, are perched on the trash and flying in the sky. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

Central Landfill is expected to fill up by 2046.
Food waste accounts for 33% of all trash.

Rhode Island needs to start composting –
but how?

LANDFILL



**ANAEROBIC
DIGESTION**



**INDUSTRIAL
COMPOSTING**



**COMMUNITY
COMPOSTING**



“Community composting is a model of composting that sources organic materials **locally**, engages the **community** in the composting process, and uses the compost produced in **local soils**.” (US EPA, 2025)



Generation



Processing



Distribution

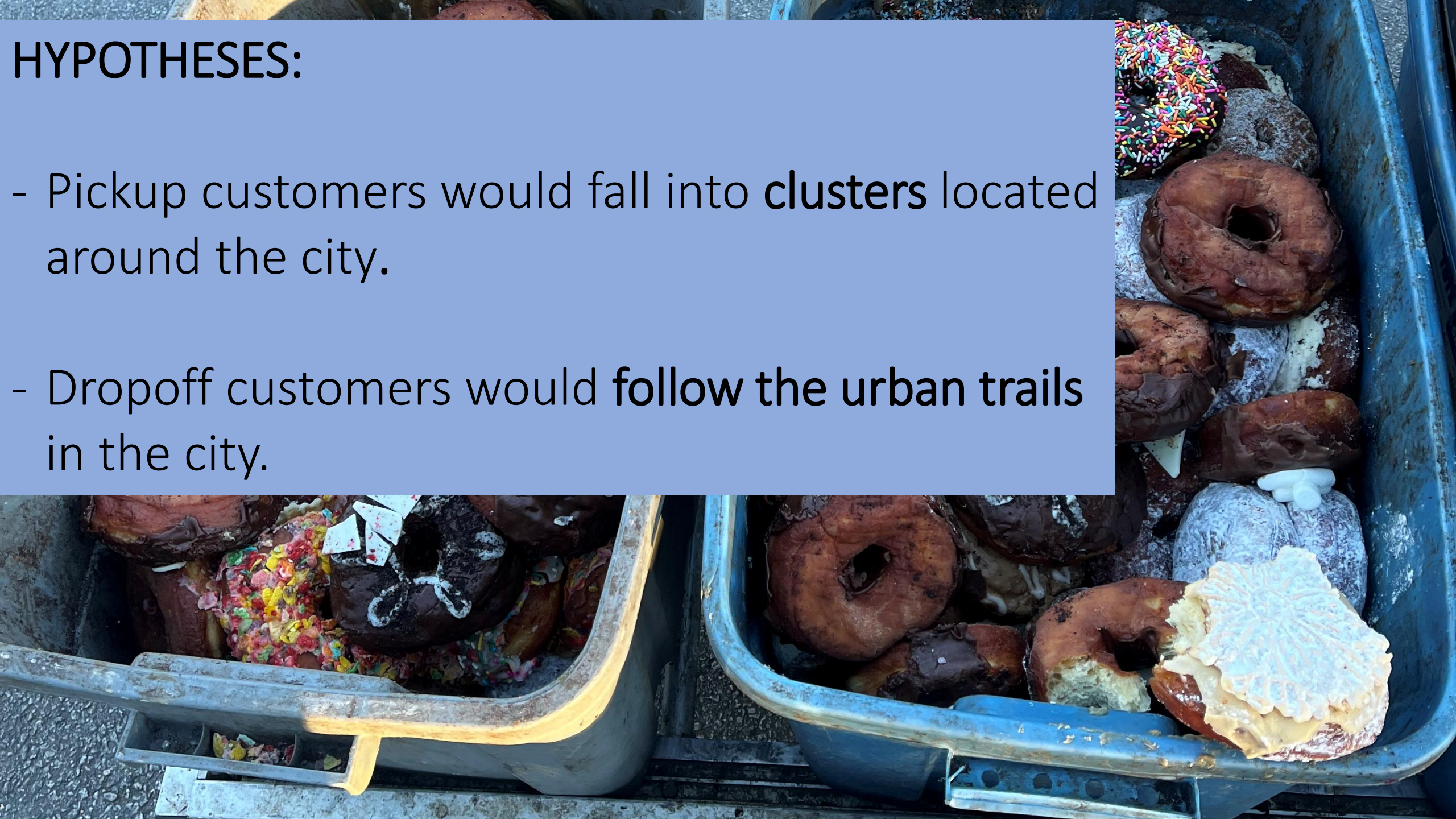


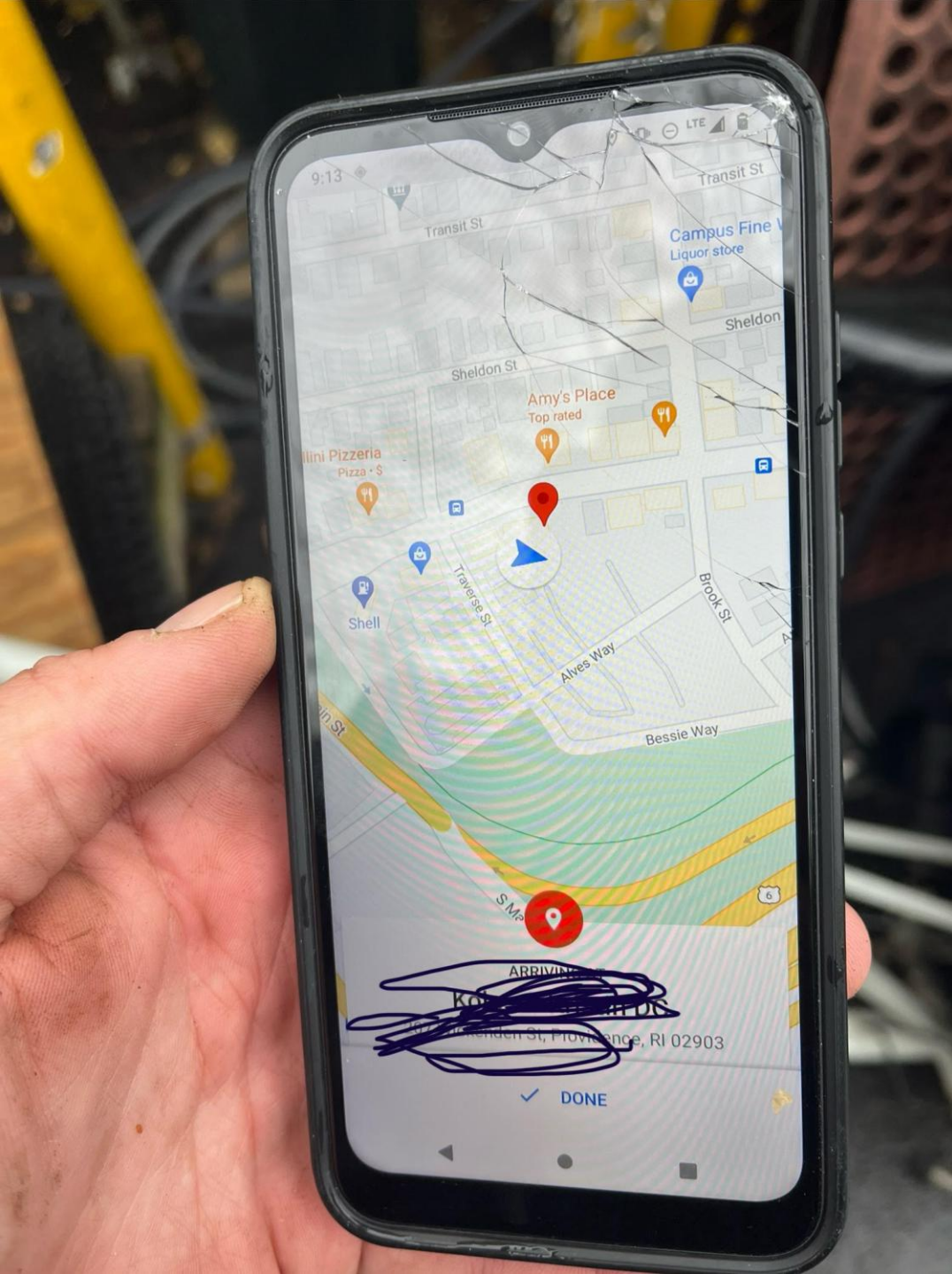
Collection

From Food Scrap to Compost

HYPOTHESES:

- Pickup customers would fall into **clusters** located around the city.
- Dropoff customers would **follow the urban trails** in the city.





Collection



All routes are programmed with **StopSuite**
Bike is a **Surly Big Easy** and **Main Street Pedicab**
Trailer is made by **Bikes At Work**

Two aggregation points at Ring Street (West End) and Jewish Community Center (East Side).

