



Wasted Food Solutions: Spotlights from Philadelphia

Philadelphia is committed to diverting 90% of waste from disposal by 2035. Since food waste makes up over 20% of the waste stream, it is a big piece of the puzzle. A lot of wasted food is perfectly edible and could be rescued to feed the hungry – here in Philadelphia there are over 300,000 food insecure individuals who could benefit. What about carrot tops, bones, and other inedible scraps? Those can be hauled to a compost facility for conversion to nutrient-rich soil amendment. And don't forget prevention. There's often a big opportunity to avoid food waste before it's even generated: employing offer vs. serve tactics in school cafeterias, ensuring that kitchen staff have proficient knife skills, and offering menu items containing “must go” ingredients, among other best practices. But you don't have to take our word for it, we showcase just a few of the amazing examples of what commercial entities and institutions right here in Philadelphia are doing to prevent and recover food waste.

For the past two years, the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), an environmental non-profit, worked with the Philadelphia Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet and other local partners – food rescue organizations, haulers, composters, food businesses – to help foster prevention and recovery activity, and to uncover local, notable examples. With support from the Claneil Foundation, CET focused on catalyzing food waste prevention and recovery activity. We hope you are as inspired by these stories as we are. If you feel moved to act, consider becoming part of the [City's Zero Waste Partnership Program](#); if you would like assistance setting up a food waste program please contact CET's [Wasted Food Solutions hotline](#).





The Rittenhouse, owned by Hersha Hotels & Resorts, is the first hotel partner of Philadelphia's Zero Waste Partnership (ZWP) Program. Waste prevention and diversion from the landfill is a large focus for The Rittenhouse and to address food waste, the hotel practices root-to-stock cooking, donates surplus food, and collects non-edible food scraps for composting.

A Zero Waste Partner



Food Donation & Composting

Brown's Super Stores operates six ShopRite/Fresh Grocer supermarkets in Philadelphia. Brown's stores undertake numerous sustainability efforts including their robust food rescue and organics diversion program. In the last year, Brown's Philadelphia stores donated 182 tons of nutritious food, the equivalent of 363,488 meals, and saved \$15,000 in hauling and tipping fees.



Food Rescue

The city of Philadelphia's Parks & Recreation Department (PPR) operates over 130 rec centers which become popular neighborhood day camps during the summer. PPR partners with MEANS Database and Food Connect to recover excess food and donate it to community organizations serving food insecure individuals. Over the course of the summer of 2019, a total of 3,447 lbs. of food were rescued, the equivalent of 2,252 meals!

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA
**PARKS &
RECREATION**

Ramp Playground

Home of the
Father Judge Crusaders



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The Rittenhouse: A Zero Waste Partner

The Rittenhouse, owned by Hersha Hotels & Resorts, demonstrates that sustainability is not only compatible with luxury, but elevates the luxury experience for their guests. The hotel has implemented a number of sustainability initiatives for which they have received accolades, including being part of the TripAdvisor GreenLeaders Program. They also participate in Hersha Hotels & Resorts' proprietary EarthView program, a leader in sustainable hospitality.

The Rittenhouse is the first hotel partner of Philadelphia's Zero Waste Partnership (ZWP) Program. The City's Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet administers this voluntary program and encourages businesses and organizations to commit to helping Philadelphia be a leader in sustainable waste management and achieve its zero waste goals. This was a natural fit for The Rittenhouse: "Food waste affects everyone, and as a food establishment we have the opportunity to be the change we want to see in the community," explains Abbe Stern, the hotel's Operations and Event Manager and EcoLeader.



The process to become a ZWP member starts with eligible businesses first having their annual Commercial Building Waste Report on record with the City. Once submitted, businesses may apply for the ZWP Program, as long as they have a recycling contract in place and comply with Philadelphia's waste and recycling ordinances. Ten additional Zero Waste Actions qualify businesses for higher tiers of certification. The Rittenhouse is already implementing several qualifying Actions across all of their waste streams; related to food waste, they are donating excess food and implementing a composting program.

