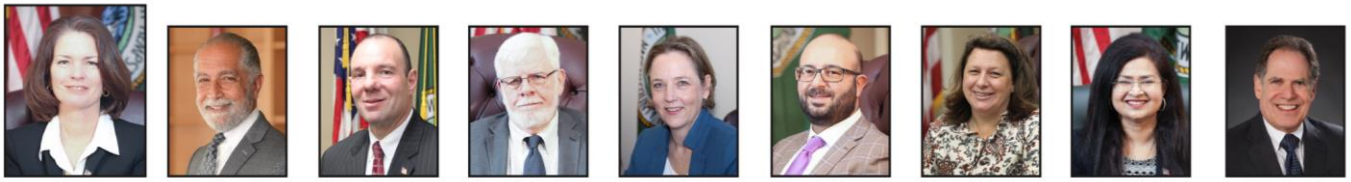
The Town of North Hempstead Organics Management Plan

December 12, 2022

The Town of North Hempstead
Climate Smart Communities Leadership Team



Town Supervisor **Jennifer DeSena** | Council Member, District 1 **Robert J. Troiano** | Council Member, District 2 **Peter Zuckerman** | Council Member, District 3 **Dennis J. Walsh** | Council Member, District 4 **Veronica Lurvey** | Council Member, District 5 **David A. Adhami** | Council Member, District 6 **Mariann Dalimonte** | Town Clerk **Ragini Srivastava** | Receiver of Taxes **Charles Berman**

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Elected Officials:

Jennifer DeSena, Supervisor
Mariann Dalimonte, Council Member
Veronica Lurvey, Council Member

Town Staff and Consultants:

Meagan Fastuca - Environmental Specialist; Planning and Environmental Protection
Michael Levine - Commissioner of Planning and Environmental Protection
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Victor Thomas - Department of Public Works
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Mitch Pitnick - Town Board Department
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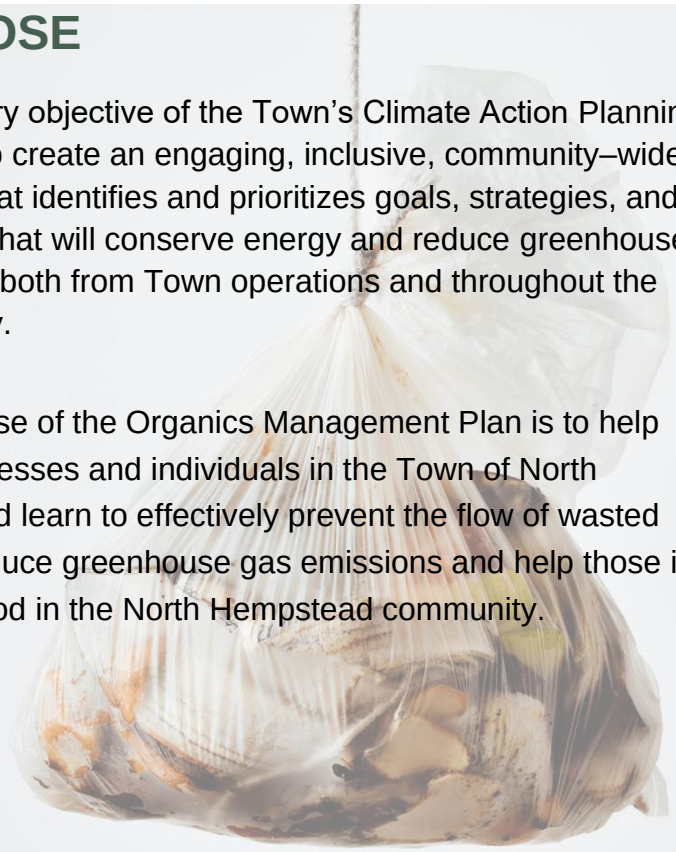
PURPOSE

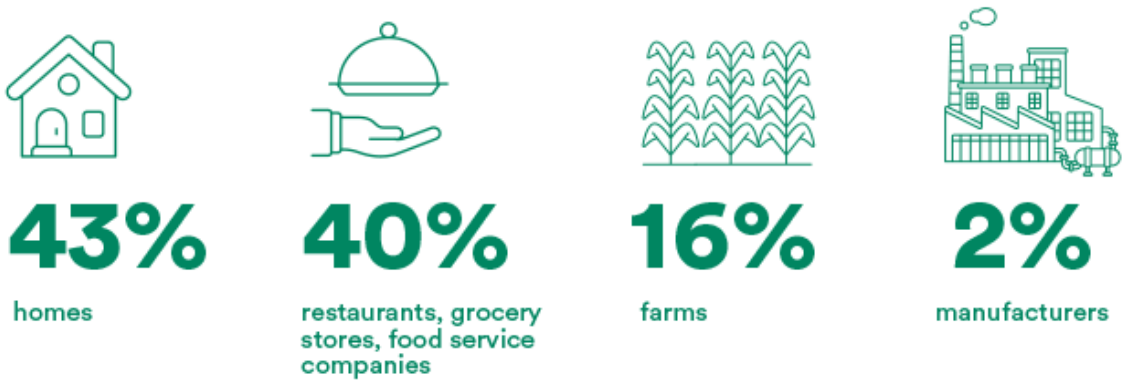
The primary objective of the Town's Climate Action Planning (CAP) is to create an engaging, inclusive, community–wide process that identifies and prioritizes goals, strategies, and initiatives that will conserve energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions both from Town operations and throughout the community.

