

City Food Waste to Compost Pilot Summary

How the City diverted 7.5 tons of food waste and prevented 5 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO₂E) emissions in one year.

When: July 2023 through June 2024

Where: City of Albuquerque Senior Affairs (CASA) Kitchen, which prepares about 1,100 meals each day; and Explora's new concessions, run by Three Sister's Kitchen (TSK).

Who: Coordinated by the Sustainability Office (SO), hauled by Little Green Bucket (LGB), separated thanks to staff at CASA Kitchen, TSK, and Explora.

What: Food waste separation and hauling to a commercial compost facility. At the concessions, Explora included other compostable materials. Each site had two, 65-gallon roll carts, which LGB serviced weekly. The Sustainability Office worked with each site to educate staff and tailor separation process to meet site-specific needs. During the pilot SO conducted 10 bin digs (i.e., waste audits; 3 at CASA Kitchen and 7 at the concessions) to identify foods most often wasted, assess contamination, and provide site-specific recommendations for optimizing food waste diversion from the landfill. SO conducted an end-of-pilot staff evaluation at each site to understand the pilot value, impacts, and opportunities for improvement.

Why: Lead by example to support a circular local food system and care for our resources.

- **Make the most of taxpayer dollars.** Preventing food waste when possible helps facilities make the most of their food dollars, composting what remains builds healthy local soils and creates circularity in the local food system.
- **Save resources.** 112,000 tons of food is wasted in Albuquerque each year, including the 27 billion gallons of water and other resources used to produce the food. Food waste is responsible for 58% of methane emissions from landfills.

Total Pilot Cost: \$10,000 (excluding signage and bins). \$9,000 for hauling services; \$500 for start-up supplies; and \$500 for bin dig materials. Signage and bins for the concessions was funded by partners as part of the construction (value: \$2,300 to \$5,700). SO worked with TSK and Explora on the in-house design.

Impacts: In one year, the pilot diverted 7.5 tons of compostables (6.5 tons of food waste; 1 ton of mix organics) from the landfill, avoided 5 MTCO₂E emissions, and helped create local compost that built healthy soils. By site:

- CASA Kitchen: Diverted 4.8 tons of food waste and avoided 3.34 MTCO₂E
- The concessions: Diverted 2.7 tons of compostables and avoided 1.61 MTCO₂E

Replicability: Each site found the pilot valuable and Three Sisters Kitchen found funding to continue.

Note: Hauling costs have increased. Recent equivalent estimate: \$8.5k/site.

Questions? Want more Information? Reach out to the Sustainable Waste Specialist (swest@cabq.gov) for details on what it would take to divert food waste at your facility.

Last updated December 2025



Separation at Explora concessions (top) and CASA Kitchen (bottom)