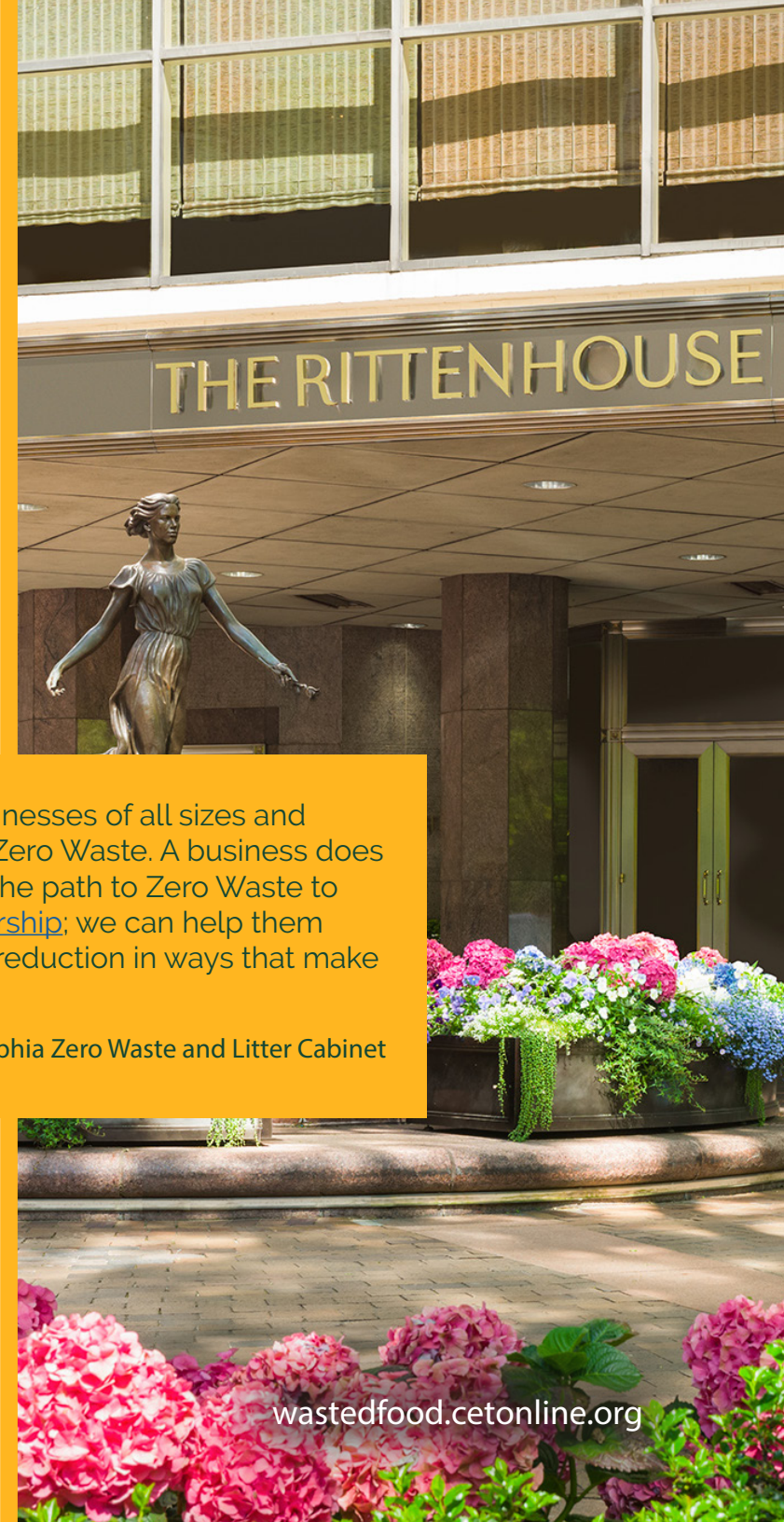
Waste prevention and diversion from the landfill is a large focus for The Rittenhouse. When it comes to managing food waste, during regular operations, the hotel donates excess bread every weekday through one of two local food rescue organizations, Food Connect and Sharing Excess. Once a day, the hotel team collects any excess bread and notifies a partner rescue organization via mobile app or text message that it is ready for pick up. Following catered events, The Rittenhouse also donates surplus food, ensuring proper food storage and handling protocols are met.

From practicing root-to-stock cooking, to ensuring that all kitchen staff have proficient knife skills, to tailoring menu items to utilize perishable ingredients that are on hand, this prevention is also seen in the hotel's food prep culture. Additionally, non-edible food scraps – plate waste, kitchen scraps, and spoiled food – generated by The Rittenhouse's restaurants and catered events are collected and hauled for composting. Altogether, The Rittenhouse typically diverts over 20 tons of organics from the landfill every year.

