GW Roadmap to Zero Waste

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The George Washington University Facilities Services Zero Waste & Logistics

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Student Organizations

- GreenGW
- Campaign GW
- Grow Community
- Solar Institute
- HMS GW

Outside Representatives

- Annie White, DC Department of Public Works
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INTRODUCTION

The George Washington University (GW), consisting of the Foggy Bottom and Mount Vernon Campuses in Washington DC, and the Virginia Science and Technology Campus (VSTC) in Ashburn, Virginia, is committed to its continued growth in sustainability. The 2012 Ecosystems Enhancement Strategy (EES)¹ is the university’s sustainability vision and mission for healthy ecosystems, lowering our carbon footprint, and promoting an environmentally literate community. In an effort to focus the vast energies of GW, the EES describes actionable targets in six focus areas, one of which is Waste Decomposition and Treatment. Within that section there are four comprehensive targets that together propel GW towards becoming a zero waste institution.

Using the internationally accepted standard for zero waste as a guiding principle, the university’s waste diversion rate can be defined as a 90% diversion of municipal solid waste (MSW) from the landfill or energy-recovery sources². Although we face many significant challenges as an open campus situated in an urban environment, GW will work toward zero waste through the initiatives outlined in the following strategic plan. Our approach will strive to reduce overall consumption, return material goods for reuse, compost applicable organic matter to promote new growth, and recycle goods and materials at the end of their lifecycle.

This Zero Waste Plan (Plan) is comprised of the following four sections:
1. An overview of GW’s current waste management infrastructure;
2. A discussion of the challenges and proposed methods for achieving the targets laid out in the EES to become a zero waste institution;
3. University and Financial Commitments needed to achieve Zero Waste goals; and
4. Appendices.

I. CURRENT GW WASTE DIVERSION PROGRAM

The foundation for becoming a zero waste institution has already been laid. In November of 2013, an Assistant Director and a Recycling Coordinator were hired under a new division - Zero Waste and Logistics. In 2014, the George Washington University (GW) began advancing a series of initiatives designed to boost recycling and diversion rates university-wide. These included: (1) implementing organics collection on Foggy Bottom Campus; (2) creating an indoor and outdoor container standard for the various types of buildings across campus; (3) creating new signage for trash, traditional recycling, food waste and electronics recycling for use in all buildings; (4) redistributing outdoor trash and recycling containers to more accurately reflect usage including the purchase of additional BigBelly solar compacting units; and (5) standardizing trash and recycling infrastructure in residence halls on the Foggy Bottom campus.

Solid Waste at GW is managed in the following categories through disposal in a Waste-to-Energy facility, landfill or via proper re-use and recycling channels:

- Solid Waste (Trash)
- Single Stream Recyclables (Paper, Cardboard, and Glass, Aluminum, and Plastic containers)
- Ferrous Metals
- Document Shredding
- Electronic Waste
- Hazardous Waste
- Clothing and Household Goods
- Furniture and Office Supplies
- Yard Waste
- Food Waste

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, the University “recycled” 31.4 percent of its waste from the landfill. This includes fiber, cans and bottles, ferrous metals, e-waste and hazardous waste. Due to other recovery programs, GW was able to increase its diversion rate to 35.2 percent, leaving 64.8 percent of all material to be disposed of in either a Waste-to-Energy facility, or at a landfill. Figure 1 below displays the FY 16 breakout of materials collected at GW by weight and composition type.

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3 Managed by the Office of Health and Safety. Only weights are reported to Zero Waste.
4 To include all items in “recycled” plus re-use, special events, yard waste and composting. It should be noted that since the Zero Waste Team was hired in November of 2013, this figure has increased due to the new programs and initiatives put into place.
While Figure 2 displays this data as a percent of the overall waste stream.
The diversion rates of three additional Universities that have either an “open-campus” or similar demographics to GW were benchmarked for comparison purposes. In addition, Georgetown University, which is in close proximity to GW, was also benchmarked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Name</th>
<th>Tons Recycled</th>
<th>Tons Reused</th>
<th>Tons Composted</th>
<th>Tons Disposed</th>
<th>Diversion Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Washington</td>
<td>1,175</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2,534</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Univ.</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1,193</td>
<td>6,657</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Univ.</td>
<td>8,359</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>49,385</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquette Univ.</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown Univ.</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>2,049</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moving forward, GW will promote an increase in the overall campus-wide waste diversion rate while continuing to educate the student, staff and faculty community on zero waste initiatives. In order to accomplish this, it is important to understand historical recycling and diversion metrics.