The purpose of the Organics Management Plan is to help both businesses and individuals in the Town of North Hempstead learn to effectively prevent the flow of wasted food to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help those in need of food in the North Hempstead community.



Introduction:

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the United States, food waste is estimated at between 30 and 40 percent of the food supply and ReFED stated that in 2019, 35% of food in the United States went unsold or uneaten. Most of this waste is sent to landfills or is incinerated. According to Feeding America 43% of food waste comes from households.



Source: Feeding America

Most people don't think about how much food waste they produce and its negative impacts on the environment, including climate change. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in the United States, food waste is the single largest category of material placed in municipal landfills. Once there, it releases methane, which is an even more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. When food is wasted, all the energy and water it takes to grow, harvest, transport, and package it is also wasted. It is estimated that we could reduce about 6% to 8% of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions if we stop wasting food. In the United States, the production of lost or wasted food creates greenhouse gas emissions that equal the emissions of 32.6 million cars (World Wildlife Fund).

Another major negative implication of food waste is the fact of hunger throughout the United States. Specifically, on Long Island approximately 259,000 people suffer from food insecurity including 79,000 children. About 34% of food insecure people in Nassau County are not eligible for nutrition assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and therefore don't have enough support to put food on the table. Research has shown that lack of food can cause behavioral issues, reduced ability to learn social skills and impaired cognitive learning in children, as well as lack of stamina, increased illness, depression, and anxiety in adults and the elderly (Long Island Cares; Feeding America).

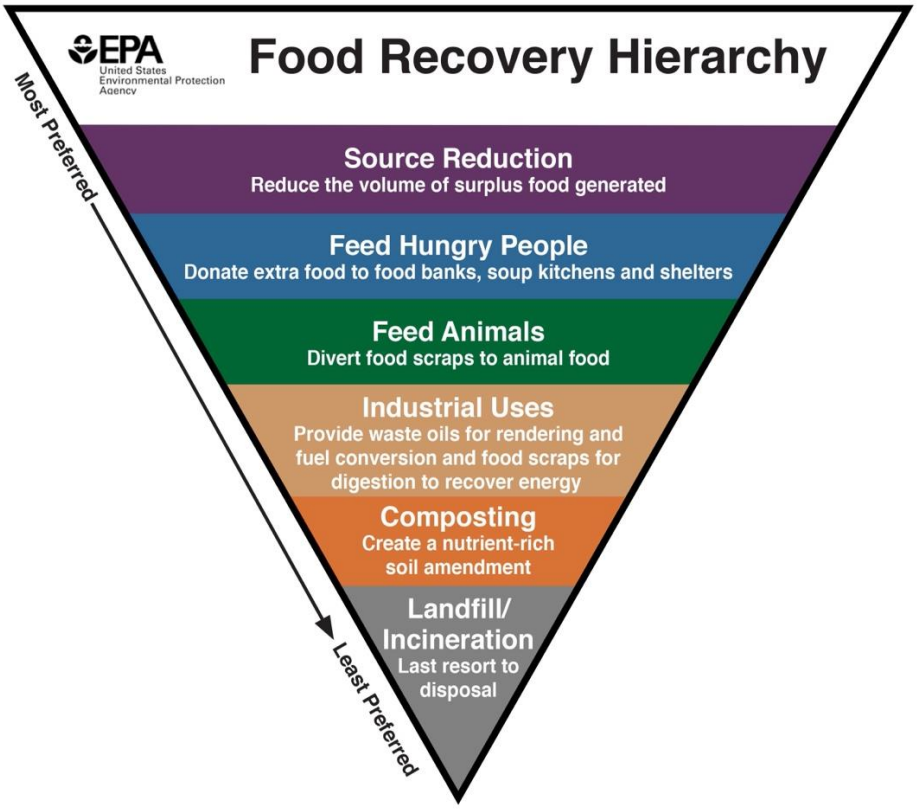
One of the ways to combat food waste and food insecurity is the use of food banks. These are said to be the single most important source of food for agencies with emergency food providers, accounting for 69% of the food distributed by pantries, 39% of the food distributed by kitchens and 45% of the food distributed by shelters (Long Island Cares; Feeding America).

