



Call our Hotline  
1 (888)-254-5525  
info@recyclingworksma.com  
www.recyclingworksma.com

### At a Glance:

- America's Food Basket Supermarkets in Boston divert 4.5 tons per week of source separated organics, totaling 234 tons annually.
- RecyclingWorks assisted CERO, an employee-owned organics hauler, with planning logistics to collect food scraps from America's Food Basket stores.

*RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts is funded by MassDEP and delivered under contract by the Center for EcoTechnology*

## Food Scraps Composting Program Case Study America's Food Basket Supermarkets Boston, MA

**Summary:** America's Food Basket is a supermarket chain with three large and two small stores based in the Boston neighborhoods of Hyde Park, Dorchester and Mattapan. CERO is an employee-owned, cooperative business located in Dorchester that began food scraps collection in conjunction with the Massachusetts Commercial Organic Materials Disposal Ban, which took effect October 1, 2014. Employee-owners at CERO set a priority to be service providers for their community, and therefore identified the America's Food Basket chain as an ideal anchor customer for their newly developed food scraps collection service. CERO contacted RecyclingWorks to assist with logistical planning for developing and implementing a food scraps diversion program at the America's Food Basket stores. This type of "train-the-trainer" approach is similar to actions RecyclingWorks has taken in the past with other organics haulers.

**Diversion Program:** All of the stores in the America's Food Basket chain have established recycling programs for cardboard. In a few of the stores, meat and fats are sent to a renderer for processing. This program was left in place due to its success.

On October 1, 2014, America's Food Basket implemented a food scraps diversion program at 4 out of 5 stores with the help of CERO and RecyclingWorks. The programs target unsold or inedible fruits and vegetables from the produce department. CERO collects the food material and delivers it to A Plus Recycling in Middleboro for composting.

**Program Development:** To assist CERO with development of its food scraps collection service, RecyclingWorks staff provided information on collection equipment that is well suited for food scraps diversion programs, including types of containers and vehicles. RecyclingWorks staff also answered questions on effective source separation training strategies for food scraps generators, as well as regional processors of source separated food material.

To begin the process of developing food scraps diversion programs at America's Food Basket stores, RecyclingWorks and CERO conducted site visits at the different stores to identify: types of collection containers best suited to individual stores; where collection containers should be kept; an estimate of food material generated per store; and how collection containers will be accessed for pick-up. RecyclingWorks staff identified that a cart-collection system would be the most effective for America's Food Basket diversion programs.

**Employee Training:** RecyclingWorks staff developed source separation training posters for America's Food Basket food scraps diversion programs, and worked with CERO to translate the posters into Spanish. With support from RecyclingWorks staff, CERO conducted a training with produce staff at America's Food Basket. The training focused on why the food scraps diversion program was being established, who CERO is, what collection containers looked like, how collection logistics would work, and who to contact with any questions.



*CERO workers collect compost from America's Food Basket.*

**Food Waste Diversion Logistics:** Staff at America's Food Basket utilize a cart collection system to divert food material. Employees in the produce area use waxed cardboard boxes as intermediate containers to collect inedible fruits and vegetables from the shelves, and then transfer the material to unlined 64-gallon carts (waxed cardboard can also be placed in carts). Employees that prepare fruit salads use restaurant trays to collect preparation scraps prior to transferring material to the 64-gallon carts.

As of now, CERO services the 64-gallon collection carts two times per week using a box truck. CERO swaps out full containers with empty, clean containers, and brings the full containers to A Plus Recycling in Middleboro for composting. While at A Plus Recycling, CERO rinses the carts so that they will be clean for the next collection.

**Program Evaluation:** America's Food Basket diversion program has been very successful. Total, the four America's Food Basket stores divert 4.5 tons per week of source separated organics, totaling 234 tons annually. CERO is working with America's Food Basket to make the food scraps diversion program cost-neutral. Employee-owners at CERO make a point to engage with America's Food Basket staff and managers on the status of the program, and offer support when needed. This engagement helps to reinforce to America's Food Basket employees that they are doing the right thing, and encourages employees to buy-in to the program and make sure it remains successful.



*Fresh produce at America's Food Basket.*