**Figure 3** below depicts the disposal and recycling weights for the total waste stream that GW has reported since FY 2012.(As the Figure shows, the total amount of materials being generated on campus continues to decline. This trend of decreasing waste is expected to continue in FY 17.) *The baselines reported in Figure 3 will be used to inform the necessary strategies to reach our zero waste goals.*

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Figure 3 – Historical Trash and Diversion Rates
II. 2016 ZERO WASTE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

U.S. EPA data suggests that the nation's recovery of recyclables has remained stagnant, with recycling and composting staying the same as in 2013. Industry experts point to the shifting material mix as a primary factor in the U.S. recycling rate's standstill. Part of this is due to the concept of the "evolving ton," which is the occurrence of lightweight, mostly plastics-based packaging replacing heavier, more easily recyclable paper and glass packaging. Therefore, a ton of recyclables today "is harder to amass" than it was a decade ago.6

Even with the phenomena of the evolving ton, GW has experienced an increase in both the recycling as well as diversion rates since the end of Fiscal Year 2013. This is the result of the new focus on our existing single stream recycling program, coupled with the additional diversion efforts described in this Plan. Figure 4 provides a break out of the diversion rate for FY 2016, compared to the projected goal of 40% for FY 20207.

Figure 4 – FY 16 vs. FY 20 Estimated Recycling and Diversion Rate Comparison

Recycling: Includes single stream recyclables (containers and fiber), shredded paper, e-waste, ferrous metals and hazardous materials.
Diversion: Includes "Recycling" plus yard waste, special events, re-use and food waste.

As the University moves forward with the programs both already implemented and pending, GW expects both the recycling and diversion rates to continue to increase as a result of the following eight initiatives below.

7 40 percent diversion goal is based on aggregate weight and not on a per capita basis. This is because GW is an open campus and it’s not possible to estimate the number of visitors accessing the campus.
These goals should be considered static, but will ultimately depend on financial resources and support from University stakeholders. However, GW will revisit the 40 percent diversion goal as we get closer to 2020. For example, if additional recycling disposal capacity in the region should be built, or additional rules and regulations promulgated by the District of Columbia arise, we expect to be able to increase the University’s recycling goals.

**Initiative #1 - Conduct Comprehensive Waste Audits on the Foggy Bottom Campus**

In order for GW to better understand its waste stream and to effectively develop and implement programs and policies aimed at achieving zero waste, **comprehensive waste audits** of both the trash and recycling streams will be conducted. The Zero Waste team, with university partners, will conduct a waste sort each semester.

This will entail collecting up to 10 bags of trash (each bag approximately 32-gallons in size) and 10 bags of recyclables, generated from both residential, and academic buildings. The bags will be opened (on a tarp) in a public setting (Kogan Plaza) and a number of students, staff, and faculty volunteers will analyze the contents within. In prior Waste Audits, items found in the trash and recycling streams were placed in one of three 55-gallon drums – “Trash,” “Recycling” and “Compost” and weighed accordingly. In future Waste Audits, it’s envisioned that further material composition categories will be introduced. These include separate categories for recyclable items such as paper, plastic containers, glass, and aluminum. The results will ultimately be weighed and analyzed on a semester by semester basis as a basis of comparison.

**The objectives of this campus wide waste audit will be:**

- To determine the contamination rates of the trash and recycling streams in residential and academic/administrative/programming buildings.
- To engage the GW community, especially the students, in understanding how disposal habits affect their environment.
- To determine the composition and quantities of waste being disposed.
- To measure the effectiveness of the campus community’s waste management/recycling habits.
- To work with vendors to reduce the incidence of certain types of materials in the campus stream.
- To identify opportunities for improving waste management systems and strategies campus-wide.
Once enough data has been collected, the university will have a meaningful set of baseline data from which to plan enhancements to waste reduction efforts on campus. For example, after the first audit, it was determined there was a high percentage of Styrofoam containers and waxy paper cups incorrectly deposited in the recycling stream.

A waste audit is high priority as it relates to all other strategic initiatives concerned with the achievement of Zero Waste.

**Initiative #2 - Campus Engagement Efforts**

In partnership with the Office of Sustainability and Division of Operations, Communications and Outreach; GW will encourage support through education, outreach, and engagement of the campus community. These areas of focus are critical to achieving waste diversion goals. Engaging with the community, especially the students, is and will always be a crucial element of the development and adaptation of our waste reduction programs.

