

# Pittsburgh Sustainable Event Guide

In Accordance with the City of Pittsburgh for the Year of 2024



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# WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE EVENTS?

Special events are a good way to connect with community, culture, and even stay fit! The City of Pittsburgh is committed to providing a wide variety of social gatherings that highlight the diverse place we call home. Although special events can be fun, they can also be a monumental source of litter and waste that have detrimental effects on our environment.



Sustainable Events are the coordinated efforts of event planners, the City, vendors, and volunteers to organize special events with the environment in mind. It incorporates **sustainable energy**, **waste management**, and **sustainable purchasing**.

This guide will help planners make their events as earth-friendly as possible!



# SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

## Transportation

Lowering your event's carbon footprint starts before your guests even arrive. Encourage guests and staff to cycle or walk to events by supplying bike racks, rideshare, and creating accessible walkways. The Port Authority of Allegheny County also offers a variety of public transportation options, including bus, light rail, incline, and paratransit services. Most of these services charge a small fee, but the "T" light rail system offers free services within Downtown and the North Shore 24/7.

By encouraging event attendees to use these services, you can help to reduce your carbon footprint, increase efficiency, and worry less about space and parking requirements. Consider including in the event description or invitation the public transit stop nearest your event location and the various transit routes that lead to it.

## Energy Conservation

Energy conservation is an essential aspect of hosting sustainable events. Staying conscious of your energy choices can help reduce the cost of your event and the resources you devote to it.

The first and easiest step is always reduction - ask yourself and your fellow organizers if you really need appliances that require electrification or gas power. Can you host your event outside during the day so that you don't have to illuminate the event with artificial lighting?

In searching for an event space, look for one that utilizes renewable energy as part of its portfolio. Look to rent portable generators or load storage appliances that run on renewable energy sources like PV solar panels or wind turbines.

If none of these options are feasible for you, you can purchase renewable energy credits (RECs) to offset any of the power you use during your event.

Consider employing an event production company that focuses on sustainability. Zero Fossil (<http://www.zerofossil.com/>) is an event production company that employs sustainable equipment and practices to provide professional event services with minimal impact to the environment. ***(This recommendation does not represent an endorsement from the City of Pittsburgh).***

# WASTE MANAGEMENT

One of the greenest, easiest, and most visible ways to manage waste at your event is to implement the tactics of zero waste.

The Zero Waste International Alliance **defines zero waste as the diversion of at least 90% of waste from landfills or incineration**. With help from 100 Resilient Cities, the City of Pittsburgh has developed a Roadmap to Zero Waste, laying out a strategic plan to achieve this 90% diversion rate city-wide by 2030. Special Events planning plays an important role in achieving that goal.

The first step is to develop a zero waste plan. This process should begin 3-6 months before your event's date and include conversations with the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works on trash collection and City of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Services on recycling options. We recommend working with your vendors to assess their individual waste streams.

When developing your zero waste strategy, always remember that source reduction is the most effective method. Consider selecting venues, vendors, and activities that generate less waste from the start. For more suggestions and resources to accomplish this, please see the vendor list on page 18.



*Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency*

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR WASTE AND RECYCLING

A key component of event planning is waste management. After minimizing your procurement of non-essential goods, the next step is to strategize a recycling protocol.

## Single Stream Recycling

Currently, Pittsburgh employs a single stream recycling system, which means that all paper fibers, plastics, metals, and other containers are mixed throughout both collection and processing, rather than being sorted beforehand by depositors.

While this method often encourages recycling, it also creates more opportunity for contamination, meaning recycled items end up getting sent to landfills. It's important to know what items can be recycled and what items should be sent directly to landfills. A helpful resource guild is: <http://recyclethispgh.com/>

## Estimate your waste stream

Consider what types of waste will be present at your event. Talk to vendors and sponsors about giveaways, utensils, and any other materials they will be distributing.

The type of event you're planning will inform the type of waste you'll generate. For example, if you are hosting an event that incorporates lots of physical activity, then your guests will likely go through more single-use water bottles than an event without.

Referring to past years' events can also help you predict the types and amounts of waste your event will produce. The waste haulers that have collected your waste at previous events may still have data on how much they collected. If this is your first event, contact waste haulers or other event organizers to find out how much waste was generated at similar events.



