

# **WATERTOWN ORGANICS RECYCLING PROJECT REPORT**



**November 9, 2015**

**Prepared by:**

**Jake Duame  
Marcus Zbinden  
Brad Hanzel**



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Significant Findings .....	3
Recommendations.....	4
<b>Survey Results</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Figure 1 – Single-Sort Recycling Participation .....	5
Figure 2 – Current Recycling Habits.....	5
Figure 3 – Recycling More Waste through Organics Collection .....	6
Figure 4 – Is Recycling Organics a Cost Efficient Disposal Option? .....	6
Figure 5 – Douglas-Kugler Eco-Site Usage .....	7
Figure 6 – Backyard Composting Participation.....	7
Figure 7 – Household Garbage Disposal Usage .....	8
Figure 8 – Barriers to Recycling Organic Material .....	8
Figure 9 – Does Recycling Organics Improve the Environment?.....	9
Figure 10 – Is Collecting Organics at Home Easy? .....	9
Figure 11 – Concerns that Prevent your Household from Recycling Organics.....	10
Figure 12 – Factors which may Motivate Households to Recycle Organics .....	10
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Appendix A – Cover Letter .....	11
Appendix B – Issued Survey .....	12
Appendix C – Press Release .....	14
Appendix D – Organics Recycling Ad .....	15
Appendix E – Organics Recycling Brochure .....	16
Appendix F – Compost Coupon .....	17

## Introduction

In January 2015, Carver County provided grant funding to the City of Watertown in the amount of \$14,500 for the purposes of organics recycling education and promotion of household residential organics collection through Randy's Environmental Services *Blue Bag* program<sup>1</sup>. This project coincides with the effort to push recycling rates in the County to 75% to reach goals set by the State. In February of 2015, Carver County issued surveys to approximately 1,250 households in the City of Watertown. The desired outcome of this survey was to:

- Gain a better understanding of priorities, preferences and experiences of residents regarding household organics;
- Gauge the interest in recycling organics and determine if residents are experiencing obstacles to starting organics collection in their homes;
- Utilize the information gathered in the Watertown project to help encourage other cities to begin similar organics collection programs.

To encourage participation, the first 150 residents who completed and submitted the survey received an organics recycling starter kit prepared by Randy's Environmental Services. The starter kits included a one year supply of *Blue Bag* compostable bags (sixty (60) 13 gallon bags), a *Blue Bag* kitchen counter compost bucket, and educational material. Additionally, participants were mailed a coupon to pick up a complimentary bag of *Blue Bag Organics Premium Compost* from the Mulch Store or other select locations. Ten (10) households were also randomly selected to receive a \$25.00 gift certificate to a local business which was donated by the Minnesota Composting Council.

## Significant Findings

A total of 1,250 surveys were mailed to households in the City of Watertown. Of those, 144 households replied giving a response rate of 12 percent. The data gathered has been compiled and displayed as graphs on pages 5-10 showing survey results. Also attached in appendices A-E are the cover letter and survey questionnaire that was sent to each individual household, the press release and organics recycling advertisement that was published in the Carver County News, the *Blue Bag Organics* brochure that was included with the starter kit, and the *Blue Bag Premium Compost* coupon mailed to program participants.

Based on the 144 surveyed, results indicate that 91 percent of Watertown households already participate in single-sort recycling (figure 1), and 96 percent recycle as much as possible (figure 2). In addition, 92 percent of households agree that collecting household organics is a good way to recycle more (figure 3), and 90 percent agree that it improves the environment (figure

9). 74 percent agree that recycling organics is a cost efficient disposal option, while only 4 percent disagree with that statement (figure 4).

When asked what concerns prevented their participation in organics recycling, 35 percent of respondents indicated a lack of knowledge of what can go into organics recycling container (figure 11). This indicates that education is necessary to increase organics recycling participation.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this survey, staff recommends the following strategies to increase participation in household organics curbside collection.

1. Imbed all cost associated with the collection of organics in the cost of garbage service to ensure residents are not subject to additional fees as prohibited in Minnesota Statute 115A.93 Licensing of Solid Waste Collection<sup>2</sup>.
2. Help residents overcome obstacles of household organics collection by offering resources and information.
3. Continue educating residents about the environmental benefits of composting organics.
4. Expand curbside organics recycling to other cities within the county using information gathered from this project.
5. Work with haulers to promote curbside organics collection to residents.

<sup>1</sup>The initial grant was allotted for \$10,000. Due to positive feedback and participation the grant was increased, and 50 additional households were included in the free organics recycling service offer.

<sup>2</sup>2015 Minnesota Statutes 115A.93 Licensing of Solid Waste Collection; Subd. 3 (c) states: A licensing authority shall prohibit mixed municipal solid waste collectors from imposing a greater charge on residents who recycle than on residents who do not recycle.

See also, definition of recyclable materials in 115A.03 Subd. 25a.

"Recyclable materials" means materials that are separated from mixed municipal solid waste for the purpose of recycling or composting, including paper, glass, plastics, metals, automobile oil, batteries, source-separated compostable materials, and sole source food waste streams that are managed through biodegradative processes. Refuse-derived fuel or other material that is destroyed by incineration is not a recyclable material.

