



## Reducing Food Waste In Denver Final Report and Recommendations



Report for Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

Prepared by Joining Vision and Action (JVA)

July 1st, 2016

## FOOD WASTE IN DENVER: THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE

### BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In order to inform recommendations for an integrated approach toward food waste reduction, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) contracted with Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to conduct a review of the local landscape of Denver-area organizations that prevent food waste, including the rescue and redirection of unused food and recycling food scraps.

The process for developing a summary list of partner organizations, which includes their scope and scale of work and their efforts that address community food waste and support its reduction and repurposing, involved the following efforts:

- **Individual interviews.** Key stakeholders across multiple disciplines (government, nonprofit, for-profit, consultants and collaborative groups) were identified and interviewed in order to achieve a broad view of the issue.
- **Connect with coalitions.** Many of the partner organizations and staff were identified as being a part of established or burgeoning collaborative groups sharing NRDC's focus of food waste reduction efforts. JVA staff initiated an ongoing dialogue with these coalitions on behalf of NRDC to explore current and potential partnerships.

As JVA and NRDC prepared to host a stakeholder convening June 16, the information gathered from these conversations guided the process of identifying future partners and the roles that each may play moving forward.

### INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, Denver has nurtured a growing ecosystem of organizations dedicated to local food and sustainability. Consisting of dozens of institutions across the private, public and nonprofit sectors, this ecosystem addresses issues as diverse as food access, energy conservation, grassroots education and economic development. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the topic of food waste has largely been left off Denver's local food and sustainability agenda.

Slowly, this is starting to change. The City and County of Denver has run a pilot-scale residential composting program for several years, and there are a handful of small and relatively young nonprofits that deal directly with food redistribution. In the past year, several coalitions and collaborations have emerged that have begun to address food waste in a systematic way. While most of these initiatives are in their infancy, they collectively represent promising first steps toward addressing food waste at each level of the reduction pyramid.

Nevertheless, there remain several significant barriers in place that may prevent these early efforts from scaling up enough to address food waste citywide. Foremost among these barriers are poor communication between stakeholders, a lack of baseline data, and a lack of the expertise and funding necessary to develop key infrastructure. With these barriers in mind, there appear to be several promising opportunities for NRDC to join the emerging food waste landscape in and around Denver.

The following **organizational profiles** cover most of the prominent collaborative groups, government, nonprofits, for-profits and consultants addressing food waste issues in the Denver area. These summaries include scope of work and connection to the broader food waste reduction efforts.

## FOOD WASTE-RELATED COALITIONS AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

### Food-1-1

Initiated in late 2015 by the Region 8 Office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food-1-1 is an emerging statewide coalition interested in food waste reduction. Its stated vision is to use a collaborative, multi-sector approach to reduce wasted food in Colorado 25 percent by 2023.

Initial meetings of the coalition identified common barriers to food waste reduction, as well as potentially shared focus areas. Meanwhile, coalition members identified priority areas and created subgroups around each one to develop action plans in more detail. To date, most of the subgroups have met one to three times and are largely still in the action planning process.

### Eat Denver

Eat Denver is a small nonprofit network of over 120 independent restaurateurs in Denver that share expertise and support. Sustainability is one of several topic issues that Eat Denver focuses on with its members. As part of these efforts, Eat Denver has begun to examine opportunities for food waste reduction. In early 2016, the group sought a \$100,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to pilot a composting program for member restaurants. While Eat Denver did not receive the grant, the organization remains eager to engage in food waste issues, and it continues to seek opportunities to reduce food waste among its member restaurants.

### Food Rescue Alliance

The Food Rescue Alliance is a coalition of allied organizations led by Boulder Food Rescue, aimed at facilitating grassroots food recovery efforts in the Rocky Mountain region and around the country. Founded in 2013, the alliance currently has nine chapters, including three in Colorado. Chapter members routinely make use of the alliance to share information, ideas, projects and values, and to create collaboration between participants.

## LiveWell Colorado

LiveWell Colorado is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing hunger and obesity. LiveWell provides long-term funding for over 20 healthy eating and active living (HEAL) communities across Colorado. Of the six LiveWell communities located within the City and County of Denver,<sup>1</sup> none has explicitly addressed food waste issues as a primary focus area. However, many of them have food access initiatives that may benefit from improved food recovery efforts.

In addition to funding HEAL communities, LiveWell Colorado focuses on policy and environmental changes that remove barriers to health living opportunities. For instance, LiveWell is currently working in partnership with obesity prevention initiatives across the state to provide every Coloradan with access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity.

## GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

### Office of Sustainability

The Office of Sustainability was established by Denver Mayor Michael Hancock. In 2014, the Office of Sustainability released the city's 2020 Sustainability Plan, which focuses on key resource areas of air quality, climate change, energy, food, health, housing, land use, materials, mobility, water quantity and quality, and workforce.

Although the sustainability plan makes no explicit mention of food waste, a reduction in wasted food would result in substantial improvement in several of the resource areas. In a phone interview for this survey, Tinianow expressed interest in engaging more deeply around food waste issues, and suggested a “pay-as-you-throw” trash policy and offering tax incentives to food retailers that donate food as potentially transformative policies for reducing food waste.

### Sustainable Food Policy Council

The Sustainable Food Policy Council (SFPC) is a group of 25 members that acts as an advisory body to the mayor on sustainable food issues. Its membership includes nonprofit leaders and community members as well as an ex-officio team of city staff. The SFPC is comprised of several subcommittees, each focused on addressing a specific food-related issue in the city. Each subcommittee submits a formal policy brief to the mayor, and they often engage the relevant stakeholders to achieve policy change. Past SFPC initiatives include:

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://livewellcolorado.org/healthy-communities/partnerships/>. May 16, 2016.

- Drafting a city ordinance to allow backyard chickens and goats as a use-by-right and ensuring the ordinance's passage through City Council
- Developing and passing a city ordinance to allow food sales from front yards
- Developing and piloting a comprehensive approach to convert underutilized public land to food production in collaboration with nonprofit farms

SPFC's primary focus in 2016 is soliciting community feedback for the city's first food systems vision and action plan.

### Office of Economic Development

Acting on a directive from Mayor Hancock, the city's Office of Economic Development hired Blake Angelo as Denver's first Manager of Food Systems Development in spring 2015. A large part of Angelo's mandate is the development of a citywide strategic vision for sustainable food systems; to that end, he has assembled an extensive public outreach process involving over 25 public meetings and industry-specific focus groups over the first half of 2016.

While food waste reduction has not emerged as an explicit priority during the feedback sessions held thus far, Angelo concurs that it has a key role to play in meeting several of the city's goals around sustainability and local food. In an interview for this report, he highlighted several specific opportunities for food waste reduction.

In Angelo's focus group with hunger relief organizations, for instance, the 23 participants acknowledged the need for more coordination of supply and distribution throughout the food pantry network. Necessary improvements include new infrastructure, distribution mechanisms, inventory management/sharing tools and a different geographic distribution of pantries.

Angelo also highlighted the opportunity for the redirection of unused produce to added-value processors, similar to what the business MMLocal is currently providing (see organizational profile below).

Finally, Angelo believes that the expansion of Denver Composts (see below) to include commercial and more residential clients is a critical component of addressing Denver's food waste stream. While composting recommendations are not included in the scope of the City Food Vision, Angelo suggested that a white paper highlighting the economic and sustainability opportunities from expanding composting would be well-received by the city.

## Certiably Green Denver

This program, based out of the Environmental Quality Division of the Department of Environmental Health, provides free, confidential, non-regulatory environmental assistance to Denver's business community.<sup>2</sup>

Since its inception in 2009, a total of 1,717 businesses have enrolled in the program, 238 of which are restaurants. Although composting is not required for certification, according to program manager Janet Burgesser, a "grand majority" of participating restaurants and other food services establishments do compost and donate leftover food.

## Denver Composts

A composting program under the Denver Recycles umbrella, Denver Composts was established in select neighborhoods on a pilot scale in 2011. According to program materials, more than 50 percent of what all Denver residents throw in the trash is compostable organic material.<sup>3</sup> The program is run for residences only (single family homes and multi-family homes with seven or fewer units) on an opt-in basis, and it charges participant residences a \$29.25 monthly fee to participate. The service area for the program was expanded in early 2016, and it will expand again in mid-summer.<sup>4</sup>

Participants in the program toss food, non-recyclable paper and yard debris into their city-provided cart for collection by Denver Recycles, the city's recycling program. The organic material is then delivered to A-1 Organics, a commercial composting facility (see organizational profile below). The resulting compost is then sold to local farmers, landscapers and individuals.