# ESTABLISHING WASTE COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Events with over 200 people are legally required to recycle in the City of Pittsburgh in accordance with [City code §619](#).

For more information on Pittsburgh recycling requirements and to order recycling equipment, visit: <http://pittsburghpa.gov/dpw/special-event-recycling>

We encourage all events to consider their environmental impact and employ recycling methods. This means plastic bottles and jugs, aluminium/steel cans, mixed paper, and cardboard can be placed in recycling containers. Depending on your waste hauler, glass can be placed in these recycling containers or recycled separately. All other waste items can be collected in trash containers.

To truly achieve a diversion minimum of 90%, consider composting. All food, wood, napkins, paper plates, and bio-plastics can be composted. Consider supplying or requiring

food vendors to use compostable bio-plastics for cups and service ware. While composting is not required by City ordinance, it greatly increases rates of diversion while educating guests about food waste.

Take into consideration the size of the event space, estimated waste generation, and number of guests. Have the same number of recycling, compost, and trash containers, and, if necessary, remove or block any City-owned trash containers to discourage guests from sending recyclable or compostable items to landfills.

Below is an estimate for the amount of containers needed for your event, based on number of guests.

Guests	Recycling containers	Trash containers	Compost containers
0-200	2	2	2
200-500	5	5	5
500-1,000	10	10	10
1,000-5,000	20	20	20
5,000-10,000	30	30	30
10,000-20,000	40	40	40
20,000-30,000	50	50	50

It is important that the containers are clearly labeled as either recycling, trash, or compost. Images of what can and cannot be recycled are extremely useful for guests.

Always place your containers in strategic locations near vendors and exits, and always in pairs. Guests are less likely to use the correct receptacle if they are far away and far apart.

## EVENT STAFFING

Appointing staff or volunteers with specific waste management responsibilities can increase your chances of zero waste success. The more people you have committed to zero waste management, the better the results. Some positions to consider are:

- Waste Manager
  - Overall manager for waste related procedures before, during, and after the event.
- Guest Recycling Ambassadors
  - One or more individuals who are educating the guests at the event about recycling and zero waste procedures.
- Vendor Recycling Assistant
  - One or multiple individuals who are educating the vendors and other third parties you are bringing in to your event about recycling and zero waste procedures.
- Container Monitor Assistant
  - One or multiple individuals who are continuously monitoring all trash and recycling containers and determine whether they need to be sorted and/or emptied.
- Hauler
  - A company or volunteering group that will be responsible for hauling all the event waste to the correct destinations.





# WATER CONSERVATION

Eliminating plastic bottle use and saving water is significant step toward reducing overall waste. A number of different options are available to make more efficient use of water resources:

- Ask your caterer if they can provide tap or filtered water.
- Utilize water fountains or water coolers instead of individual water bottles.
- Consider purchasing or renting a tank and stand system like WaterMonster. These are available for purchase at <https://watermonster.us/> and for rent from the City of Pittsburgh. ***(This recommendation does not represent an endorsement from the City of Pittsburgh).***



# ZERO WASTE CHECKLIST

**GREEN EVENT CHECKLIST**

- Establish the extent to which your event will be "zero-waste"
- Request the necessary equipment and facilities from the city and other providers
- Organize prior to your event what hauling and removal services you require
- Include information in your event description and invitations to reiterate to attendees what your "zero-waste" goals are
- Organize your volunteers and reiterate to them the value of "zero-waste" and what their intended roles are
- Determine the locations of your waste, recycling, compost, and other necessary bins that will be available to guests (consider making a map)
- Ensure labeling of these bins is clear and easily understandable by users and volunteers
- Cleanup all remaining waste and ensure that it is properly disposed of

# SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING: VENDOR LIST

The following vendor list can help you identify new partners for reducing waste and energy consumption at your next event. *These listings do not represent an endorsement from the City of Pittsburgh.*

## ***Full Service Zero Waste Consulting and Event Services***

These expert organizations will help you strategize zero waste plan, identify zero waste vendors, and manage zero waste events onsite.