Fig. 1

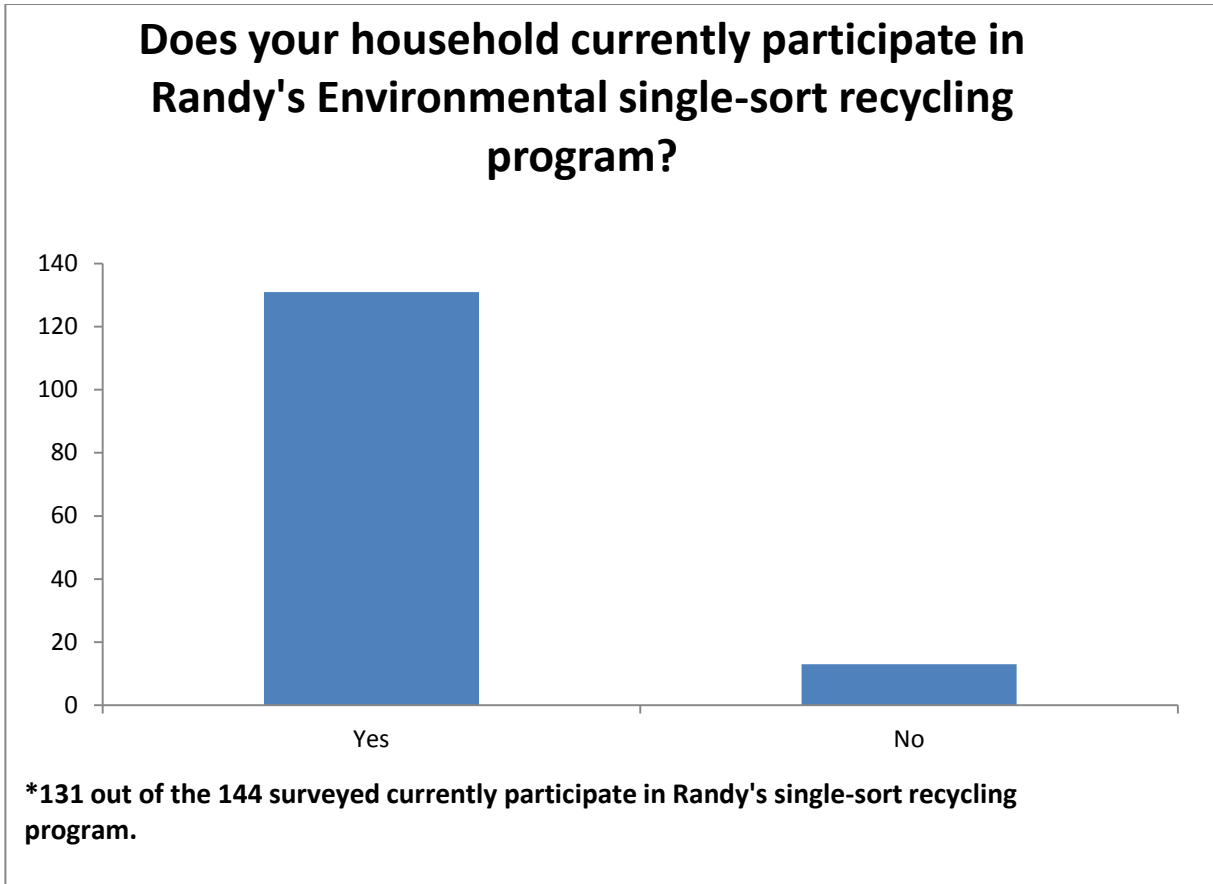


Fig. 2

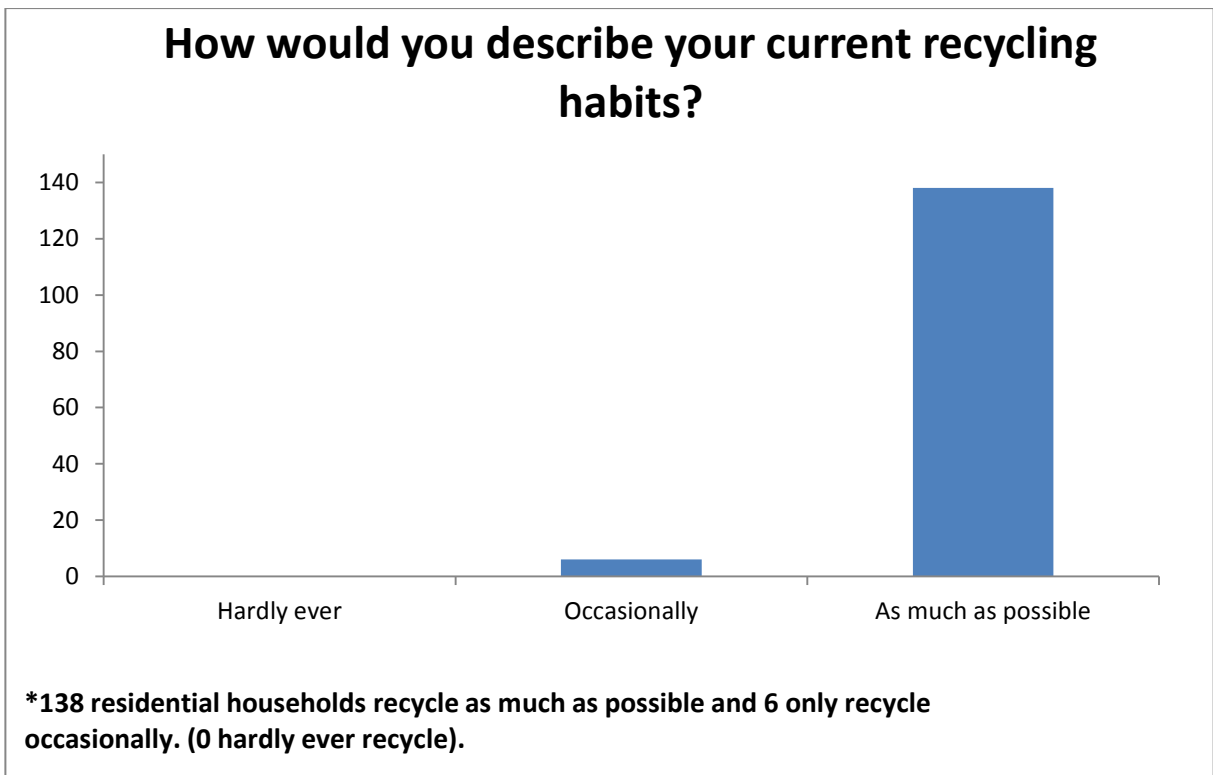


Fig. 3

