

Greening State College

“State College Borough announces first quarter results of food waste collection and composting program.”

In a first of its kind program east of the Mississippi, State College Borough began a curb-side pickup of food waste along specific streets located within the Greentree, Orchard Park and South Hills Neighborhoods on January 12, 2010. These particular areas were chosen for the pilot program due to their overwhelming positive response to a recent survey. This program will evaluate the feasibility of curb-side pickup of food waste and the effectiveness of composting it on a large scale. Composting is an environmentally preferable way to dispose of food waste. The program may be expanded to other neighborhoods once the year-long trial is completed. This pilot project was made possible through an Act 198 Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and supported by State College Borough, Centre County Solid Waste Authority and the Pennsylvania State University.

In the initial phase, thirty-five-gallon carts were offered to 584 residences with instructions on how or what could be composted in this pilot project. The program is voluntary but only 79 households declined to participate. Their carts were redistributed to additional residences. Reasons given for opting out of the program ranged from “Already composting” to “Did not have room for containers.” For the first four weeks of the program, we averaged 7 lbs of food waste per cart presented for pick-up (Not every cart was put out every week.).

In mid-February, the Borough began commercial collection at selected locations (Weis Market on Westerly Parkway, Ponderosa, Autoport, State College High School N & S, Corl Street Elementary, Easterly Parkway Elementary, Our Lady of Victory School and Foxdale Village Retirement Community). With the addition of these commercial properties, average weights have increased to 12.33 lbs of food waste per collected cart. By March 31, over 33,200 lbs of food waste was diverted to the Yard Waste Recycling facility.

At the Borough’s Yard Waste Facility, collected food waste is mixed with leaves and/or mulch and then placed in windrows to begin the composting process. Once a windrow reaches an appropriate size it will be turned at least once a week and should result in completed, coffee ground consistency, compost within 9 to 14 weeks.

Borough staff is also exploring the possibility of adding additional properties in the Downtown, including flower shops and restaurants. For additional information please email the Borough at foodwaste@statecollegepa.us.