

The History of Sustainable Waste Management at Emory University



1985-1989

The Beginning of Recycling at Emory

- 1985: Emory Surplus Property began to facilitate the sale and reuse of equipment around campus.
- 1989: The Library Environmental Action Force (LEAF) was founded and introduced white paper recycling at Emory libraries.

1990-1994

Expanding the Recycling Program

- 1990: Emory Recycles was created.
- 1992: Six outdoor recycling containers were added to collect aluminum, colored paper, and glass.
- 1990-1993: White paper recycling expanded to about 50 buildings around campus.

1995-1999

Increased Infrastructure

- 1998: The Emory Recycling Center opened, allowing the university to handle more recyclables and generate income from processing them.
- The center handles recycling for both members of the Emory community and surrounding neighborhoods.

2000-2010

The Introduction of Composting

- 2005: The first Sustainability Vision Report was released with the goal of reducing Emory's total waste stream by 65% by 2015.
- 2009: Emory instituted a composting stream, beginning with the DUC student cafeteria and the fraternity houses.

2011-2015

Renewed Sustainability Goals

- 2014: A pilot program was initiated at Cox Dining Hall for zero waste to be sent to landfills.
- 2015: The second Sustainability Vision Report introduced the goal of reducing Emory's total waste stream by 95% by 2025.

2016-2020

Expanding Awareness

- 2015-2016: A literacy survey from OSI found that 70% of students acted "often" or "always" to reduce waste.
- 2018-2019: Emory's campus diverted 72.36% of its total waste from landfills.
- The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges.

2021-
Present

The Transition Away from Plastics

- 2021: Emory University signed the Break Free from Plastic Pledge (BFFFP), committing to the reduction of unnecessary single-use plastics on campus.
- 2025: The BFFFP went into effect, and a Task Force was formed to foster collaboration on plastic-free solutions.



EMORY



sustainability
initiatives