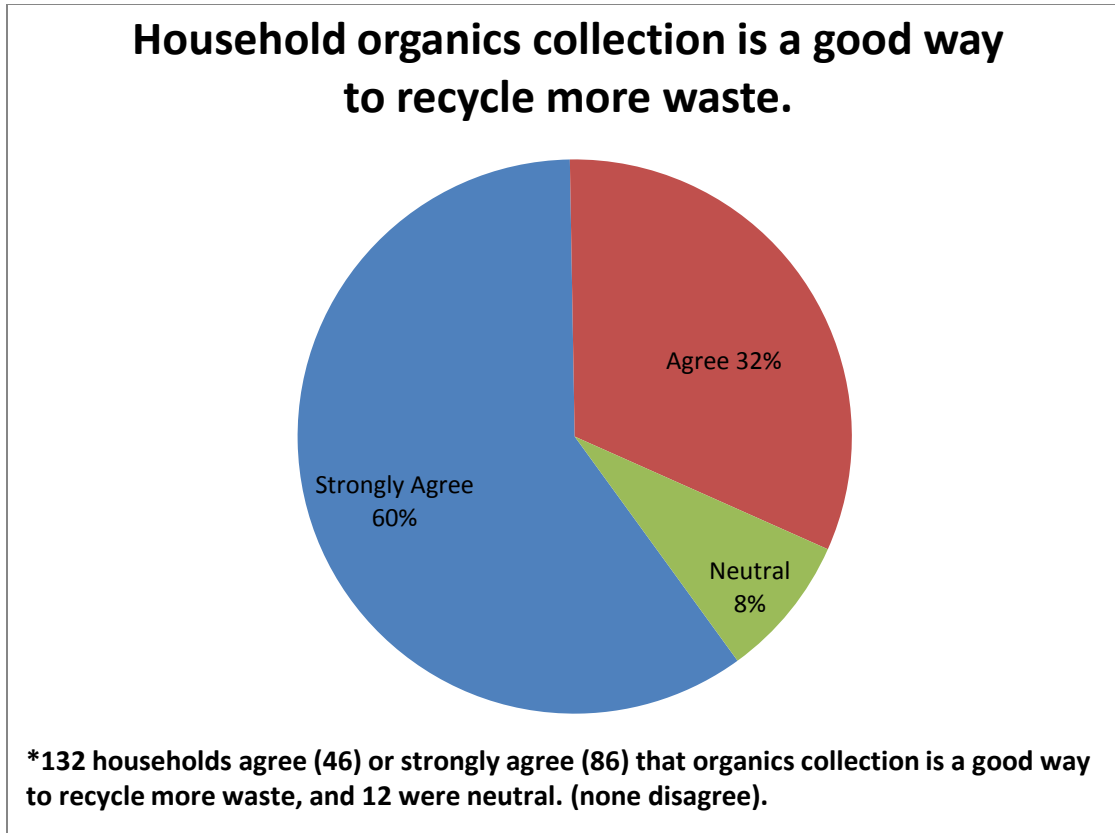


Fig. 4

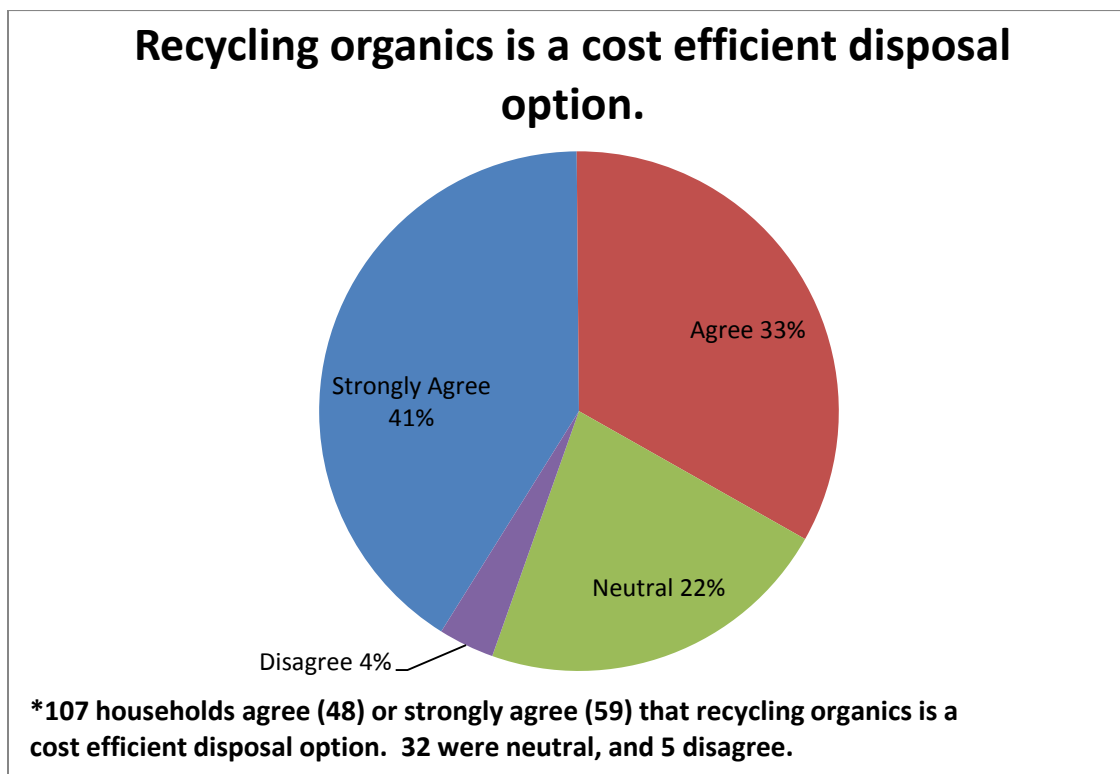


Fig. 5