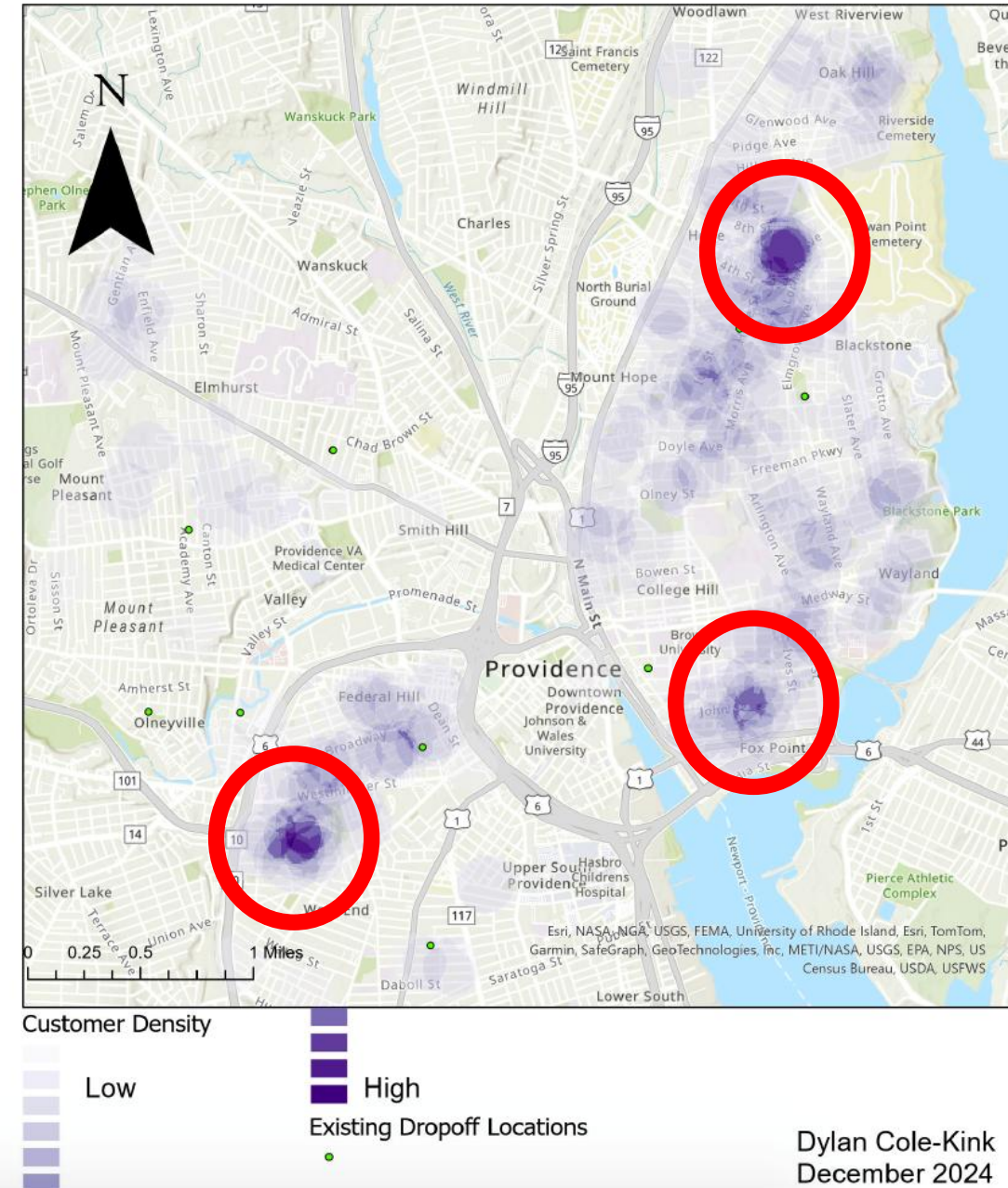


Food scraps collected at dump sites are either brought by **Remix Organics** to the Anaerobic Digester, collected by **Epic Renewal** for bokashi composting, or processed in house.

