

# Howard County Curbside Food Scrap Collection

Gemma Evans, Recycling Coordinator  
Recycling Division  
410-313-6434  
[gevans@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:gevans@howardcountymd.gov)



Bureau of Environmental Services  
Howard County, Maryland



# Mini Pilot

- September 2010 to January 2011
- Current yard trim processor would accept material at current tip fee (\$34/ton)
- Weekly curbside collection by the yard trim truck
- Small area chosen, contacted residents via email list-serv and door-to-door
- 34 households (of 200 targeted) volunteered
- Provided indoor and outdoor collection containers
  - Ease of use, prevent/minimize rodent problems
  - 10.5 gallons, 20 gallon, 35 gallon, 65 gallon outdoor containers. Some had vents in the sides and/or lids
  - No need for plastic bags
- Residents kept journal about their experiences
- Regular email reminders & updates were sent
- Frequent email correspondence (questions, advice etc)
- The County weighed trash cans and food scrap carts and tracked participation



# Mini Pilot

- Types of material collected
  - Fruit and vegetable scraps (fresh or cooked)
  - Egg shells
  - Bread, pasta, beans, grains and nuts
  - Coffee grounds, filters and tea bags (no foil or foil-backed products)
  - Paper towels and napkins with food residue on them
  - Uncoated paper plates
  - Pizza boxes (remove any non-food items)
  - Paper egg cartons or paper bags



# Mini Pilot Findings

- Average weekly setout rate was 76%, overall 100% participation rate (overall participation rate was expected to be high)
- One family dropped out
- Estimated 3.9 tons of food scrap and yardwaste diverted
- Approximately 23% of the residential trash in the pilot area was food scraps
- Volunteers really liked the program, many expressed disappointment that the pilot program ended
- Volunteers were very happy to keep journals, provide feedback, and help us move forward
- Bureau recommended a larger/expanded pilot program to include more residents and further explore feasibility of County-wide food scrap collection.





# Mini Pilot Volunteer Observations: Indoors

- One family put toothpicks and popsicle sticks in bins. Would have added chopsticks also.
- Another family used a pedal -operated 3-gal bin to collect food scraps; they preferred it to the kitchen pail.
- Great way to clean cupboard of stale/expired foods.
- Several households suggested that if program expands we should create a sign/sticker for indoor collection.
- One family started out excited about indoor pail then decided didn't like it.
- Indoor collection is tricky – looking for a system that doesn't get too “yucky/messy”.
- Several people said that counter space at a premium so hard to know where to put indoor container.
- Couple of people stopped using the green bins and started using bowls instead – easier to use and also to clean.



# Mini Pilot Volunteer Observations: Outdoors

- Several people mentioned success using baking soda to help control odors in cart.
- Suggested we implement program in winter when there are fewer fruit flies.
- Several families felt they had to rinse and wash inside bin each time it is emptied.
- One family started out worried about odor problems but then worked around it.
- Attached lid makes cart hard to wash in laundry sink. Another family would have preferred a kitchen container that fit in the dishwasher or with a removable lid that makes it easier to wash. Several people mentioned regularly washing both bins and carts but couldn't wash big green cart outside once weather got cold and outdoor faucet was turned off.
- Several residents started using paper grocery bags to line small indoor container to keep it cleaner.
- Liked vent on top of container so could tell difference between carts in the dark
- 2 people tried using plastic bags to line small bin then either rinse or toss the bag once contents are emptied into larger cart.