Now, as ZWP members, The Rittenhouse will gain access to Philadelphia's Sustainable Business Tax Credit, be featured in the Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet's social media and publications, and have another way of advertising their commitment to being the change to their customers and community.

"Our goal is to support businesses of all sizes and services in their pursuit of Zero Waste. A business does not already have to be on the path to Zero Waste to join the [Zero Waste Partnership](#); we can help them start thinking about waste reduction in ways that make sense for them."

Helena Rudoff, Philadelphia Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet



The Brown Family's Supermarkets: Food Donation & Composting

Brown's Super Stores operates six ShopRite/Fresh Grocer supermarkets in Philadelphia. Brown's mission and operations are built on a 'triple bottom-line' ethos of Good for the People, Good for the Environment and Good for the Business. It is the environmental component, supported by their robust food rescue and organics diversion program, which resonates with many people who shop with the Brown family.

Brown's stores undertake numerous sustainability efforts, but their partnership with Philly Food Rescue stands out. This partnership allows for nutritious food to be rescued before it spoils and donated to a community in need, rather than risking having it go bad, and disposing of it. Philly Food Rescue, operated by the non-profit Uplift Solutions, uses Uber's technology platform to pick up edible food from many restaurants and grocery stores across the city, and distribute it to appropriate community partners.





Philly Food Rescue collects food from Brown's supermarkets every day, including produce, meat, dairy, deli, bakery, and grocery items. In the last year, Brown's Philadelphia stores donated 182 tons of food, the equivalent of 363,488 meals, and saved \$15,000 in hauling and tipping fees.

Non-edible food scraps from the prepared foods departments, as well as any spoiled food, are separated for composting. The company contracts with Organic Diversion to haul food waste twice a week from each store, diverting an average of 30 tons of material from landfills to compost per store annually. "All associates are trained to properly pull products from the shelves that are not acceptable to be sold. They are trained by department managers to know the difference between an item that is still fresh and can be set aside for donation pickup versus those items that must be put into the organic recycling bins," explained David Deets, Director of Store Development & Sustainability. Brown's is an inspiring example of the role grocers can play in recovering and diverting food from disposal.

Brown's is also a proud partner of Philadelphia's Zero Waste Partnership (ZWP) Program.

There are many food rescue partners in Philadelphia! [Philly Food Rescue](#), [Philabundance](#), and [Food Connect](#) to name a few!





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Philadelphia Parks & Recreation: Food Rescue

The city of Philadelphia's Parks & Recreation Department (PPR) operates over 130 rec centers across the city, which become popular neighborhood day camps during the summer. In 2015, PPR piloted a food rescue program to recover excess food from summer meals and donate it to community organizations serving food insecure individuals. The pilot began with three recreation centers (Kensington, Port Richmond, and Lower Northeast) and by year three had expanded to all locations.



PPR's partners in this effort are MEANS database, a food rescue organization that built an online platform to connect those with excess food to organizations in need, and a local transportation partner, Food Connect, who moves the food between the donor rec centers and recipients. Over the course of the summer of 2019, a total of 3,447 lbs. of food were rescued, the equivalent of 2,252 meals!

The successful rollout of PPR's food rescue program took commitment and determination from the organization's core leadership. There were some early hurdles to navigate – most importantly, alleviating staff concerns about liability issues around donating food, which were addressed with consistent education around the Bill Emerson Act that protects organizations donating in good faith. PPR, MEANS database, and Food Connect worked diligently to streamline the program and make it easy for all centers to participate.

PPR isn't stopping with food rescue; in 2020 they're launching a system-wide compost program that involves collecting food scraps for compost at PPR recreation centers across the city. Daniel Lawson, Sustainability and Quality Control Manager at PPR explained, "These programs are an easy pitch within the PPR staff world, as the men and women who work in these centers are there to serve the community. That means not letting food go in the trash that can be used to feed the community, whether as a recovered meal, or as feedstock for rich compost."

"The [MEANS](#) program has been the ultimate win-win for us at Ramp Playground. We have a large summer camp so we had a lot of excess food at the end of the day. It's extremely easy to use, takes no time to complete, and the food goes to a good cause. It's been a huge success for us."

Eric Kurtz, Manager of the Ramp Rec Center