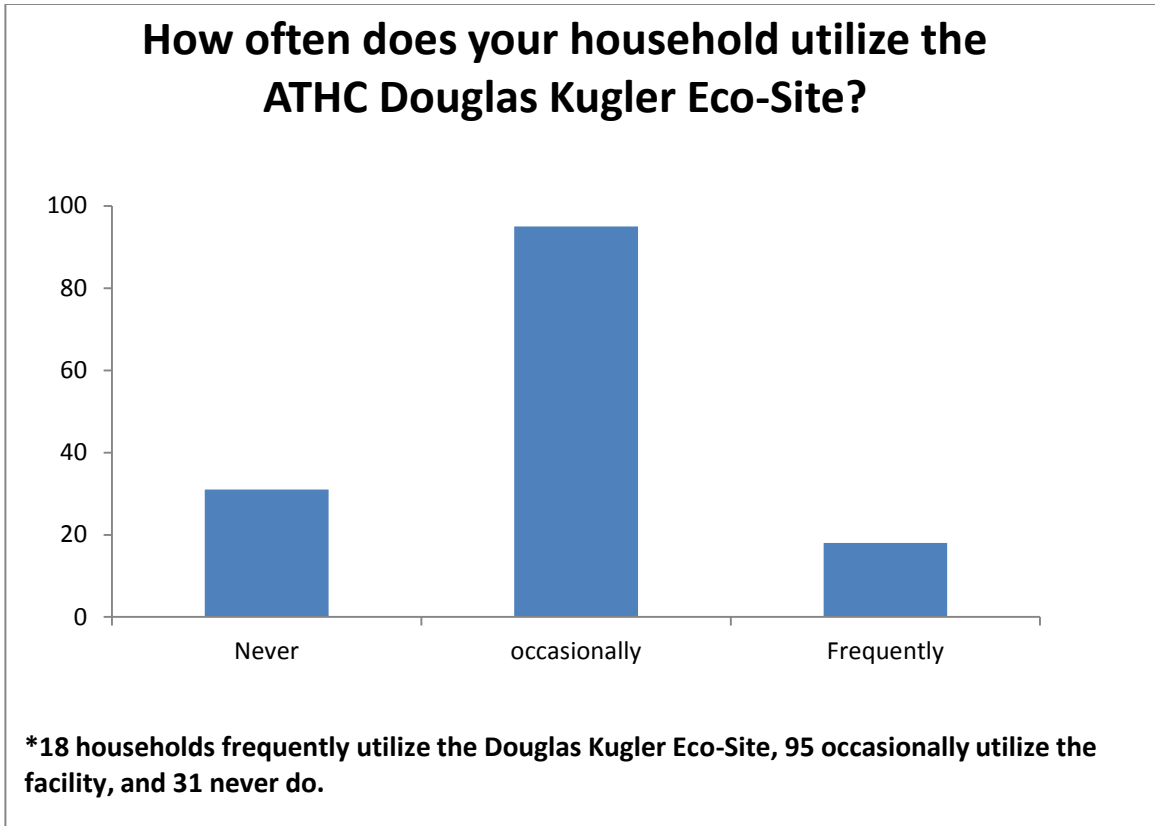


Fig. 6

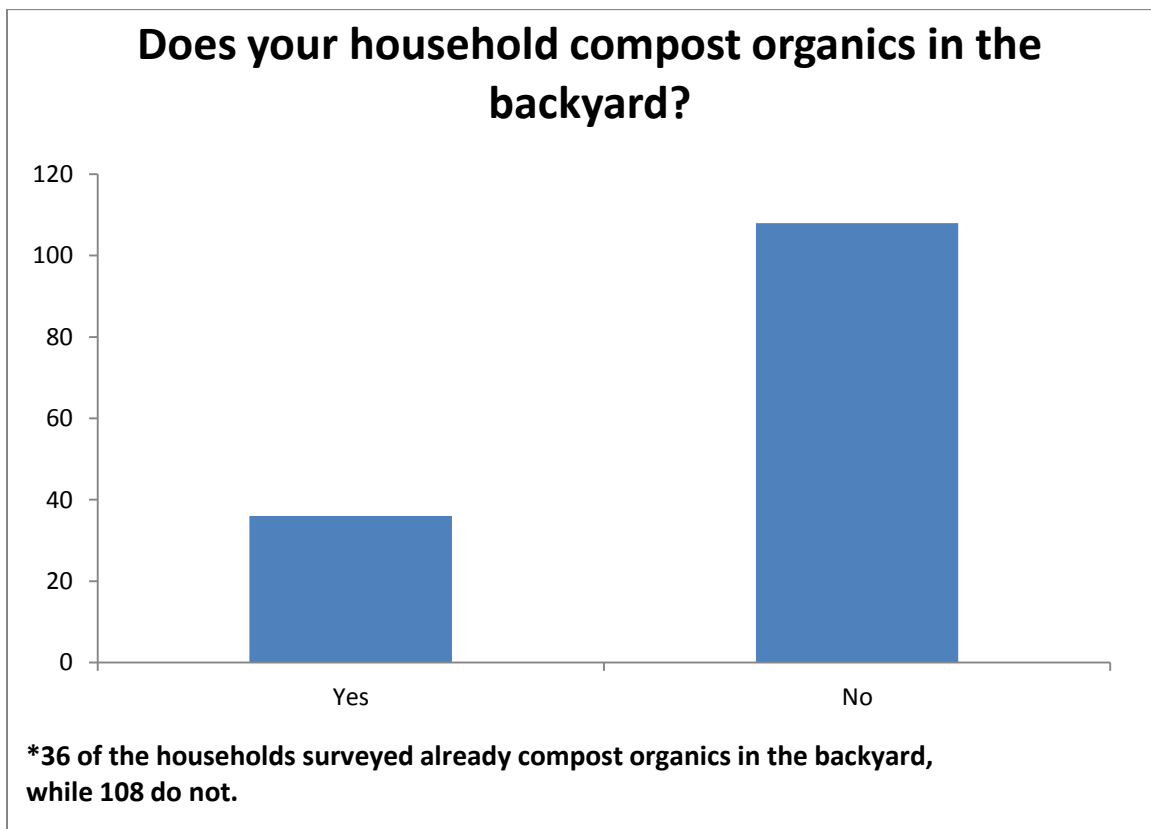




Fig. 7



Fig. 8

