



## Hennepin County **News**

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### **Hennepin County's organics recycling program expands to businesses**

Hennepin County businesses are joining school districts and residential curbside programs to collect organics for recycling. From large organizations - including IKEA in Bloomington and the Best Buy Headquarters in Richfield - to small restaurants - such as Corner Table and Heidi's in Minneapolis - businesses are seeing the benefits of implementing an organics recycling program. Through organics recycling, businesses are reducing their trash disposal, increasing their recycling and saving money.

Organics include all food scraps, such as meat, bones and dairy products; food-soiled paper, such as paper towels, napkins, plates, milk and juice cartons; and boxes from frozen and refrigerated foods.

The county has turned its attention to businesses because of the potential to divert vast amounts of waste from landfills and incinerators. About half of the county's waste - a half million tons every year - comes from businesses. Typically 80 percent or more of the trash produced in commercial kitchens and cafeterias is compostable.

About 10 tons of organics are picked up from Hennepin County businesses each week by Randy's Sanitation and delivered to Resource Recovery Technologies in Empire Township in Dakota County for composting. The finished compost is used in professional landscaping and road construction projects.

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## **Commercial organics program/2**

“One of the most critical parts of setting up an organics recycling program is finding a hauler that will pick up your carefully separated organics and take it to the right place for recycling,” said John Jaimez, coordinator of the county’s organics recycling program. “Many businesses have been eager to participate in organics composting but until now could not find a collection company that was willing to try to make a business out of collecting their compostables. Randy’s Sanitation, a local business, has now stepped up to the plate, helping other businesses fulfill their desires to be better environmental stewards.”

For a food service business, expanding their recycling program to include organics is an easy way to make a positive impact immediately. Organics recycling can work for all size businesses.

IKEA was looking for an environmentally-friendly method of disposing of food waste, and the Twin Cities store began recycling organics this summer. “IKEA has goals for maximizing the recyclable waste we create, and organics recycling puts us above our goal,” says Nathan Disch, assistant food manager at IKEA Twin Cities. “The entire program has been so successful that IKEA is looking for opportunities to implement the program nationally.”

Corner Table is a small restaurant in South Minneapolis that specializes in locally grown foods. They saw the organics recycling program as another opportunity to greatly reduce the amount of garbage they generate and to save money on the trash bill. Since beginning organics recycling in September, the restaurant now recycles or composts 95 percent of their waste while reducing their waste bill by nearly 50 percent. “Our customers are very interested in reducing waste and making positive environmental change, and they’ve given us a lot of positive feedback,” said Scott Pampuch, chef and owner of the Corner Table. “It’s the right thing to do, it’s easy, and it’s saving us money. What’s not to like?”

Hennepin County provides financial incentives for organics recycling, and staff is available to provide free technical assistance to businesses to get started with an organics recycling program. For more information, contact John Jaimez at 612-348-5893 or visit [www.hennepin.us](http://www.hennepin.us), search: organics.