TRENDS WITH INDIVIDUAL PICKUP:

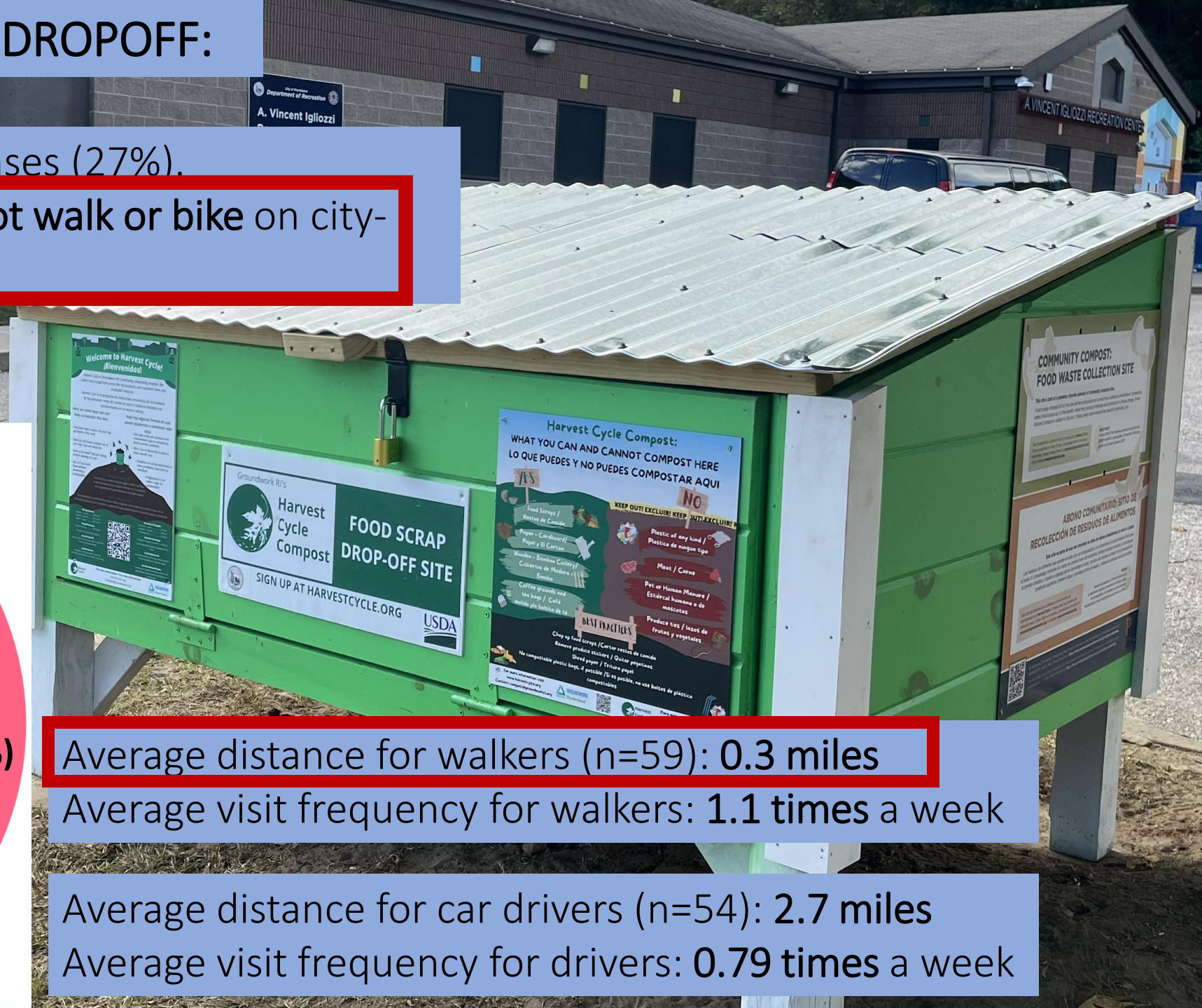
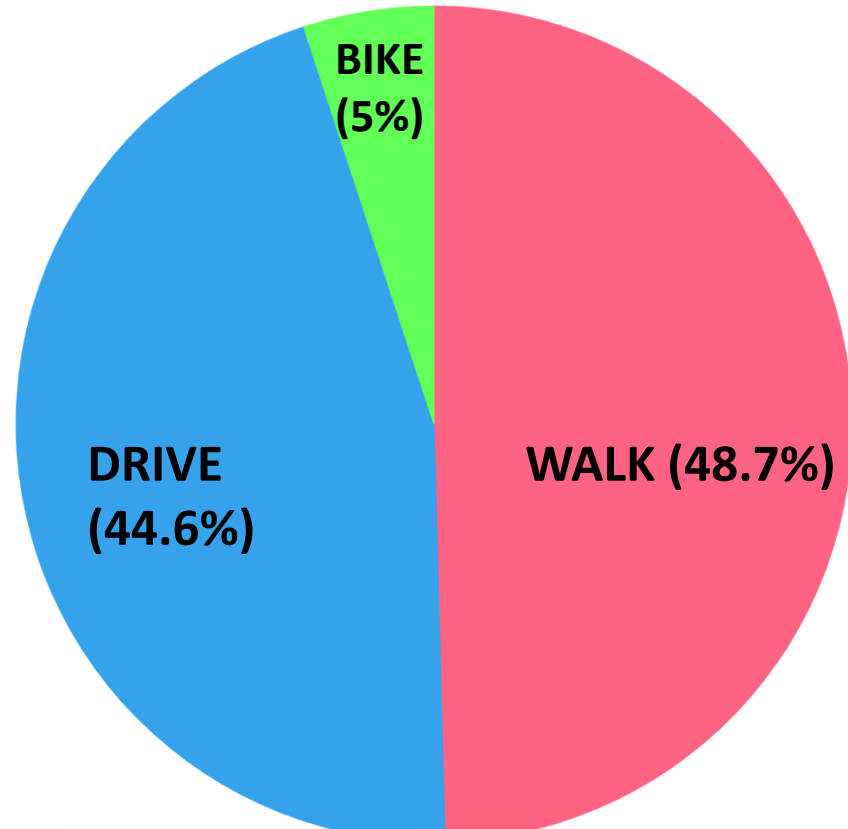
- Customers gather in CLUSTERS.
- Neighbors see buckets around their neighborhood and join as well.
- Hotspots include **Fox Point, Hope Street, Federal Hill.**
- Price for individual pickup starts at **\$16/month** compared to **\$10/month** for residential dropoff.