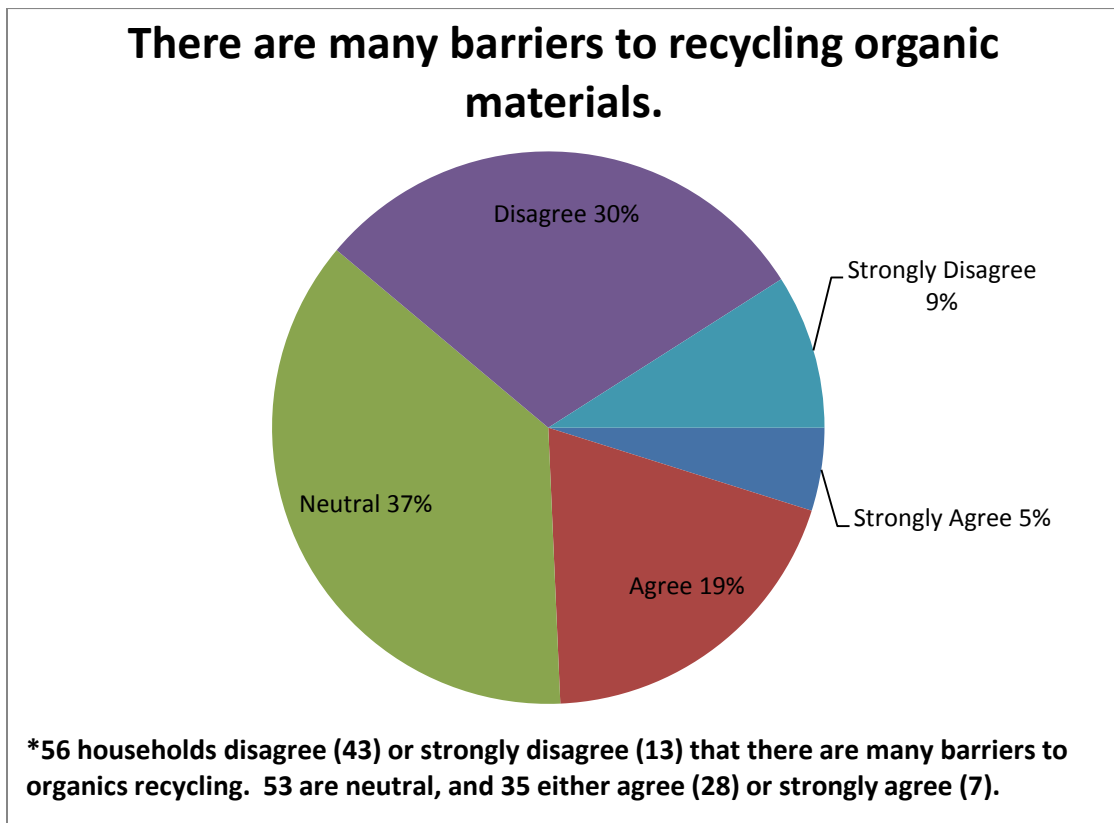


Fig. 9

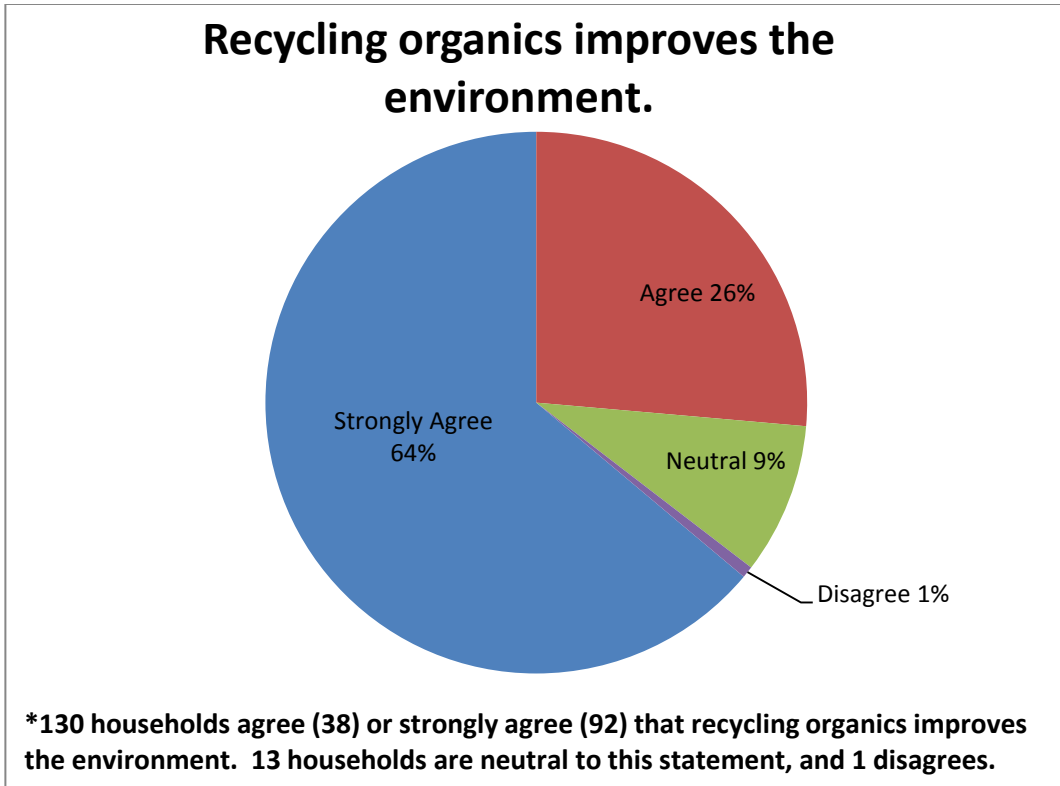


Fig. 10

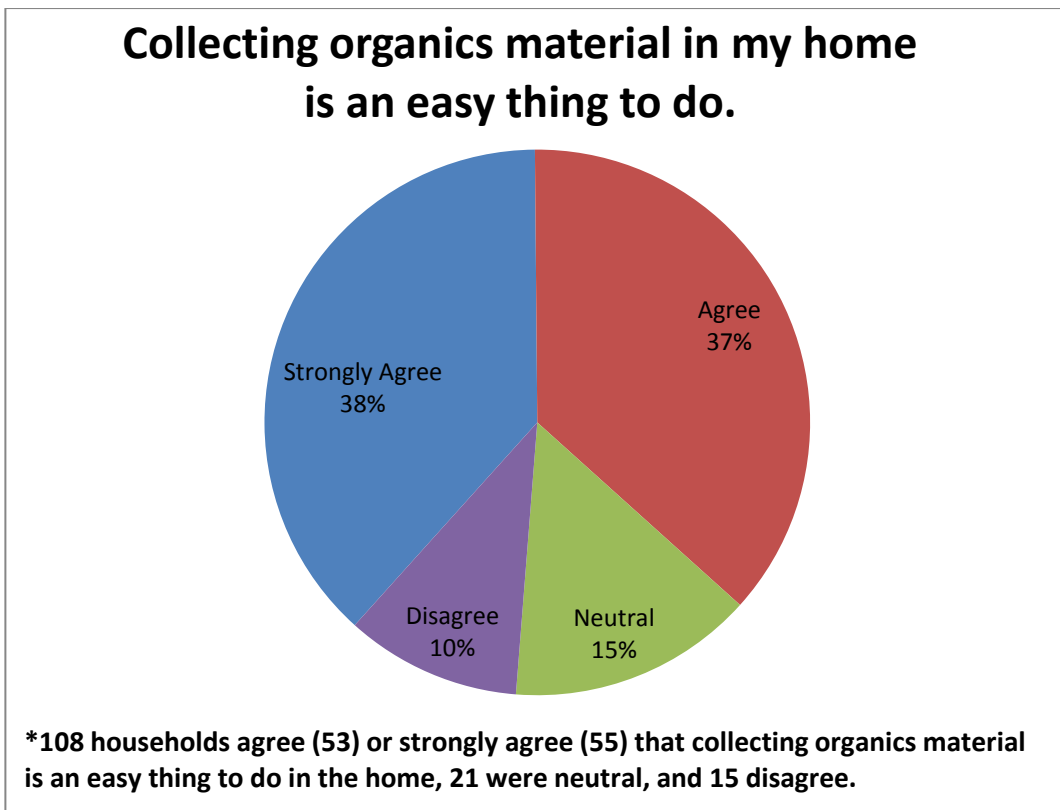