## NONPROFITS

### Denver Food Rescue

Denver Food Rescue is a 3-year-old nonprofit with the mission of increasing health equity by reducing barriers to fresh, healthy food in low-income and food desert communities. It delivers on this mission by partnering with grocery stores and farmer's

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved at [https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/environmental-health/environmental-quality/certiably-green-denver.html](https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/709/documents/Compost%20Collection%20Guide%202015%20single%20pages.pdf). April 15, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved at <https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/709/documents/Compost%20Collection%20Guide%202015%20single%20pages.pdf>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Service area map may also be viewed at: <https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/709/documents/compost%20map%20update%202-9-15.pdf>

markets to redistribute food to local community centers. Complementing its emphasis on health and community, food delivery is completed via bicycle by volunteers. Denver Food Rescue will provide 200,000 pounds of fresh produce to underserved neighborhoods this year.<sup>5</sup> Denver Food Rescue is also part of the Food Rescue Alliance.

## We Don't Waste

Collecting unused food from venues, caterers, restaurants and other food purveyors, We Don't Waste distributes the food to underserved populations within the Denver metropolitan area. We Don't Waste provides these "restaurant-grade" meals to community-based agencies, which in turn provide donated items to individuals as they deem appropriate.<sup>6</sup> In recent years, the organization has scaled its impact rapidly. In 2014, We Don't Waste served 678,627 meals and rescued 508,970 pounds of would-be food waste. In 2015, those numbers jump dramatically to 2,286,208 meals and 1,714,656 pounds.<sup>7</sup>

## Re:Vision

Re:Vision is a nonprofit food justice organization located in southwest Denver's Westwood neighborhood, a largely Latino community that lacks access to healthy food. Since 2009, Re:Vision has been growing a backyard gardening program in the neighborhood using a peer-to-peer educational model. Today, the program involves over 300 families that collectively grow hundreds of thousands of pounds of produce annually.

In 2014, Re:Vision purchased a parcel of land in the heart of Westwood's commercial corridor to develop a community center, commercial farm and cooperative grocery store. It is currently in the process of renovating the site's existing buildings and raising funds to build out the remainder of the center.

## FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

### MM Local Foods

Since 2009, MM Local Foods has partnered with local family farmers to preserve ripe, surplus produce at the height of the harvest. This surplus, which would otherwise become food waste, is processed into canned fruits and vegetables for sale, promoting the access to, and consumption, of local, organic produce all year. Exact figures for the

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<sup>5</sup> Retrieved at <http://denver.cbslocal.com/2015/12/21/cyclists-rescue-produce-for-those-in-need/>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved at <https://www.wedontwaste.org/learn-more/faq/>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <https://infograph.venngage.com/p/67181/we-dont-waste-2015-update>. May 12, 2016.

quantity of food processed were unavailable at the time of this writing, but MMLocal has been expanding its operations rapidly.

## WasteFarmers

WasteFarmers is a self-described “next-generation sustainable agricultural company” focused on supporting local food systems through creating closed-loop waste streams. Founded by former financier John-Paul Maxfield in 2008, Waste Farmers was initially a small-scale composting hauler serving sustainability minded Denver restaurants. After successfully processing 9,000 tons of waste food into compost, WasteFarmers deemed waste hauling financially unviable at a small scale and began to pivot to selling organic soil mixes incorporating compost from A1 Organics and a number of other additives. This proved to be a commercially successful market niche, particularly given Colorado’s rapidly growing marijuana industry.

While WasteFarmers’ core business model has evolved past the direct redistribution of food waste, Maxfield and his team remain passionate about food waste reduction and its importance to sustainable food systems. Maxfield is a frequent public spokesperson for closed-loop agriculture and has expressed interest in collaborating with NRDC on its food waste reduction efforts.

## A1 Organics

Established in 1974, A1 Organics is Colorado’s leader in organic recycling, reporting the diversion of over 1.2 million cubic yards of waste from Colorado landfills. Its efforts result in composts, mulches and other products that are available to Colorado citizens for landscaping and soil amendment purposes.<sup>8</sup>

Utilizing its expertise and experience with organic recycling, A1 Organics is also working to expand its food waste recycling program. Restaurants that participate with the program place food and other organic waste into specially marked bins at their location, to then be picked up by A1 Organics for delivery to one of its sites for recycling and composting.

## Heartland Biogas Project

The Heartland Biogas plant, opened just outside Denver in early 2016 and currently ramping up to full capacity, is one of the largest biogas digesters in the country.<sup>9</sup> The process uses an anaerobic digestion system that converts organic feedstock and dairy cow manure into raw biogas. This raw biogas is then processed into pipeline quality renewable natural gas (RNG).

