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## Restaurant Recycling and Composting Case Study

### Northampton Brewery, Northampton, Massachusetts

**Summary:** The Northampton Brewery benefits from a comprehensive waste diversion program that nearly eliminates the need for trash disposal. The Brewery demonstrates their commitment to improving environmental performance by diverting approximately 95% of their waste for recycling and composting.

#### At a Glance:

**Business:**  
Northampton Brewery

**Recycling and Composting:**  
Programs have been in place for more than 20 years with 300 tons of food waste diversion in 2012

**Employee Education:**  
Proper waste collection is an important part of both new employee orientation and staff training

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**Business Profile:** The Northampton Brewery is a restaurant and brewery in Northampton, Massachusetts that has been operating under the ownership of Janet Egelston since 1987. Since its inception, the Brewery has been committed to low environmental impact by supporting local agriculture, improving their own energy efficiency and independence and maintaining successful recycling and composting programs.

**History:** The Brewery was one of the first businesses in Northampton to enact a comprehensive recycling program, diverting mixed containers, paper and cardboard for recycling. In the early 1990s they participated in an organics program that diverted food waste to Smith Vocational High School in Northampton. When this school-run program ended, the Brewery continued to divert food waste to local composting facilities and livestock farms. Today, recycling and composting are still an integral part of their daily operations.

**Recycling:** In-house collection containers for mixed containers, cardboard and paper are strategically placed throughout the facility. Three bins are positioned side-by-side behind the bar; paper, trash (mainly straws) and food waste (mainly lemons and peanut shells). Bartenders collect empty bottles in separate containers to maintain inventory. Staff gather mixed paper and containers in the kitchen in similar bins and empty them into 96-gallon toters for weekly pick-up. The Brewery's commitment to recycling also includes purchasing in-house collection containers made of 100% recycled material.



Barrels for spent grain



Northampton Brewery compost collection

**Composting:** A local dairy farmer collects the spent grain, hop waste and yeast sediment generated during the brewing process; an estimated 284 tons per year. In the kitchen, two 45-gallon trashcans sit side by side: One collects plate scrapings, napkins and compostable products for composting, and the other is for trash. Chefs also gather prep waste in smaller five gallon buckets to deposit directly into one of the several compost toters stored outside.

**Employee education:** The Brewery's commitment to a low carbon footprint extends to its employees. Job applications include questions about sustainability, while training for new employees includes demonstrations of how waste is separated. Constant reminders help staff continue to sort waste correctly, and the atmosphere created at the Brewery encourages employees to improve diversion. Management stopped using plastic wrap to cover bottles at night in favor of reusable bottle covers after one employee demonstrated the impact by gathering a week's worth of plastic wrap waste.

**Evaluation:** Downtown Northampton businesses participate in a waste collaborative with shared dumpsters to maximize space. If the Brewery did not divert over 85% of their waste for composting and livestock feed, the resulting cost increase for the waste collaborative would be over \$20,000 per year. The Brewery's high-level attention to responsible waste management results in virtually zero waste, with trash disposal less than 6% of the total waste generated. This level of diversion represents a 2% reduction in trash since 2002 and marks the potential every program has for improvement over time. Good support and encouragement from management and active employee engagement ensure that collection is successful at every step in the Brewery's program.



Under-bar containers for paper recycling, trash, and food waste.