With this plan we strive to help both businesses and individuals in the Town of North Hempstead learn to effectively prevent the flow of wasted food in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help those in need of food in the North Hempstead community.

Objectives of the Organics Management Plan:

This plan utilizes the U.S. EPA Food recovery hierarchy to prioritize the following goals:

1. Prevention
2. Donation
3. Diversion



To reach this goal we plan to use a variety of strategies:

- Education of residents and local businesses on preventing food waste and reducing the volume of surplus food in our community.
- Creation of strategies to support, facilitate and educate the community on food recovery and food donation by working with local food banks.
- Education and tools for home composting, as well as local community composting.

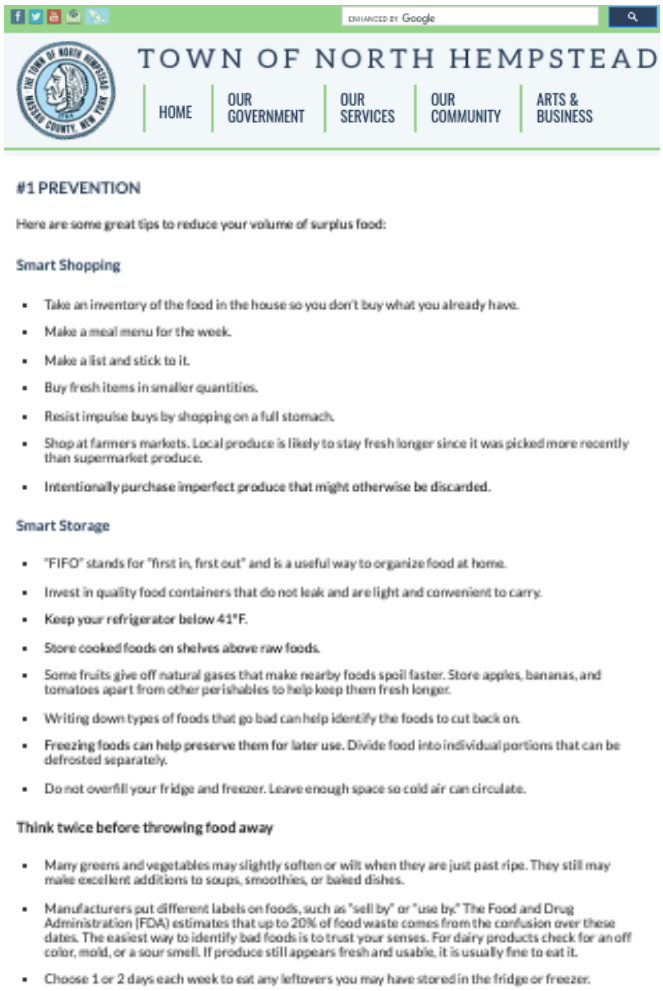
We believe this plan will lead to reduced food waste and greater food security for North Hempstead residents, thereby reducing the resources needed for food production (water, land, gasoline, energy, labor, pesticides, fertilizers), as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

Program Elements:

1. Prevention: Source Reduction

The Town of North Hempstead Climate Smart Communities Task Force discussed strategies on source reduction of food waste. The following was agreed upon as the best ways to educate residents, businesses, and institutions on how they can reduce food waste and what they can do with surplus food. A broad coalition of stakeholders will be used to ensure broad outreach.

- Creation and dissemination of tips on the following topics, through a dedicated webpage (https://northhempsteadny.gov/foodwastetips), press releases, social media, and more:
  - Smart shopping
  - Smart storage
  - Repurposing food before throwing away
  - Reducing waste while eating at restaurants



TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD

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#1 PREVENTION

Here are some great tips to reduce your volume of surplus food:

Smart Shopping

- Take an inventory of the food in the house so you don't buy what you already have.
- Make a meal menu for the week.
- Make a list and stick to it.
- Buy fresh items in smaller quantities.
- Resist impulse buys by shopping on a full stomach.
- Shop at farmers markets. Local produce is likely to stay fresh longer since it was picked more recently than supermarket produce.
- Intentionally purchase imperfect produce that might otherwise be discarded.

Smart Storage

- "FIFO" stands for "first in, first out" and is a useful way to organize food at home.
- Invest in quality food containers that do not leak and are light and convenient to carry.
- Keep your refrigerator below 41°F.
- Store cooked foods on shelves above raw foods.
- Some fruits give off natural gases that make nearby foods spoil faster. Store apples, bananas, and tomatoes apart from other perishables to help keep them fresh longer.
- Writing down types of foods that go bad can help identify the foods to cut back on.
- Freezing foods can help preserve them for later use. Divide food into individual portions that can be defrosted separately.
- Do not overfill your fridge and freezer. Leave enough space so cold air can circulate.

