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Food Materials Composting Program Case Study **The Lenox Hotel** **Boston, MA**

Open since 1900, The Lenox Hotel has a rich history, but also looks to make an impact today through its dedication to personalized customer service and numerous sustainable initiatives. The hotel has been recycling since the 1980s, has electric vehicle charging stations and produces honey from bee hives on its roof. As of 2015, TripAdvisor ranks The Lenox Hotel as one of the top 10 greenest hotels in the United States. This case study focuses on the food materials diversion program at The Lenox Hotel's three restaurants.

At-a-Glance:

- *The Lenox Hotel is highly-rated among green hotels in the United States for its numerous sustainability initiatives.*
- *Since May 2014, The Lenox Hotel has diverted food scraps from three on-site restaurants to Rocky Hill Farm for composting.*
- *Diverting food scraps from trash saves The Lenox Hotel \$164.00 per month in total waste costs.*

Diversion Programs

The Lenox Hotel runs a host of impressive waste diversion initiatives. For example, staff at The Lenox recycle used vegetable oil into fuel for a biodiesel shuttle service. Each room at The Lenox has a recycling bin, and only 100% recyclable and chlorine-free paper towels, tissues and napkins are used. During the restoration of the Lenox's historic façade, 60 tons of brick, mortar and terra cotta were recycled.

In May 2014, The Lenox Hotel implemented a food scraps diversion program. The program targets food scraps generated from meal preparation, as well as post-

consumer plate scrapings. The food material is captured through an easy kitchen and dish room collection system. Renewable Waste Solutions picks up the separated food material and takes it to Rocky Hill Farm for composting. Because of the downtown location, it was vital to have a clean and pest free collection program. Renewable Waste Solutions proposed using lined, locking carts for collection.



Employee Training

The Lenox Hotel provided educational signage and personalized instruction for effective participation. Staff quickly adapted to the new food materials diversion program.

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Compost Logistics

The Lenox Hotel program utilizes a very easy and basic system to divert food scraps from disposal. Each workstation has a small clear plastic container on the counter to collect food scraps generated from prepping and cooking operations. Staff combine these containers of organic material into interim lined 20 gallon green carts. When full, staff take these carts outside and consolidate them into a locking 64 gallon green carts that the hauler picks up three times a week. The 20 gallon green carts are also placed next to the dirty dishes cart and dishwashing area for easy plate scraping.

Convenient sizing and placement of the containers contributes to the success of the program.



Director of Sustainability Scot Hopps and the Executive Chef have been instrumental in ensuring that The Lenox Hotel food scraps diversion program runs smoothly and efficiently. Both endorse the food materials collection system for its ease and cost-savings. Also, monitoring the food trimmings has had an extra benefit for The Lenox kitchen — staff can evaluate preparation methods to minimize waste.

Implementation Challenges

The main challenge for The Lenox Hotel's food materials diversion program is that the small carts must be moved up a partial flight of stairs to exit the building. Staff monitor levels in the carts to keep the weight manageable. A second challenge involved choosing when to decrease the trash collection frequency. The Lenox had its split trash and recycling compactor picked up on schedule twice a week. Staff monitored weights and compactor pressures for two months before feeling confident that they could adjust hauling frequency.

Program Evaluation

Renewable Waste Solutions reports that they collect 3,500 pounds per week of food materials for composting from The Lenox. They have noticed a 20% increase since the program started, which they attribute to improved employee awareness and adoption of the program.

By diverting food materials out of the trash, The Lenox Hotel has been able to reduce waste pickup frequency from twice to once a week and then to an on-call basis. Reduced waste tonnages and increased recycling diversion also offset the compost service rates, saving \$164/month in total waste costs. This savings is due to a combination of factors including food materials diversion, increased recycling and eliminating third party access to the dumpster. Even though not all the savings can be attributed to food diversion, the evaluation of the whole waste service is what led to all of the changes.

The Lenox Hotel has also noticed an overall improvement in cleanliness of the waste area as a result of implementing this new program. Food scraps are contained in the carts and removed from the site at a greater frequency than the trash. Based on the success of the diversion program in the three Lenox Hotel restaurants, Environmental Program Coordinator Samantha Sorrin has expanded this program to the employee cafeteria and the banquet kitchen.