### **Pennsylvania Resources Council**

(412) 488-7490

<https://prc.org/what-we-do/zero-waste-services/zero-waste-event-services/>

### **Green Gears Event Groundskeeping**

(412) 512-9616

<https://www.ggpedi.com/event-waste-services>

## ***COMMERCIAL HAULERS***

### **AgRecycle**

412-242-7645

Accepts: yard debris, food waste

### **BIG's Sanitation, Inc.**

724-379-4331

Accepts: cardboard, paper, aluminum, plastic bottles, jugs and jars

### **Access**

877-345-3546

Accepts: paper shredding/recycling

### **Boyd Roll-Off Services**

412-331-6830

Accepts: paper, plastic, cardboard, aluminum

### **Brunner Waste/Recycling**

724-775-6665

Accepts: cardboard, paper, aluminum, plastic bottles, jugs and jars

**J.A. Rutter Co.**

724-327-1101

Accepts: yard debris and pallets

**Largent's Pallet's & Recycling**

412-377-9021

Accepts: cardboard, wood pallets, and plastic pallets

**Recall Total Information Mgmt.**

412-321-0600

Accepts: paper, cardboard

**Recycle Source**

412-421-6000

Accepts: single stream

**Republic Services**

(412) 429-2600

Accepts: single stream

**Road Runner**

888-871-7623

Accepts: single stream

**Royal Oak Recycling**

412-329-2590

Accepts: paper, cardboard

**Quest Resource Management**

855-782-5819

Accepts: single stream

**Waste Management**

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Accepts:

**Vogel Disposal Service**

724-625-1511

Accepts: single stream

**Wood Waste Recycle LLC**

724-695-1000

Accepts: yard debris

***COMPOSTABLE SERVICEWARE*****Biodegradable Products Institute**<https://bpiworld.org/find-certified-products>**Birchware**

217-615-4830

<https://www.birchware.com/>**Eco Products**

303-449-1876

<https://www.ecoproducts.com/>**Pennsylvania Resources Council**<https://prc.org/what-we-do/zero-waste-services/zero-waste-rental-service/>**Stalk Market Compostable Products**

(503) 295-4977

<https://stalkmarketproducts.com>

**World Centric**

(707) 241-9190

<https://www.worldcentric.com>

***ENERGY CONSERVATION***

**Zero Fossil Energy Outfitters**

412-906-ZERO (9376)

[www.zerofossil.com](http://www.zerofossil.com)

Services: solar generators, veggie oil and bio-diesel generators, lighting, audio, staging, custom

***FOOD WASTE PREVENTION AND RECOVERY***

**412 Food Rescue**

412-277-3831

<https://412foodrescue.org/>

Services: leftover food pick-up and delivery to local non-profits

**Sustainable Pittsburgh**

<https://sustainablepittsburgh.org/take-action/recognition-programs/restaurants/restaurants-directory/>

Services: identifying sustainable food vendors

**Worm Return**

<http://wormreturn.com>

Services: composting

**Zero Waste Wrangler**

<https://zerowastewrangler.com/>

Services: composting

***WATER CONSERVATION***

**WaterMonster**

Retail sales: 512-563-1737

Event services: 512-517-8118

<https://watermonster.us/>



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

***Are guests allowed to bring their own reusable containers (i.e., Tupperware, coolers, water bottles, etc.) for vendors to fill with their food and beverage products?***

Yes! While recycling and composting are crucial to a zero waste event, the ultimate way to avoid landfills is through reduction. Speak to your vendors beforehand to discuss whether they can accommodate customers bringing their own containers, and encourage them to consider adding cost reductions to guests who do so.

***Does the city have ways to accurately determine the amount of waste and recycling that is generated at a zero waste event?***

As this is a new initiative, there are currently limited ways to generate estimates of how much waste has been diverted away from landfills, either through reduction or recycling. Fortunately, there are ways to approximate these values based on the number of guests, the type of event, how many containers are used, and by weight of materials. Using these values as proxies, data can be determined and used to measure the success of a zero waste event. Certain haulers and consulting services can provide these numbers for you.

***Do recyclable products need to be cleaned before going into the appropriate bin?***

While items do not need to be thoroughly washed before being recycled, it is highly recommended that all visible food and non-recyclable product has been removed. This reduces the volume of contaminated materials and ultimately results in a higher diversion rate.

**For more information call the City of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Services at 412-255-2631 or visit us at <https://pittsburghpa.gov/dpw/environmental-services>.**

*This guide was developed in partnership with Heinz College at Carnegie Mellon University, City of Pittsburgh Environmental Services, and City of Pittsburgh Office of Sustainability and Resilience.*