Think twice before throwing food away

- Many greens and vegetables may slightly soften or wilt when they are just past ripe. They still may make excellent additions to soups, smoothies, or baked dishes.
- Manufacturers put different labels on foods, such as "sell by" or "use by." The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates that up to 20% of food waste comes from the confusion over these dates. The easiest way to identify bad foods is to trust your senses. For dairy products check for an off color, mold, or a sour smell. If produce still appears fresh and usable, it is usually fine to eat it.
- Choose 1 or 2 days each week to eat any leftovers you may have stored in the fridge or freezer.

Town of North Hempstead Climate Action Website with dedicated webpage to reducing food waste.

Examples of social media posts with food waste tips.

- Outreach through our stakeholders, including local Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, religious organizations, civic associations, libraries, and additional nonprofit organizations.

2. Donation: Feed Hungry People

The focus of this strategy will be the donation of excess food to food banks and how the Town can facilitate this through outreach. By donating food, we are feeding people, not landfills, supporting local communities and saving all the resources that went into producing that food from going to waste.

- **Education of Residents and Businesses**
  - A list of all local food banks (https://northhempsteadny.gov/foodbanks) including webpages and contact information, to use in outreach.
  - Social media posts will also be used throughout the year to direct residents on where and how to donate excess food.
  - We will reach out to our stakeholders including local Business Improvement Districts and Chambers of Commerce to make sure they are aware of local food banks where food can be donated.
- **Food Scraps Producers**
  - In 2022 a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation law went into effect that requires Designated Food Scrap Generators (DFSG) or businesses and institutions that generate 2 tons or more of food scraps per week, to comply with donation requirements or both donation and recycling (composting/recycling facility) requirements. Currently there are no composting facilities in the Town for businesses to process food waste. As these facilities are built the Town will help educate local businesses of this law.

Sample outreach on food banks.

3. Diversion: Composting

Another way the Town can reduce waste is to help residents use food scraps for composting at home. Composting involves the breaking down of yard and kitchen waste into a nutrient rich soil amendment.

It provides many benefits including reducing the amount of waste that ends up in landfills or combustion facilities, providing valuable plant nutrients, improving soil structure, adding beneficial soil organisms, suppressing plant diseases, reducing the need for fertilizers and pesticides, and helping to prevent soil erosion and nutrient runoff.

The Town of North Hempstead, therefore, sells compost bins to its residents at a discounted cost to encourage composting and its environmental benefits. With each bin residents receive a manual on how to use it properly including what materials to include and how to maintain the bin.

The Town also offers free workshops to its residents on Sustainable Yard Care each spring, which includes instruction on how to compost. More information on the program can be found at northhempsteadny.gov/sustainability.

The Town will also educate residents about a Community Composting program at the Long Island Science Museum run by a local nonprofit Transition Town. They have collected 7,000 pounds of food waste since 2020. Learn more at transitiontownpw.org

Sample social media post on Town's compost bin program.

TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD ORGANICS MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

First Month

Research on food banks

Researching local food banks that will best redistribute donated food. This will help convert would be food waste into nourishment for families and communities that need it.

Second Month

Research Information on outreach materials

Researching the best ways to educate and interact with our community members on preventing food waste and donating to those in need.

Moving Forward

Continuous Exposure

Ongoing education and outreach to keep the issues related to food waste in the forefront of the minds of community members. This will lead to the reduction of food waste in North Hempstead.

Conclusions:

Wasted food is one of largest generators of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally. Thirty to forty percent of food is wasted each year, and 43% of that food waste occurs at the household level.

Food production, transportation, and handling of food waste generate significant carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions. When food ends up in landfills, it generates methane, an even more potent greenhouse gas.

The Town of North Hempstead aims to reduce food waste using the U.S. EPA Food recovery Hierarchy to prioritize solutions: #1 Prevent, #2 Donate, #3 Divert.

The implementation of this organics management plan is part of The Town's overall Climate Action Planning, providing residents and businesses throughout the town education and resources to reduce GHG emissions and therefore help the Town reduce its impact on climate change.

Resources:

WWF: https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/fight-climate-change-by-preventing-food-waste

USDA: https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste/why

EPA food recovery hierarchy: https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-hierarcy

Feeding America: https://www.feedingamerica.org/

Long Island Cares: https://www.licares.org/

ReFed: https://refed.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI25fo5ofI9AIVNu7jBx1kmQg_EAAYASAAEgIaW_D_BwE