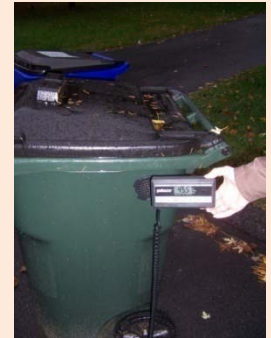


# Mini Pilot Distribution





# Mini Pilot - Collections



# Mini Pilot - Correct



# Mini Pilot - Incorrect

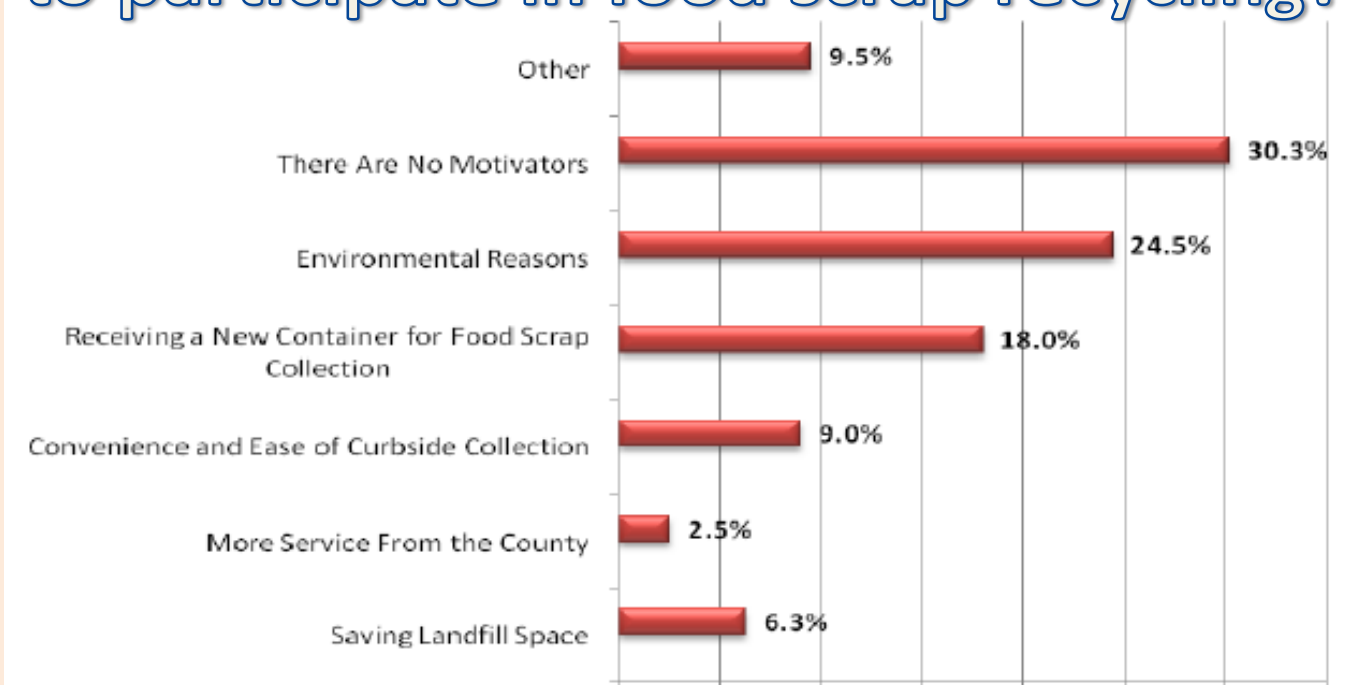


# Phone Survey

- Completed February 2011
- Cost about \$10,000
- Random phone sample
  - Non-biased spread included various house types, household sizes, locations, and recycling habits - non-recyclers to >75%)
- 400 completed surveys
- 63% likely to participate in food scrap program
- 24% currently compost at home



# What would be your biggest motivator to participate in food scrap recycling?



<u>Non-Listed / Other Responses:</u>	Uncertain / Don't know	Would need more info	Already doing it at home	All of the above	An easy way to buy or sell compost created	Use it to feed animals	Creation of new jobs	An animal-proof container
Number of mentions	12	4	3	3	1	1	1	1

Table 3 – Other non-listed motivators to participate in Food Scraps Recycling program.