Harvest Cycle Customer Density and Existing Dropoff Locations



TRENDS WITH RESIDENTIAL DROPOFF:

- 435 surveys with 121 responses (27%).
- Responding customers **do not walk or bike** on city-wide urban trails.



Average distance for walkers (n=59): **0.3 miles**

Average visit frequency for walkers: **1.1 times a week**

Average distance for car drivers (n=54): **2.7 miles**

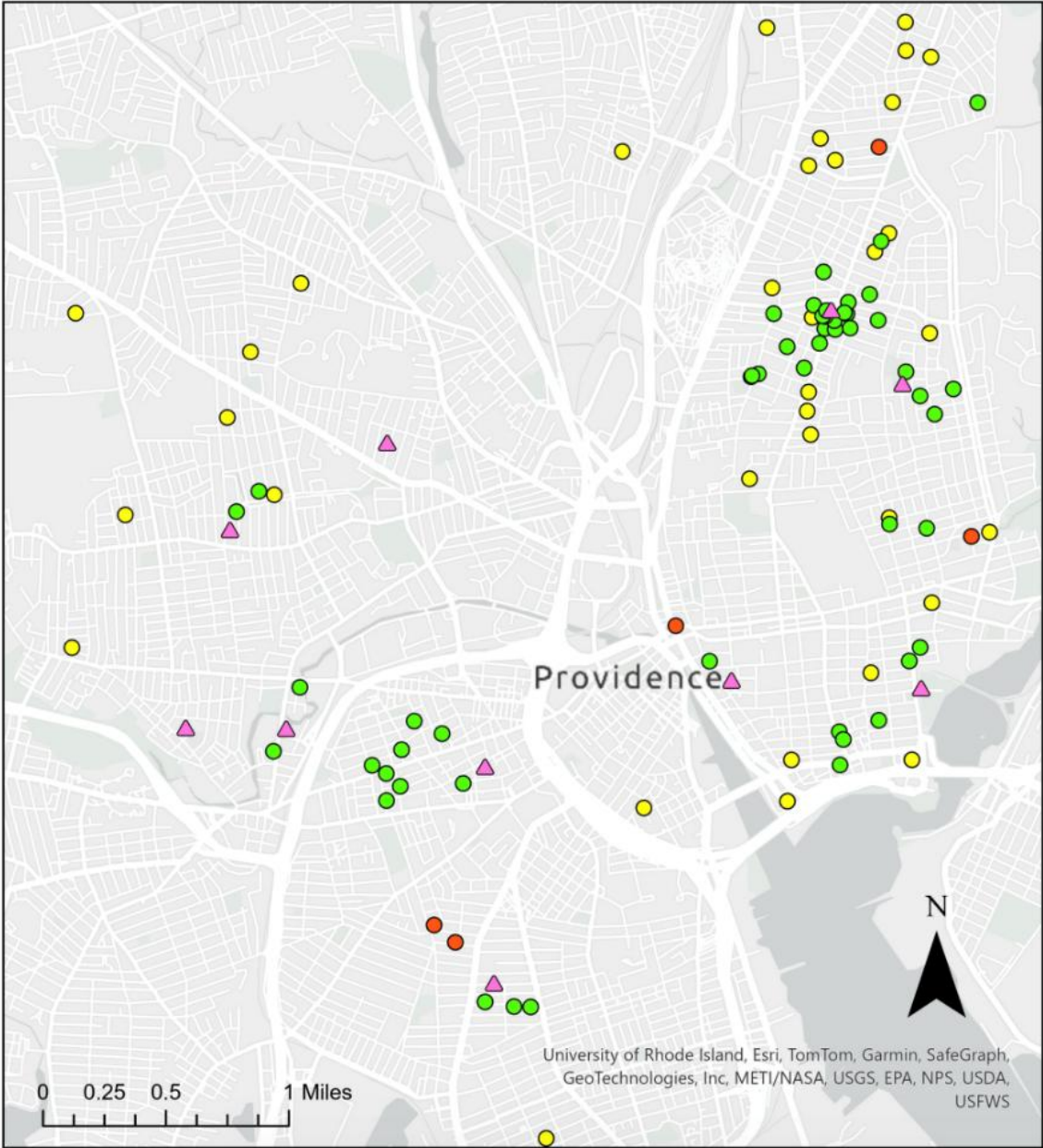
Average visit frequency for drivers: **0.79 times a week**

