

Sustainable Events Checklist

A guide to help you set up a successful sustainable event in the City of Gainesville!



City of Gainesville Ordinances that apply to events

Mandatory Commercial Recycling (*Ordinance Ch. 27, Div. 3, Sec. 27-85*)

- **Requires the separation of recyclable materials from the garbage.** Designated recyclable materials for events include metal, plastic & glass bottles & cans, and cardboard boxes.
- **Requires an equal number of publicly used recycle collection containers as garbage collection containers.**

Prohibition on Single-Use Plastic Straws and Single-Use Stirrers (*Ordinance Ch. 27, Div. 5, Sec. 27-90*)

- **Bans the distribution, sale, or use of single-use plastic straws and single-use plastic stirrers.** Food vendors may provide reusable or compostable straws and stirrers.

Single-use Plastic Food Accessories upon Request Only (*Ordinance Ch. 27, Div. 5, Sec. 27-91*)

- **Bans the routine distribution of single-use plastic accessories** (i.e., plastic utensils, condiment packets, or portion cups) by vendors with a customer's order unless the single-use food accessory is specifically requested by the customer. Single-use accessories can be provided at customer self-serve stations.

Prohibition on the Use of Expanded Polystyrene Containers on City Property or City Right-Of-Way (*Ordinance Ch. 27, Div. 5, Sec. 27-92*)

- **Bans the distribution of prepackaged food or beverages in expanded polystyrene** (i.e., foam containers) by vendors on City of Gainesville property (i.e., City parks) or on the City right-of-way (i.e., food trucks).

Prohibition on the Intentional Release Outdoors Of Plastic Confetti, Glitter, and Balloons (*Ordinance Ch. 27, Div. 5, Sec. 27-93*)

- **Bans the release of plastic confetti, glitter, or balloons outdoors within city limits.** Florida State Statute 379.233 limits the release of balloons filled with gas lighter than air, no matter the material of the balloon.

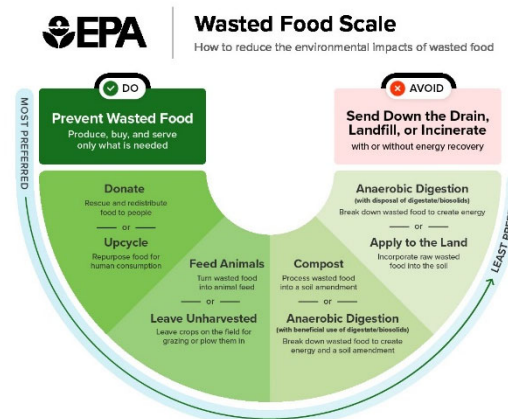
Introduction to Sustainable Events

Making Your Event Sustainable

- Events often bring challenges like pollution from single-use items, excessive food waste, increased litter, high energy & water consumption, and increased greenhouse gas emissions.
- Transforming to a sustainable event will reduce your event's environmental impact and strengthen our local economy.
- By incorporating sustainable practices, your event can:
 - Showcase your organization as an environmental steward
 - Minimize pollution and litter
 - Support local businesses and organizations
 - Encourage healthier practices within our community

Reducing Food Waste

- In Florida, food waste accounts for around 25% of material landfilled.
- Diverting food waste from the garbage is a great way to lower the environmental impact of your event and provide a service to the local community.
- To minimize food waste, follow the EPA's Waste Food Scale by using these preferred methods:
 - Partner with local nonprofits to donate surplus food before your event
 - Work with nearby farms to repurpose food waste as animal feed
 - Compost any food scraps to create a valuable soil amendment



Sustainable Supplies & Packaging

- Many food service items are single-use plastics that are not recyclable and can contribute significantly to event waste.
- Consider using supplies that are reusable, compostable, or can be recycled locally:
 - Provide attendees with reusable/refillable cups instead of disposable cups.
 - Use refillable condiment bottles instead of individual condiment packets.
 - Offer only compostable forks, spoons, and knives.
 - Serve food items in compostable tubs or trays.
 - Sell beverages in bottles that you know are recyclable in your community.
- Make sure compost collection containers are properly labeled to avoid contamination with non-compostable materials.
- Buy local when possible to support local businesses.

Sustainable Event Planning Checklist

1. EVENT APPLICATION

- To submit a City of Gainesville event application, visit gainesvillefl.gov/specialevent.
- Depending on the size and location of your event, you may be required to submit proof of garbage, recycling, and or compost services from a registered service provider.

2. MAKE A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

- Identify an event captain on your team who can lead the planning of your sustainability efforts.
- Research venues that offer sustainable services, such as energy-efficient lights, recycling & composting programs onsite, and sustainable transportation options (see checklist #8).
- Determine the estimated number of attendees for each day of your event to better predict your waste service needs.

These actions that reduce waste and preserve energy help progress towards the City of Gainesville's goals for fighting climate change! The city aims to go zero waste by 2040 and to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.