# How would you prefer to collect your material?

56% County-provided container, 30% Bio-degradable bags, 14% Container of choice

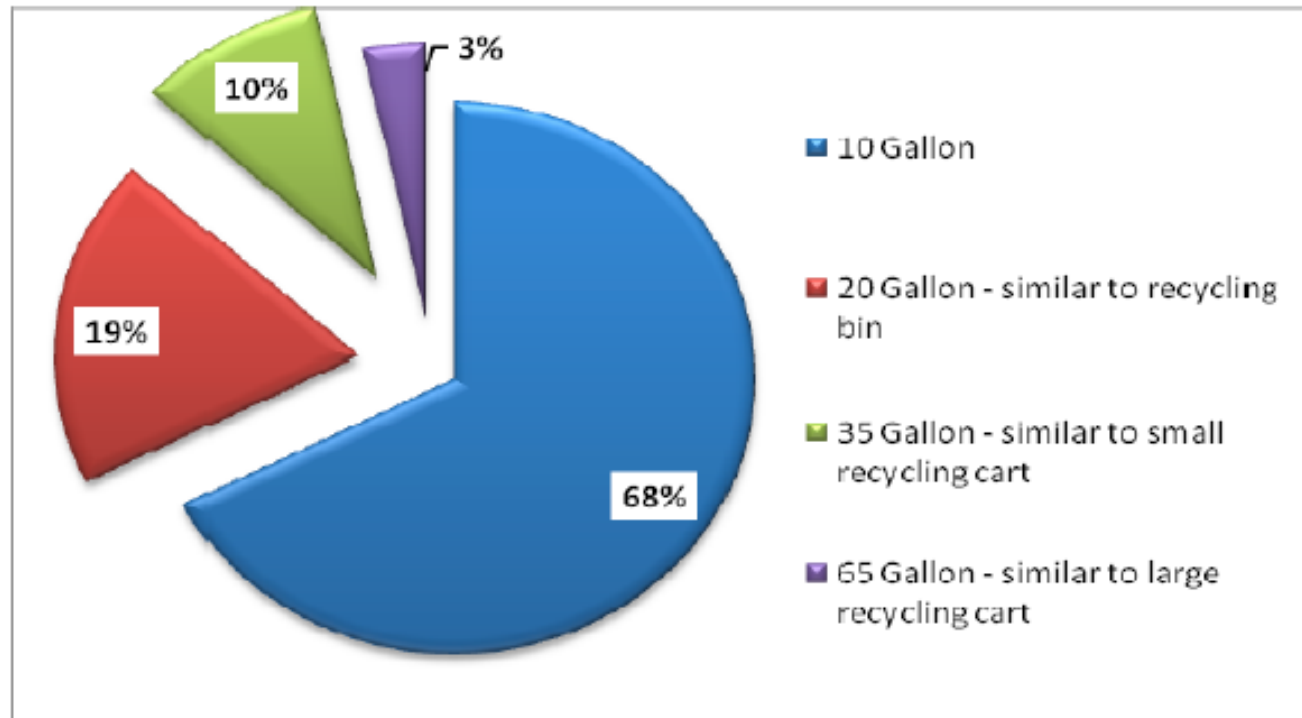


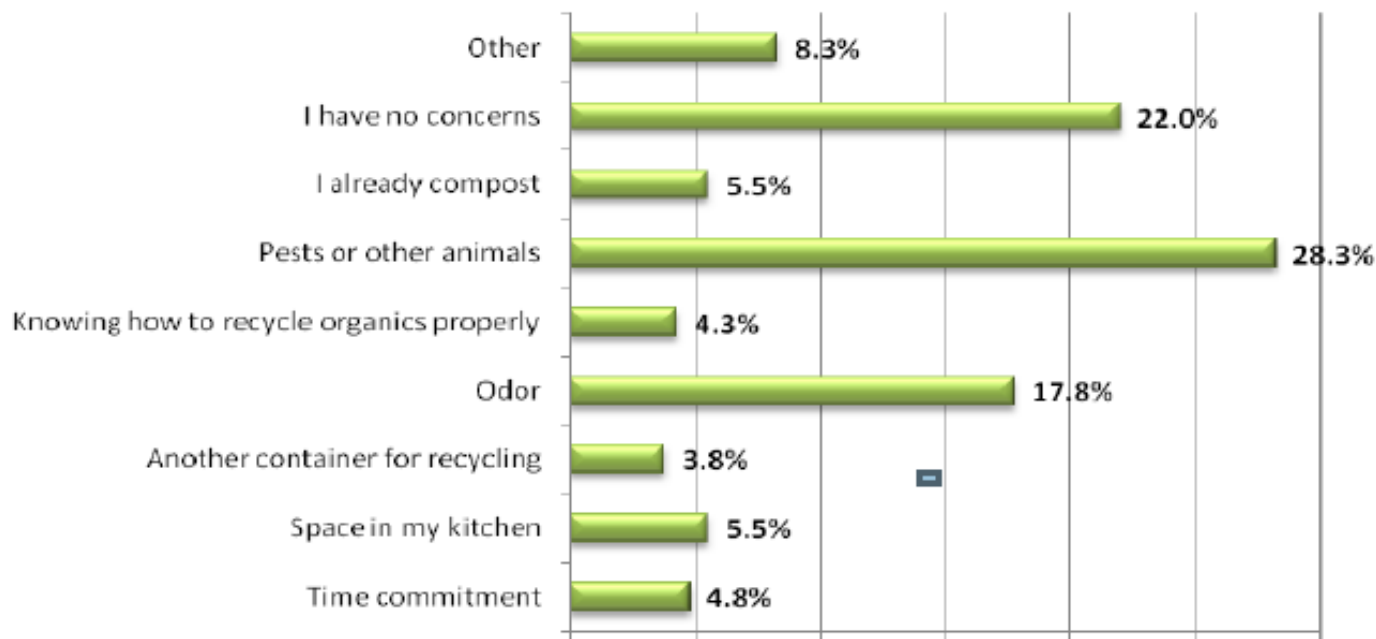
Figure 23 - Size container believed needed for food scrap collection. Participants were told a standard trash can is 30 Gallons.



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# What is your biggest concern about food scrap recycling?



<u>Non-listed concerns:</u>	1. All of the above	2. Would need more information	3. Pests AND Odors	4. Missed Pick-ups	5. Uncertain
Number of mentions	10	11	2	2	8

Table 2 – Other non-listed reasons for concern with food scrap recycling program.