**Key Actions will include:**

- Partner with **Community Recycling** to expand the use of clothing and shoe collection bins throughout the Foggy Bottom and Mount Vernon campuses to capture usable materials year-round. At the beginning of 2015, GW began partnering with Community Recycling to place four permanent clothing collection bins in residence halls throughout campus. Due to the success of the program, the university is looking at installing additional collection bins in select residence halls.

- Partner with **Starbucks** campus locations to provide education material designating what components of their waste stream are recyclable (i.e. plastic containers), and what components are trash (i.e. waxy paper coffee cups). Given the large volume of hot coffee cups in our recycling containers, GW will work with Starbucks to educate their consumers.

- Partner with **Sustainability and University Event Planners** to make all events more sustainable and green. This will include making sure that all internal and external event coordination goes thru the Grounds team. A priority will be placed on compostable utensils and recyclable items. In addition, to prevent overflow of trash, Grounds will work to ensure adequate receptacles are in place.

- Conduct bi-annual training of **Housekeeping staff** on any existing and new University wide trash and recycling efforts. Currently, Zero Waste staff provides annual training of proper trash and recycling protocols to over 250 housekeepers throughout Foggy Bottom University. Moving forward, this training will be made
twice per year and will include housekeeping staff from the Mount Vernon and VSTC campuses.

- Identify policies that need to be modified or developed to support the zero waste commitment. This will entail working with various stakeholders throughout campus to include (but not limited to) Sustainability, Housekeeping, Property Management, the Division of Student Affairs, and various student Green Groups.
- Advance **Social Media** engagement efforts by using Twitter and other media outlets to promote recycling at GW, and send out our recycling and diversion metrics to the student populace.
- Encourage the paperless office as technologies become available.

**Initiative #3 – Annual Participation in RecycleMania**

RecycleMania is a friendly competition and benchmarking tool for colleges and universities to promote waste reduction and waste diversion activities in their communities. Over an eight week period each spring, from February 1st to March 31st, colleges across the United States and Canada report the amount of recycling and trash collected each week at their respective universities. Participants are then ranked to determine which school performed best in waste reduction and increased recycling.

GW participated in the 2015 and 2016 RecycleMania events. This included tracking data on a weekly basis, working with our trash and recycling vendors to provide data in a timely manner, conducting the seasonal waste audit as a RecycleMania themed event, and promoting campus awareness at sporting events. In 2015, GW placed first in recycling among the participating DC Universities. In 2016, only one other school in Washington, D.C. participated in RecycleMania. Trinity College reported a recycling rate during that eight week period of 16.9 percent, compared to GW’s 31.8 percent.

**Initiative #4 – Promote Diversion Efforts of BigBelly Solar Compactors**

GW has 20 sets of BigBelly solar compacting trash and recycling units throughout campus. Each set has the standard Zero Waste trash and recycling signage on the front panel. These units hold up to five times the volume of ordinary trash receptacles, reducing campus transportation and labor costs due to their lower frequency of collection and ability to properly contain solid waste spillage.

GW has identified six additional spots (3 “critical”) on campus where the current Victor Stanley containers are frequently overwhelmed (see Appendix D) that could benefit from a BigBelly solar unit. The Zero Waste Team procured the funding
necessary to purchase two of these new sets in 2015, which were installed in December of that year.

Another benefit of the BigBelly solar units is their ability to act as public education feature. Each receptacle provides an opportunity to promote Zero Waste and sustainability initiatives. On a quarterly basis, GW will develop and post (in a fun and interesting way) current recycling and re-use data on the sides of each Big Belly unit. This will help inform the Foggy Bottom community of GW’s recycling commitment and how they can help make the university Zero Waste. In July 2016, the first of these posters was installed

**Initiative #5 - Expand Reuse and Recycling Efforts**

To facilitate lowering GW's carbon footprint, the Reuse Program is seeking ways to expand and be more efficient in their efforts to assist in the University's zero waste goals. The Reuse Program is researching the following areas to increase the re-purposing of usable, unwanted items and to divert a larger volume of furniture and objects from disposal.

Areas being explored to expand the Reuse Program include:

- Pursue increased access and visibility of available items.
- Implementing an inventory software program along with a visual program to enable viewing of available items.
- Network with other universities to exchange information on re-purposing university surplus items.
- Develop additional relationships to provide usable reuse items to community organizations.