Fig. 11

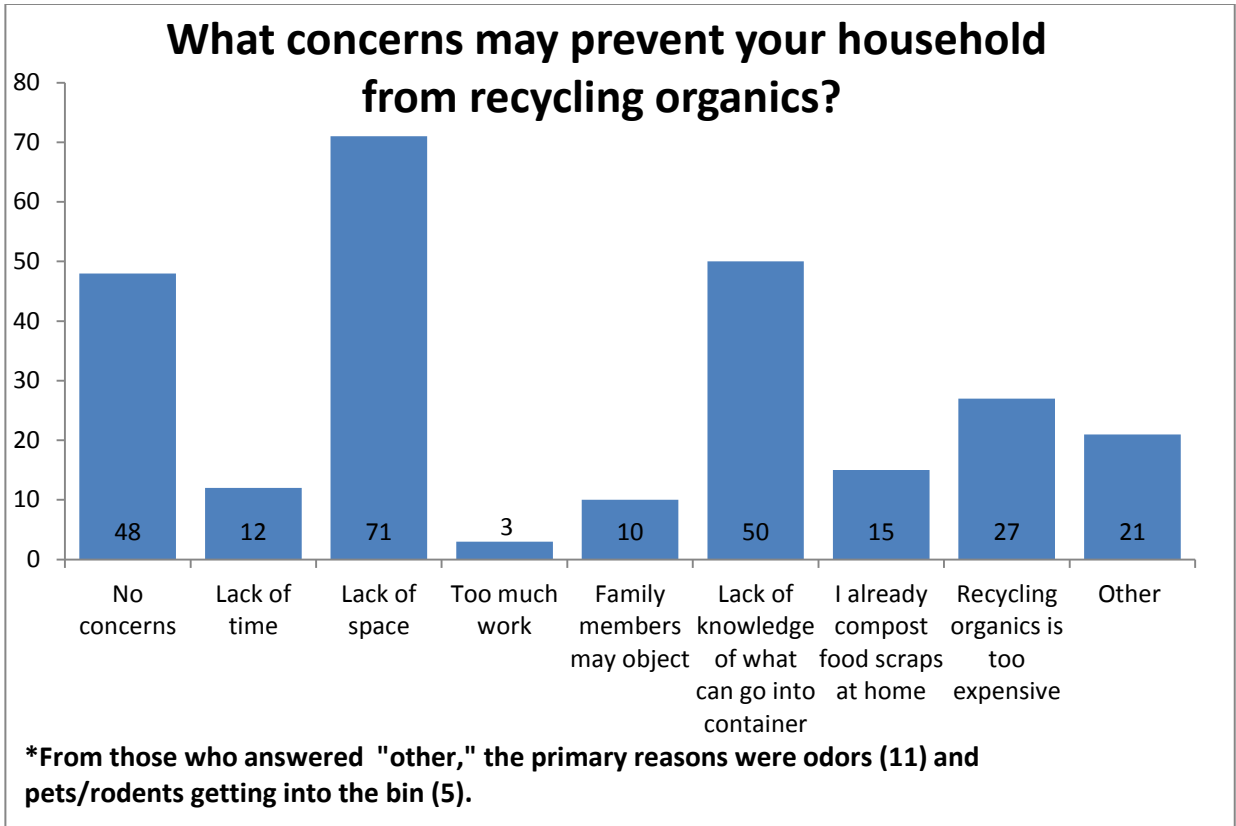
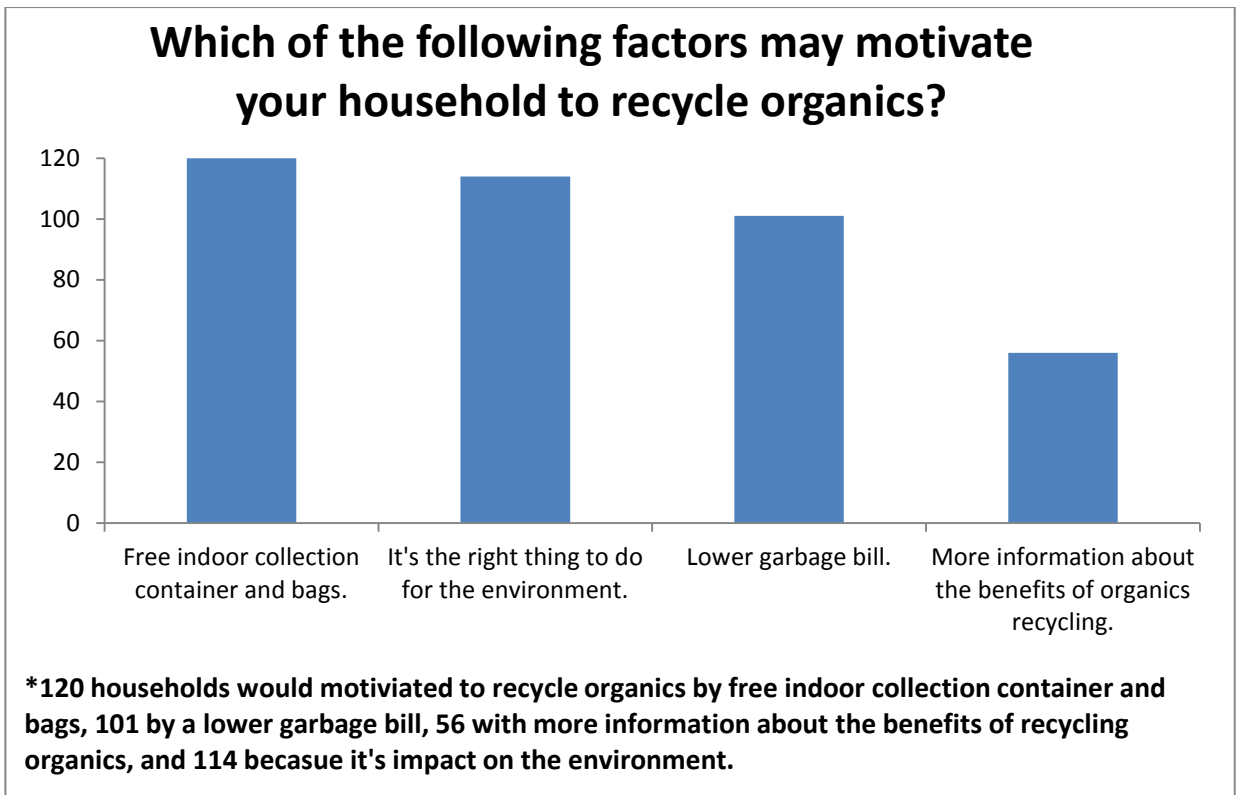