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<sup>8</sup> Retrieved at <http://www.a1organics.com/>. April 15, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.edf-re.com/projects/detail/heartland\\_biogas\\_project/](http://www.edf-re.com/projects/detail/heartland_biogas_project/). May 6, 2016.

With Heartland still in the process of sourcing feedstocks, it remains unclear how much diversion potential the project represents for the City and County of Denver. Mathews has noted that Heartland is “always looking for materials” and “new opportunities,” specifically noting those that involve packaging given their expertise and available machinery.

## Restaurants

With food waste reduction efforts and initiatives picking up steam across the country, more and more restaurants are also starting to join the cause. As mentioned above, this movement is also supported by the Certifiably Green Denver program, through which residents are able to identify and patronize food waste reduction focused establishments.

Additionally, Denver and the surrounding areas serve as a corporate hub for multiple national chain restaurants, including: Red Robin, Smashburger, Noodles and Company, Boston Market Corporation, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Garbanzo Mediterranean Grill, Qdoba, Quizno’s, CraftWorks Restaurants and Breweries, Inc., and American Blue Ribbon Holdings, Inc.

Chipotle, in particular, has established itself as an industry leader in the fight against food waste. Since its founding, Chipotle has stressed waste reduction as part of its corporate philosophy of “food with integrity,” and it continues to educate every new employee on best practices for reducing waste from farm to fork. In an interview for this survey, Caitlin Leibert, Chipotle’s Environmental Impact Manager, expressed enthusiasm at NRDC’s efforts and a willingness to educate other restaurants about how to mitigate food waste.

## CONSULTANTS

### FuturePointe

FuturePointe is an LLC run by Brendan McCrann, a food systems consultant specializing in multi-stakeholder collaboration around food waste reduction. For several years, McCrann managed the development of a for-profit farm in the Colorado Springs area that redirected food waste to livestock feed. Now based at the other end of the Front Range in Loveland, FuturePointe remains committed to addressing food waste from a systems-level perspective, and it is eager to bring McCrann’s years of experience to bear on food waste issues in the City and County of Denver.

## DENVER FOOD WASTE CONVENING SUMMARY

### Introduction

The Denver Food Waste Convening was put together by NRDC and JVA to gather feedback about NRDC's proposed plans to engage in food waste reduction in Denver. The Convening attracted over thirty participants, representing a wide range of nonprofit, business, government and collaborative entities. The following individuals participated in the conversation:

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|---|---|
| <b>Blake Angelo</b> , City and County of Denver                     | <b>Caleb Phillips</b> , University of Colorado at Boulder                                 |
| <b>Lynn Butler</b> , Metro Caring                                   | <b>Charlotte Pitt</b> , City and County of Denver, Composting Program and Denver Recycles |
| <b>Blythe Chorn</b> , Deloitte Consulting                           | <b>Arlan Preblud</b> , We Don't Waste   |
| <b>Courtney Cotton</b> , City and County of Denver, Denver Recycles | <b>Victor Restrepo</b> , Innovative Organics  |
| <b>Brian Freeman</b> , Grower's Organic                             | <b>Krista Roberts</b> , Slow Food Denver  |
| <b>Reuben Gregory</b> , Metro Caring                                | <b>Tim Sanford</b> , We Don't Waste   |
| <b>Lauren Howe</b> , Slow Food USA                                  | <b>Adam Schlegel</b> , Eat Denver   |
| <b>Hallie Jaeger</b> , University of Denver                         | <b>Jospeh Teipel</b> , ReVision   |
| <b>Leif Kerr</b> , Innovative Organics                              | <b>Virginia Till</b> , Environmental Protection Agency Region 8                           |
| <b>Emily Kutosky</b> , Grower's Organic                             | <b>Rachel Wilson-Roussel</b> , Colorado Department of Health and Public Environment       |
| <b>Kaela Martins</b> , University of Denver                         | <b>Tracy Williams</b> , Sodexo  |
| <b>Brendan McCrann</b> , FuturePointe                               | <b>Turner Wyatt</b> , Denver Food Rescue  |
| <b>Kristin Monier</b> , Sodexo                                      |   |
| <b>Amy Moore-Shiple</b> , Denver Food Rescue                        |   |
| <b>Monica Munn</b> , The Rockefeller Foundation                     |   |
| <b>Scott Pexton</b> , A1 Organics                                   |   |

NRDC representatives included **Jason Babbie** (Deputy Director, Urban Solutions and Strategic Program Development), **JoAnne Berkenkamp** (Senior Advocate, Food and Agriculture Program), **Catherine Cox Blair** (Senior Advisor, Urban Solutions), **Dana Gunders** (Senior Scientist, Food and Agriculture Program), and **Darby Hoover** (Senior Resource Specialist, Food and Agriculture Program).