**Additional Key Actions relating to re-use and recycling may include:**

- Establish additional recycling locations campus-wide and improve existing drop-off collection points.
- Institute more recycling and composting opportunities at special events on campus (e.g. during Colonial Inauguration).
- Take advantage of solid waste and recycling groups in the District region such as the Virginia Recycling Association and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.
- Develop strategic relationships with local reuse/recycling entities serving the region.
- Work with the Office of Sustainability to develop marketing plan and educational materials to support efforts.
- Recommend making the temporary Re-Use coordinator a permanent position.
Initiative #6 – Continue to Update and Replace Lids and Signage

GW has approximately 70 sets of Victor Stanley trash and recycling receptacles placed throughout Foggy Bottom campus, with additional sets on the Mount Vernon and VSTC campuses. These receptacles play an instrumental role in proper solid waste disposal, and recycling efforts. Each set of Victor Stanley bins has a “rain-bonnet” lid identifying its use, and the materials that can be disposed within.

Because we are in an active and open campus, many students and the general public incorrectly use the containers. The end users were both cross contaminating, as well as leaving their items on the lip of the lids, instead of placing within the container.

In FY 2015, Zero Waste re-designed the lid to account for a much larger opening, while also streamlining the text designating the container use. Beginning in February, GW began replacing the old lids with the new, updated units. Although this will not eliminate improper usage, combined with vendor and student education programs, we hope to reduce contamination levels.

In 2014 and 2015, GW created brand new recycling, trash, electronics and other relevant signage to be placed by indoor containers. These posters will continue to be placed in both new and existing buildings throughout campus.

Initiative #7 - Expand Food Waste Composting Efforts

The university will continue to expand its food waste diversion efforts. In order to get the maximum benefit from this valuable resource, the university will need to develop programs to ensure as much pre- and post-consumer food waste is being diverted. Not only will this increase the diversion rate, it will serve to improve the overall sustainability efforts of the university.

Key Actions will involve:
- Conduct research of post-consumer food waste collection at other universities (such as American University) and Washington DC agencies.
- Collaborate with on-campus food locations to increase compostable product line.
• Conduct pilot projects at select residence halls to determine feasibility of small food waste diversion programs. One such program was implemented at Hensley Hall in MVC in the first half of 2015.
• Coordinate with on-campus food locations to begin post-consumer compost collection.
• Expand materials collected at Starbucks, Carvings and Tonic to include food waste and/or coffee grinds.
• Assist Beef Steak Restaurant within the Science and Engineering Hall, implement a food waste diversion program.

**Initiative #8 - Expand Yard Waste Collection Efforts**

GW understands the importance of diverting yard waste material from the landfill. Due to GW’s location, the university produces less landscaping waste. However, the Grounds Management Department is committed to minimizing their impact on the environment by diverting what they can. Although some diversion of yard waste is occurring, much more can be captured.

*During FY 2016, the Zero Waste team worked with the Grounds Department to expand this effort to collect plant waste year-round.* In FY 2016, approximately 27 tons of organic yard waste materials from Foggy Bottom campus were sent for composting. To this effect, GW helped procure a 30 Cubic Yard open-top roll-off container to be placed at the back of the Facilities building on a permanent basis. Moving forward, it is anticipated that this program will divert over 30 tons of yard waste materials on an annual basis.
III. UNIVERSITY AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENT

The university has made commitments within all levels of the administration and support systems that support the GW Ecosystems Enhancement Strategy and Zero Waste goals. As this effort progresses in the future, appropriate stakeholders will be identified and asked to collaborate in an effort to maximize expertise when allocating resources to the initiatives. While there are no guiding enforcement rules or penalties with the zero waste goals, it will become the responsibility of the entire GW community to ensure that they are appropriately managed and completed.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

As GW works toward accomplishing tasks throughout the zero waste process, the financial benefits of each initiative will have to be evaluated. Zero waste strategies have been adopted by a wide range of institutions, businesses and agencies with results that have included significant cost savings, and improved environmental performances. Zero waste strategies support all phases of the sustainability movement. These include but are not limited to, a healthy environment, a healthy university community, and economies of scale.
APPENDICES

The following list of appendices is intended to provide an example of the achievements realized by the Zero Waste team in Fiscal Year 2015 and 16 to date. Included in these appendices are (1) a map of the new outdoor container layout; (2) the new interior container standards; and (3) new university wide posters designed for our trash, recycling, compost and e-waste endeavors.
Appendix A: Foggy Bottom Solid Waste Receptacles as of 2015