Fig. 12



## APPENDIX A



January 23, 2015

Dear Watertown Resident:

The City of Watertown and Carver County are pleased to announce a special offer for organics recycling service with Randy's Environmental Services. **The first 100 residents to reply to this offer will receive one year's organics recycling service for FREE.** As an added bonus, 10 households will be randomly selected to receive one of ten **\$25.00 gift certificates** to a local business.

The purpose of this offer is to encourage more residents to separate their household organics for curbside collection and composting. "Organics" are all material that come from plants and animals sources such as food scraps and soiled paper. These materials naturally decompose and break down into nutrient-rich compost

### WHY SEPARATE AND COLLECT ORGANICS?

A recent study of the composition of Minnesota garbage showed that 40% of what we throw away is organic material. Carver County residents are recycling about 50% of the material that previously went to landfills. Although this is a good start, we need to reach a 70% recovery rate to meet new State goals.

To get started, **fill out the enclosed survey and return it to Carver County Environmental Services by February 12, 2015** and Randy's Environmental Services will deliver the following items for you to get started:

- One Year Supply of Blue bag Organics bags - sixty (60) 13 gallon bags
- A Blue Bag Organics kitchen counter compost bucket
- In the Spring, you will be mailed a coupon to pick up a complimentary bag of Blue Bag Premium Compost

On trash day, simply hand tie the 13 gallon Blue Bags organics bags containing your household's food waste and non-recyclable paper and place it inside your regular trash cart. Randy's will separate all Blue Bags from the other trash at their processing facility and deliver them to the compost facility.

Refer to the attached brochure for a complete explanation of the organics collection service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shane Fineran".

Shane Fineran  
Watertown City Administrator

## APPENDIX B

### Watertown Recycling/Organics Collection Survey

This survey is being conducted to gain a better understanding of priorities, preferences and experiences of residents regarding household organics.

There are three convenient ways for you to complete the survey:

1. Fill out the survey below and return it using the self-addressed and stamped envelope.
2. Fill out the survey below, scan and email it to [mzbinden@co.carver.mn.us](mailto:mzbinden@co.carver.mn.us).
3. Go online to complete the survey at [www.recyclecarver.org/survey](http://www.recyclecarver.org/survey).

**The first 100 residents to complete the survey will receive one year of organics recycling service for FREE!** As an added bonus, 10 households will be randomly selected to receive a **\$25.00 gift certificate** to a local business.

Please complete and return the survey by **Thursday, February 12, 2015**.

#### General Information

1. Household Information

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### About Your Recycling Habits

2. How often does your household utilize the ATHC Douglas Kugler Eco-Site?  
 Frequently                       Occasionally                       Never
3. How would you describe your current recycling habits?  
 As much as possible                       Occasionally                       Hardly Ever
4. Does your household currently participate in Randy's Environmental single-sort recycling program?  
 Yes                       No

#### About Your Organics Recycling Habits

5. Does your household compost organics in the backyard?  
 Yes                       No
6. Do you have a garbage disposal in your kitchen sink?  
 Yes, but not used                       Yes, used sometimes                       Yes, used daily                       No

7. Using the following scale, please rate these statements pertaining to organics recycling.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Household organics collection is a good way to recycle more waste.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling organics is a cost efficient disposal option.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collecting organics material in my home is an easy thing to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are many barriers to recycling organic materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recycling organics improves the environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What concerns may prevent your household from recycling organics? (check all that apply)

- No concerns
- Lack of time for separating organic material.
- Lack of space for indoor collection.
- Too much work.
- Family members may object.
- Lack of knowledge of what can go into an organics recycling container.
- I already compost food scraps at home in the backyard.
- Recycling organics is too expensive.
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Which of the following factors may motivate your household to recycle organics? (check all that apply)

- Free indoor collection container and bags.
- It's the right thing to do for the environment.
- Lower garbage bill.
- More information about the benefits of organics recycling.

Questions? Please contact **Marcus Zbinden** at **952.361.1806** or [mzbinden@co.carver.mn.us](mailto:mzbinden@co.carver.mn.us)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

## APPENDIX C

Marcus Zbinden  
Minnesota Composting Council  
[mzbinden@co.carver.mn.us](mailto:mzbinden@co.carver.mn.us)  
(952) 288-4747

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 6, 2015

### **Watertown Organics Recycling Project Demonstrates Strong Interest in Residential Organics Collection**

The City of Watertown received a \$14,500 grant from Carver County Environmental Services to help educate residents on the benefits of organics recycling and encourage more residents to separate household organics for curbside collection and composting with Randy's Environmental Services Blue bag program. Organics includes food scraps and soiled paper such as napkins and paper plates. These materials naturally decompose and break down into nutrient-rich compost.