# Larger Pilot

- Pilot area of 5,000 houses
- Variety of house styles – SF, TH, MHP, no condos
- Weekly curbside collection by the yard trim truck – year-round
- Voluntary program, 20% participation
- Sent 2 informative mailers with attached reply card to sign-up
- Public meeting at local library
- Created online sign-up & webpage about the food scrap program
  - [www.HowardCountyMD.gov/foodscraps.htm](http://www.HowardCountyMD.gov/foodscraps.htm)
- Volunteers received:
  - 35 gallon green cart with custom IML
  - Booklet with troubleshooting, FAQs, and tips to reduce food scraps
  - Acceptable/Unacceptable magnet
  - How Low Can You Go? contest
- Maintain help email account for questions and comments



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# Food Scrap Cart IML

## Food Scrap Collection

**Please NO:**

- Meat or Fish
- Dairy products
- Oils, fats or grease
- Bones
- Styrofoam
- Pet waste
- Diapers
- Plastics of any kind (including bio-degradable)

61916



Bread, Pasta, Rice, Cereal, Grains



Fruits & Vegetables (fresh or cooked)



Nuts, Beans, Seeds (including shells/hulls)



Cakes, Pies, Cookies



Egg shells



Paper towels & Napkins



Pizza boxes (remove non-food items)



Paper egg cartons & Paper bags



Uncoated paper plates



Shredded paper



Coffee grounds, Filters, Tea bags

**Limited Amounts:**

Yard debris, House plants, Cut flowers, Chopsticks/Popsicle sticks



410-313-6444

[www.HowardCountyRecycles.org](http://www.HowardCountyRecycles.org)



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# Food Scrap Magnet

Distributed  
with carts and  
at public events

Guidelines also  
appropriate for  
backyard  
composting

## Recycle Food Scraps!

### Accepted:

- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Egg shells
- Bread, pasta, rice, grains, cereal
- Cakes, pies, cookies, baked goods
- Nuts, beans, seeds
- Corn cobs and husks
- Coffee grounds, filters, tea bags (no foil or foil-backed products)
- Paper towels and napkins
- Uncoated paper plates
- Pizza boxes (remove non-food items)
- Ice cream containers
- Paper egg cartons and paper bags
- House plants
- Cut flowers
- Small quantities of:
  - Grass and leaves

### Not Accepted:

- Meat or fish (including bones)
  - Dairy (cheese, butter, ice cream, etc.)
  - Fats, oils, grease
  - Facial tissues
  - Styrofoam
  - Diapers
  - Pet waste
  - Plastic-coated paper plates or bowls
  - Plastics of any kind, including bio-degradable plastics
  - Milk cartons: Recycle in your blue bin/cart
  - Waxed paper or waxed cardboard, aluminum foil, or plastic wrap
- Please recycle cardboard and clean aluminum foil in your blue bin or cart.



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# Pilot Costs

Description	Total Cost
Print 5,000 food scrap return mailer round 1	\$2,447.32
Mail 5,000 food scrap return mailer round 1	\$2,226.40
Purchased 4,000 plastic bags for brochures on carts	\$116.00
Print 4,300 food scrap return mailer round 2	\$1,246.19
Mail 4,300 food scrap return mailer round 2	\$1,878.36
Return cost of both sets of postcards	\$351.52
500 promotional food scrap mini carts	\$1,555.66
Food for public meeting	\$67.15
5,000 magnets 3.75"x5.25"	\$2,196.50
Design food scrap booklet	\$847.50
Print 2,500 food scrap booklets	\$798.00
Coroplast sign of acceptable items 35"x28"	\$53.77
Oops stickers, Post-It Labels 3.33" x 4"	\$9.79
Print 1,100 How Low Can you Go? contest information quarter page sheets	\$277.48
35 gallon carts, IMLs, delivery and assembly	\$42,590.90

Total \$56,662.54



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# Comments – from website

- Are there plans to expand beyond the pilot program? I would LOVE to get curbside food scrap pickup in my community (Dorsey Search). I am so happy to hear this is going on!
- My family is THRILLED about the food scrap pilot program and dearly hopes that the program will be a success and Columbia (our home) will be included in the program. We would love to participate in such a program should it continue in the future and feel it would be very helpful in helping to reduce landfill space.
- I think the container should be smaller and there needs to be a way to be sure it is thoroughly emptied each week. Cleaning/rinsing it on our end is not feasible especially based on the size.
- We would like a food scrap container 1/2 the size of townhouse blue (35 gallon cart).



# Where are we now

- Averaging 10 pounds of food scraps per household
  - 5,000 pounds a week
  - 130 tons per year
- 51% participation rate
- Represents 26% of the waste stream
- Sending out Holiday Reminder Post card to Participants



# What's next

- How to Videos
- Expand County-wide
- In-County processing
- Business, condo composting
- Plastic bag ban



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**Help!**  
Let me out of this  
food scrap cart!



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# Contact Information

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