3. HIRE A REGISTERED SERVICE PROVIDER(S) FOR YOUR EVENT

- Select a service provider(s) to provide garbage, recycling, and or food waste collection services at least 30 days before your event day.
- Waste collection services may include providing collection containers, emptying collection containers, back-of-the-house sorting of waste materials, and post-event cleanup duties.
- See the Resource Appendix (page 5) for a list of local registered event service providers.**

4. SELECT & MANAGE SUPPLIERS

- Source local businesses to provide event services, such as catering, printing invitations, equipment rental, etc.
- Reduce waste by adopting reusable, recyclable, and or compostable plates, cups, utensils, and napkins.
- Remember City ordinances banning plastic straws & stirrers and the routine distribution of single-use plastic accessories.
- Ensure compostable products are BPI-certified and explicitly labeled with the word "Compostable".
- Consider incentivizing attendees to bring their own reusable beverage containers.



5. SET UP ZERO WASTE STATIONS

- Reduce event waste by setting up zero waste stations in accessible locations throughout the event area for the collection of garbage, recycling, and food waste.
- Waste collection containers should always be grouped together. There shouldn't be any stand-alone containers.
- Place large print, easy to understand service signs on all waste containers and at each station.
- Additional signs can be added to recycling collection containers, such as "No Cups."
- Consider having waste station monitors at each waste station to assist attendees with placing items in the correct containers.
- If food waste collection containers require bags, be sure to use compostable bags, not plastic bags.
- Select waste containers that can hold up in inclement weather for outdoor events.

6. HYDRATION STATIONS

- Avoid single-use plastic water bottles by providing hydration stations at your event.
- For large events, offer water bottle refill stations instead of bottled water. For smaller events, see if a caterer can provide 5-gallon water just as refill stations.

7. EVENT OUTREACH & MESSAGING

- Opt for digital marketing over printed event materials.
- To maximize participation, announce sustainable event initiatives to attendees before and during the event.
- Make use of event signs that can be reused, such as chalkboards with colorful writing.
- Avoid disposable giveaways. Instead, go for sustainable options, such as reusable cutlery, native seed packets, or digital gifts like free passes or discounts. Check that items are reusable, compostable, or recyclable in your community.



8. EDIBLE FOOD RECOVERY

- Organize the recovery and donation of edible surplus food from all vendors.
- Connect with local food banks in advance to distribute leftover non-perishable items.
- Utilize food recovery networks like FoodRecovery.org or TooGoodtoGo.com to offer perishable food items to local organizations or individuals.
- With proper documentation, food donations can provide you with tax deductions.

Did you know that landfilled food waste accounts for 14% of methane emissions in the United States? This is the single largest category of landfilled material. Reducing food waste by donating edible foods and composting food scraps is one of the greatest ways to reduce our impact on climate change.

9. TRANSPORTATION

- Select an event location that has convenient modes of public transportation nearby.
- Check to see if the event location is close to a local bus stop, has bike racks, and has EV charging stations.
- Coordinate with rideshare apps to set up a discount code for your event attendees.

10. AFTER THE EVENT

- Save money on disposal costs by sorting discarded materials correctly before placing them in garbage containers.
- Vendors and cleanup crews should flatten and stack cardboard boxes to save space and make recycling collection easier.
- Hold vendors responsible for leaving behind waste materials at their booth or contaminating the recycling.
- Schedule a post-event meeting to discuss insights and successes. Remember to take photos and keep records of which sustainability efforts did or didn't work.
- Tout your sustainable efforts by announcing your total event waste diversion rate.



Resource Appendix

- Sample event container signs:
 - Free templates for recycling signage, recyclingpartnership.org/diysigns
 - Free tool for making your own signs, sfrecycles.org/signs
- Local registered event service providers, gainesvillefl.gov/HaulerList

GARBAGE & RECYCLING COLLECTORS:

- Florida Express Environmental, 352-369-5411
- Republic Services, 800-331-2909
- GFL Environmental, 352-377-0800
- Waste Pro of Florida, 386-462-2500

COMPOST/FOOD WASTE COLLECTORS:

- Beaten Path Compost, beatenpathcompost.com
- O-Town Compost, o-towncompost.com

- BPI-certified compostable products, bpiworld.org
- Food donation liability information:
 - Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (updated 2023), usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FAQs-GoodSamaritanAct.pdf
 - Federal tax incentives for food donation, policyfinder.refed.org/federal-policy/federal-tax-incentives
- Examples of food donation distribution organizations:
 - Bread of the Mighty, breadofthemighty.org
 - GRACE Marketplace, gracemarketplace.org
 - FoodRecovery.org
- Other event guides:
 - University of Florida Sustainable Event Guide, sustainable.ufl.edu/get-involved/sustainable-event-guide/
 - Sarasota County Sustainable Event Guide, scgov.net/government/sustainability/sustainability
 - City of Orlando, orlando.gov/Our-Government/Departments-Offices/Executive-Offices/CAO/Sustainability-Resilience/Initiatives/Make-Your-Events-Green