Reasons for using dropoff overwhelmingly included “price” and “proximity to home.”



17 dropoff locations spaced around the city with more on the way!

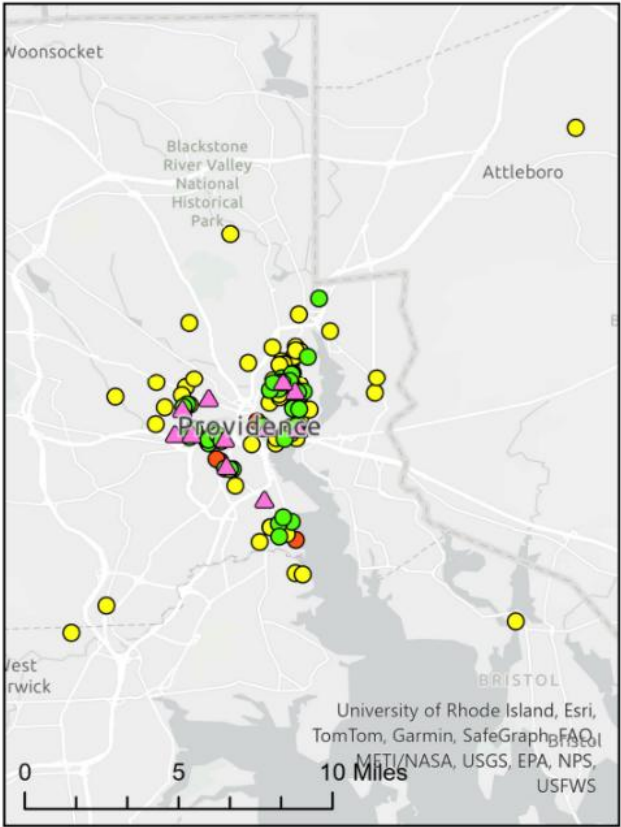
Harvest Cycle Dropoff Customer Addresses and Modes of Travel to Dropoff Locations



 Dropoff Locations

Customer Home and Mode of Travel

-  Bike
-  Car
-  Walk



Farthest distance traveled by car:

19.5 miles (Attleboro to Power Street)

Average distance traveled by car:

2.5 miles

Frequency visited a week:

0.79

Farthest distance traveled by foot:

0.9 miles

Average distance traveled by foot:

0.3 miles

Frequency visited a week:

1.06

PROCESSING

Industrial composting misses out on involving the **local community** in the composting.

Processing is mostly done by staff but our volunteers include pickup and dropoff customers who want to help out whenever they can. Groundwork RI high school Green Team and Adult Job Training students also help with processing. Many hands make light labor!



FINDINGS:

- Pickup customers fall into **clusters** located around the city.

~~Dropoff customers would follow the urban trails in the city to get to their dropoff.~~

- Dropoff customers walk an average of 0.3 miles to drop off their compost.



Harvest Cycle Diverted **156 tons** of food scrap from the landfill last year.

(Up from 111 tons in 2023)

Every Spring there is a compost “giveback” available to all subscribers to receive 5-10 gallons of finished compost.

to join, visit
harvestcycle.org



Thank you!