JVA staff included **Adam Brock** (lead facilitator), **Collin Lessing**, **Gabriela Perez**, and **Nora Welch** (facilitation support).

## Event Summary

After a brief welcome and round of introductions, NRDC began the event with a presentation of its current work around food waste, including the Ad Council campaign, federal legislation, and efforts to pilot city-focused models of food waste reduction that could be used in cities nationwide. NRDC explained that it is currently working with Nashville and New York City, and Denver is being considered as an added pilot city for this work.

After the presentation, Convening participants had a number of comments and questions. These comments and questions centered around the following subjects:

- Methodology for picking families in the Nashville baseline assessment
- The food being received by A1 Organics could potentially be a resource in the baseline assessment
- Early response to the Ad Council campaign
- The anticipated timeframe for NRDC's work in Denver
- The extent of bipartisan support for the current food waste legislation
- Linkages between food waste and local food preferences
- Correlations between the amount of consumer food waste and the proportion of organic vs. conventional produce purchased

After the Q+A session, Adam Brock summarized the existing food waste landscape in Denver through the framework of EPA's hierarchy. Participants took a short break following Adam's presentation and reconvened for a series of small-group breakout sessions. The groups were organized into four subjects of NRDC interest: baseline food waste assessment, food rescue capacity gap analysis, policy advocacy, and technical assistance.

The following sections share a summarized description of each group's feedback about their assigned topic.

### *Baseline food waste assessment*

This group projected a resounding confirmation that **data is needed**. Examples of potential data points include:

- stage(s) in the food system where waste occurring (production, processing, distribution, retail or consumption)

- consistent definition of food waste across processes and systems
- analysis of food waste by sector (including schools and resorts)
- various levels of food waste by demographic
- geographic mapping (GIS)
- relation to the carbon continuum (how is food waste related to climate change and other energy and health factors)

Some of the **inhibitors** to collecting this data and impacting food waste overall include availability of funding, community-wide **education** and access, as well how cultural and social backgrounds impact views of and participation with food waste related efforts.

Opportunities for focus include **increasing involvement of community leadership and integration into business planning**. For example, how can sample data be collected from partnerships between food distributor (Sodexo) and food distribution sites (like a hospital) to better inform business planning to positively impact both their bottom line and overall food waste reduction.

#### *Food rescue capacity gap analysis*

Participants noted that, although there are many great local organizations contributing to food waste-related efforts, there are still needs and gaps that, if addressed, would strengthen and advance the local movement.

Some suggested focus areas for gap analysis included:

- Equitable distribution, increased communication systems for food pantries
- Centralized system/infrastructure for food redistribution, including education on safety, client needs, and efficiency practices
- Perceptions about or judgments of food donors (and thus often their desire to be anonymous)
- Addressing the competitive mentality food pantries have in accessing donors and funders
- Supporting businesses for mid-market foods (how can excess or “ugly” food be redirected and used more quickly?)
- Overall funding and support for food waste-related efforts
- The need to solicit buy-in from businesses and corporations
- Integrating anchor institutions (hospitals, schools) into the food waste systems education and implementation processes

#### *Policy advocacy*

Participants of this group noted that there are two primary perspectives for focus: political advocacy and advocacy with consumers.

The following opportunities for policy change and advocacy initiatives were discussed:

- Updating Denver’s zoning code to accommodate neighborhood-scale composting
- Exploring the political feasibility of a “pay-to-throw” trash collection model
- Integrating food waste training and support through the existing health inspection process
- Providing more structured community education (including focus on health inspectors, K-12 students and staff, and other food-related employees)
- Educating businesses around liability issues

Participants noted that a number of factors have made progressive waste policies particularly difficult to implement in Denver, including the relatively cheap costs of landfilling, special interest groups, and the fact that Denver’s landfill is a revenue source for the City. However, participants wondered if the current City Council may offer more of a window for action than previous political climates. They suggested an education session for Council members to help them get briefed on food waste issues.

On the advocacy side, Denver Water’s “Use Only What You Need” campaign was brought up as a best practice for its successful multi-stakeholder collaboration to educate consumers around resource use.

### *Technical assistance*

When discussing the various needs for a food waste reduction system, two broad systems were repeatedly referenced as being opportunities ripe for technical assistance.