Marcus Zbinden, Carver County Environmental Specialist said, "A recent study of the composition of Minnesota garbage showed that 40% of what we throw away is organic material. Carver County residents are recycling about 50% of the material that previously went to landfills. Although this is a good start, we need to reach a 70% recovery rate to meet new State goals"

As part of the project Carver County sent out a survey to residents of Watertown asking a series of questions to help gauge the interest in recycling organics and determining if residents are experiencing obstacles to starting organics collection in their homes. The first 150 residents who replied by completing the survey received one year's Blue Bag organics recycling service from Randy's Environmental Services for FREE. As an added bonus, 10 households were randomly selected to receive one of ten \$25.00 gift certificates to a local business donated by the Minnesota Composting Council.

The survey results indicated that of those who responded, 92% currently participate in single sort recycling collection and 95% recycle as much as possible. Over 90% of respondents agreed that collecting household organics is a good way to recycle more waste and that recycling organics improves the environment.

When asked what concerns prevented their participation in organics recycling, 35% respondents indicated a lack of knowledge of what can go into organics recycling container. Zbinden said "This project was focused on those residents that indicated lack of knowledge as a barrier to starting the organics collection."

Randy's Environmental Services has completed delivery of the starter kits to the lucky 150 residents which include the following items:

- One Year Supply of Blue bag Organics bags - sixty (60) 13 gallon bags
- A Blue Bag Organics kitchen counter compost bucket
- In the Spring, participants will be mailed a coupon to pick up a complimentary bag of Blue Bag Premium Compost
- Education material

Participating in the Blue Bag program is simple. On trash day, residents hand tie the 13 gallon Blue Bags organics bags containing their household's food waste and non-recyclable paper and place it inside the regular trash cart. Randy's will separate all Blue Bags from the other trash at their processing facility and deliver them to the compost facility.

Carver County intends to utilize the information gathered in the Watertown project to help encourage other cities to begin similar organics collection programs.

APPENDIX D

**The City of Watertown is happy to announce a special offer to encourage organics recycling with Randy's Environmental Services!**

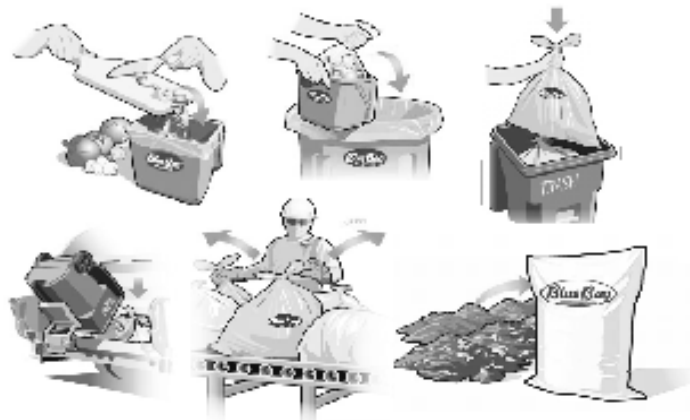
**The first 100 residents who call and sign up will receive FREE:**

- One year supply of Blue Bag Organics bags consisting of sixty (60) 13 gallon bags
- A Blue Bag Organics kitchen counter compost bucket
- A bag of Blue Bag premium Compost in the spring for your garden

*As an added bonus, 10 households will be randomly selected to receive a \$25.00 gift certificate to local businesses.*

Organics made up of food scraps and food soiled paper accounts for as much as half of your household trash. Rather than dumping this material into landfills or incinerators you can help convert it into a nutrient-rich compost.

**HERE IS HOW IT WORKS!**



**Organics Recycling is as easy as 1, 2, 3**

Don't miss out! Watch for a mailing from the city with all the information or call Randy's Environmental Services at (763) 972-3335 and they will get you started.





## APPENDIX E

TWO MONTHS AFTER  
NOURISHING YOU

..... to .....

**NOURISHING  
LOCAL LAWNS  
AND GARDENS**

It takes only two months to take food waste like an apple core, corn husks or salad scraps and convert it to nutrient-rich compost to help grow more apples. Or corn. Or lettuce.

And the Blue Bag<sup>™</sup> Organics curbside composting system makes it easy for you and your household.

The secret to our Blue Bag Organics curbside composting system is the special Blue Bag Organics liner. It's made from corn syrup and polymers. These renewable ingredients make Blue Bag Organics bags durable for your use. They can withstand sunlight, rain and snow. And they can stretch to resist most tears and punctures.

But when they are buried at an industrial composting facility, Blue Bag Organics bags and their contents disintegrate in less than two months, turning into nutrient-rich compost that is bagged and sold at your local garden center.

Hungry for more information, visit  
[bluebagorganics.com](http://bluebagorganics.com).

 Printed on recycled paper.

**ORGANICS  
RECYCLING**  
..... at .....

**HOME**

*Your Guide  
to Blue Bag<sup>™</sup> Organics  
Curbside Composting*



**SOURCE SEPARATED ORGANICS**  
[BlueBagOrganics.com](http://BlueBagOrganics.com)

**ORGANICS  
RECYCLING**

..... is as .....

**EASY**

as



You and your household can help our community convert food waste and food-soiled paper into nutrient-rich compost that fortifies lawns, flower beds, backyard and community gardens, and small vegetable and berry farms.

Curbside composting is a much better use of food waste and food-soiled paper — which accounts for as much as half of most household trash — than dumping it into a landfill or incinerator.

## APPENDIX F

### Good for One Complimentary 1.0 cubic foot bag of Blue Bag Organics Premium Compost

Redeem only at: The Mulch Store: Minnetrista, Shakopee, Burnsville,  
Empire Township. Randy's Environmental Services Drop Sites: Delano,  
St. Michael and Burnsville. Medina Clean up Day on Saturday April 25,  
2015 from 8 am to Noon at 600 Clydesdale Trail or Medina City hall  
(Medina residents only) Wayzata Public Works: Wayzata residents only.

Expires 9/20/15

*Limit one coupon per participant. Coupon valid for item indicated. Void if  
transferred, sold, auctioned, reproduced or altered from the original.*



SOURCE SEPARATED ORGANICS  
BlueBagOrganics.com