[Map of Foggy Bottom Solid Waste Receptacles with various symbols indicating different types of receptacles and their locations.]
Appendix B: Interior Container Standards
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location(s)</th>
<th>Building Type(s)</th>
<th>Academic Residence</th>
<th>Academic Residence Halls Multi-Purpose</th>
<th>Academic Residence Halls Multi-Purpose</th>
<th>Academic Residence</th>
<th>Academic Residence</th>
<th>Academic Residence</th>
<th>Academic Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Public Area</td>
<td>Public Area</td>
<td>Offices or Dorms</td>
<td>Offices or Dorms</td>
<td>Common Areas</td>
<td>Common Areas</td>
<td>Elevators or High Profile Locations</td>
<td>Built-Ins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Single Stream</td>
<td>Stream</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer/Model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lid Photo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lid Type/Model</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. Container Cost ($)</td>
<td>Included in price</td>
<td>Included in price</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Est. Lid Cost ($)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. A second option are 48-Gallon Toter’s. Model ANA48. Dimensions are 28.75” L x 23.50” W x 37.50” H. Order thru Kim Heafner (1-800) 424-0422. Estimated at $79.60/each.


Appendix C: Signage Created in Fiscal Year 2015
TRASH

Plastic Bags/Film
Styrofoam Cups/Containers
Hot Beverage (Coffee) Cups

&

Juice Boxes
Plastic Utensils
Cold Drink Cups
Coffee Creamer Cups
Soiled Napkins/Paper
Condiment Packaging
Candy/Snack Wrappers

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ALL MATERIALS LISTED ABOVE CAN BE PLACED IN THIS BIN FOR TRASH.
TRASH

Styrofoam Cups/Containers
Waxy Paper Cups/Containers
Coffee Cups
Condiment Packaging
Plastic Bags
Plastic Utensils

&

Food Waste
Coffee Grinds
Candy/Snack Wrappers
Soiled Napkins/Paper Towels
Soiled Pizza Boxes

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ALL MATERIALS LISTED ABOVE CAN BE PLACED IN THIS BIN FOR TRASH.
Single-Stream RECYCLING

CONTAINERS AND JARS
Plastic Beverage and Food Containers (#1-7)
Aluminum, Steel and Tin Cans
Glass Bottles and Jars
Juice Cartons

MIXED PAPER AND CARDBOARD
Office Paper (White/Color)
Newspapers, Magazines and Books
Flattened Cereal and Corrugated Boxes
Junk Mail and Paper Inserts

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ALL MATERIALS LISTED ABOVE CAN BE PLACED IN THIS BIN FOR RECYCLING.
COMPOST

PLEASE NO STYROFOAM OR PLASTICS

Bones
Dairy Products
Egg Shells
Yard Waste
Food Scraps
Coffee Grinds

Napkins
Paper Cups and Plates
Paper Towels and Rolls
Pizza Boxes
Compostable Plates/Utensils

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ALL MATERIALS LISTED ABOVE CAN BE PLACED IN THIS BIN FOR COMPOSTING.
ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

E-CYCLING TOWERS (SMALL ITEMS)

WHAT:
- Cell Phones
- Chargers/Cords
- Batteries
- Toner/Ink Cartridges
- CFL Light Bulbs

E-CYCLING TOWER LOCATIONS:
- Marvin Center (Ground Floor Elevators)
- Thurston Hall (Mail Boxes)
- Strong Hall (Lobby)
- Shenkman Hall (1st Floor Elevators)
- West Hall (Lower Level 1 Next to the iPrint Station & ATM)

FIXIT REQUEST & DROP-OFF BIN (LARGE ITEMS)

WHAT:
- Computers/Monitors/TVs
- Printers
- Tablets/E-Readers

HOW:
- Submit a FIXit Request for “ECYCL” or
- Place items in the Drop-Off Bin
  (located on the Support Building Loading Dock, 2025 F Street, NW)

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TRASH CHUTE
ALL WASTE MUST BE BAGGED

WHAT:
Items Listed on the Trash Poster MUST be Bagged

NO
Boxes/Bulky Items
Glass/Breakable Items
Hot/Smoldering/Smoking Items
Sharp Objects/Syringes
Recyclables

HOW:
1. Bag and Tie Trash Bags
2. Turn Handle and Pull Door Outward
3. Place Bagged Trash Into Chute Carefully

If the Trash Chute is Full or has Been Locked for More Than 8 Hours, Please Call FixIt at 202-994-6706 option 2

facilities.gwu.edu/housekeeping-residential
Current 1 Pair of Big Belly’s 1 Trash, 1 Recycling (20)
Proposed 1 Pair of Big Belly’s 1 Trash, 1 Recycling (3)

Proposed BigBelly Locations

1. Eye St Mall, Center
2. Kogan Plaza, NW Corner North of Gate
3. University Yard, NW Corner