- **Education.** Across the continuum, increasing the community-wide food waste literacy level was noted as a top focus. Examples include with businesses about current law and policy information (e.g. the “Good Samaritan” law) with regard to donating food to other organizations, as well as consumer education about food waste. Integration of food waste concepts into local culinary schools was also noted as a sustainable way to impact the restaurant industry’s knowledge through their chefs and cooks becoming more aware of and committed to food waste reduction practices.
- **Communication.** Food-1-1 was called out as a great start for coordinating and informing collaborative efforts, although it was noted that its scope may not be the most appropriate for every level along the food waste continuum. Group members noted that it would be helpful to have scaled systems of organization and communication for various levels of participation. Also, haulers and volunteers were noted as groups would be beneficial to include in the conversation.

Additionally, it was noted that having **supports in place for the smaller scale businesses or participants** within the food waste reduction efforts would be of benefit. For example, some businesses do not have enough food waste to warrant their own

container or pick-up. An organized system or process of sharing services or information would be helpful for them to contribute without negatively impacting their resources of time or money.

### **Next steps**

With the question of interest in Denver participating as one of the NRDC model cities, the group noted support, including several strong voices of “Yes!” and “Go for it!”. When prompted for concerns about this effort moving forward, the group did not share anything other than interest in knowing whether or not the city was competing with others to be selected as the next pilot site.

## MOVING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NRDC

### Introduction

After conducting the landscape assessment and running the convening, there appears to be a clear role for NRDC as a key player in reducing food waste in the Denver area. In every sector, stakeholders appear passionate about reducing food waste and eager to collaborate, yet there is as of yet no central organization or initiative that has managed to consistently capitalize on that enthusiasm.

In this context, NRDC is ideally positioned to act as a catalyst for long-term action, bringing the relevant groups and resources to the table to create the conditions for successful cross-sector collaborations. NRDC's current scope of work, funded by the Rockefeller foundation, will cover a food waste baseline assessment and food rescue capacity gap analysis. Beyond these initial steps, JVA recommends that NRDC consider opportunities in the following three areas:

- Technical assistance for retailers and food service providers
- Government Linkages
- Public Awareness

Recommendations for each of these five initiatives are outlined in more detail below.

### Food waste baseline assessment

With an existing precedent from NRDC's work in Nashville, this initiative appears to be the most well-positioned for immediate action. Convening participants had several useful recommendations for how the baseline could be put to use, and their input should be sought again as the process moves forward.

### Food rescue capacity gap analysis

Food redistribution organizations have consistently stressed the need for greater coordination and improved infrastructure to deepen their impact. NRDC can accelerate this process by continuing to engage these organizations in a dialogue about their collective impact and providing written recommendations that can be used to leverage more resources.

### Technical assistance for retailers and food service providers

At some point, the majority of Denver's food ends up in the hands of a restaurant, grocery store or food service provider. As a result, strategic interventions to reduce food waste at these institutions have the potential to have a high impact. Based on information from the landscape analysis and convening - as well as solutions in other communities - it appears that the following solutions would greatly expand the efficacy of food waste reduction efforts at these organizations:

- Education around existing liability laws
- Technical assistance with setting up systems to track and disincentivize food waste
- Connection to appropriate food recovery organizations

## Government Linkages

Several interviewees pointed to the lack of a dedicated policy champion around food waste issues in Denver. In the short term, NRDC has an immediate opportunity to impact the city's emerging Food Vision as well as advise the implementation of the city's 2020 Sustainability Goals. Meanwhile, NRDC may want to consider partnering with industry groups, the SPFC and other stakeholders to conduct research and report on key policies that would reduce food waste. Potential policies or programs discussed by stakeholders during the interviews and convening include:

- Pay-as-you-throw trash policy in Denver
- Further expanding the City's composting program to cover more neighborhoods and commercial institutions
- Disincentivizing food scraps ending up in the landfill
- Offering tax breaks to supermarkets that donate food to charities

NRDC may choose to engage government agencies, elected officials and other policy-oriented stakeholders in a number of ways, including via in-person education sessions, white papers, and webinars.

## Public awareness

Many convening participants expressed enthusiasm in the Ad Council campaign and its potential to raise awareness about food waste issues within their networks. NRDC may want to gather a group of key stakeholders to continue discussions about how to incorporate campaign messaging into their organizational networks. In addition to assisting with implementation of the Save the Food campaign, a Public Awareness working group may also want to consider the following opportunities:

- Coordinating with Feeding the 5,000 organizers to cross-promote and launch an initiative, report or goal at the event
- Hosting public film screenings, panel discussions or other events