

2016 DISTRICT SUSTAINABILITY AWARD WINNER
CASE STUDY: COMPOST CAB



COMPOST CAB

Compost Cab has two goals: make it easier for people to compost, and easier for urban agriculture to thrive. They achieve these two goals by providing home and commercial composting services, and by partnering with urban farms and community gardens to build soil in the city.

Compost Cab provides their partners with resources such as expertise, labor, compostables, every single day. They offer an array of programs and services, from pro-bono classroom education to larger-scale composting solutions, tailored to an organization's individual needs. Compost Cab partners with local urban farms, gardens, not-for-profits, and government agencies to build healthier, more sustainable food systems, starting with the soil.



BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Every Halloween, Compost Cab holds Pumpkins for the People, rescuing hundreds of pounds of pumpkins from their members, and donates them to organizations such as Martha's Table, Miriam's Kitchen and DC Central Kitchen, who turn them into meals for people in need.

They operate a canned food drive around the holidays, leveraging existing route structures as a tool for doing even more good in the community.

They give pro bono sustainability presentations in public schools, donate services as auction and raffle prizes to organizations citywide, and provide composting services to 7 schools associated with Freshfarm's FoodPrints program.

In 2016, Compost Cab enabled hundreds of families across the District to compost in the city, collected more than a quarter of a million pounds of food scraps, and used these scraps as a key input in support of urban agriculture through a distributed network of small-scale, community-based composting efforts

They've made composting easier to access for the past five years through a community compostables drop-off point each Sunday at Freshfarm's Dupont Circle Farmers Market.

Also in 2016, Compost Cab took the lead in designing and building a site-specific composting system that doubled the existing capacity to make soil for the Washington Youth Garden (WYG) located in the National Arboretum.

As an environmental project, the system enables food waste reduction and soil production in a hyper-local, closed loop system.

FULL CIRCLE SUSTAINABILITY

Compost Cab itself is a self-sustaining sustainability program. Their operations are light-weight, efficient, and distributed by design. They collect food scraps from hundreds of households across the District each week, without putting a single additional vehicle on the road – instead they maximize the utilization of existing vehicles already on the road.

They serve urban farms and community garden partners, creating a clean stream of nitrogen in the form of vegetable-matter only, urban-appropriate compostables that (a) diverts food scraps from landfill, (b) creates compost for use in the community, (c) limits vehicle miles traveled, and (d) drives behavioral change. Members report a 40% reduction in household waste when they start working with Compost Cab.

Compost Cab operates out of a shared workspace 1776, and runs a completely paperless operation (data recording, billing, etc. are all done electronically). They utilize public transit and bicycle infrastructure, and optimize their collection procedures for efficiency with advanced routing software. And every employee is trained to follow zero-waste protocols.



ABOUT THE DISTRICT SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS

The District Sustainability Awards recognize businesses, individuals and organizations for outstanding achievements and leadership in sustainability. The honorees support the goals of the District's sustainability plan, Sustainable DC, in areas such as energy and water conservation, renewable energy production, healthy food access, stormwater management, green jobs development, and sustainable waste management.



From left to right: Top: Bobby Bell, James Ley, Morgan Cosgrove, Christine Connerty-Marin. Middle: Fred Struse, Peter Lewis. Bottom: Jess Samuda, Jeremy Brosowsky