

PRESS RELEASE

# NRDC Launches Regional Food Matters Project to Reduce Food Waste in 5 Southeastern Cities

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## MEDIA CONTACTS

Fabi Nunez

[fnunez@NRDC.org](mailto:fnunez@NRDC.org), (786) 999-2138

NEW YORK—NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) announced the expansion of the [Food Matters Project](#) in the Southeast region with the goal of furthering larger-scale change related to food waste throughout the region. Building on five years of partnership on the project, Nashville will become the hub city for the regional initiative and will be joined by Asheville, Atlanta, Memphis, and Orlando.

In the Food Matters Regional Initiative, NRDC and the participating cities will collaborate to implement policies and programs to reduce municipal food waste while leveraging regional synergies. Cities often confront similar barriers when tackling food waste, including insufficient data and resources. The initiative will include city representatives who will network with one another, with NRDC, and with local partner organizations to set goals, develop programs to achieve those goals, and identify regional strategies that help maximize their resources. NRDC will work with each city to estimate their baseline food waste generation and food rescue potential and to provide technical assistance on developing food waste strategies that help bolster their broader food systems, sustainability, and climate goals.

### Following are quotes from mayors of participating cities and NRDC staff:

“In Nashville we’re prioritizing food waste reduction to feed hungry people, but also to urgently expand our landfill capacity while meeting our climate goals,” said **Nashville Mayor John Cooper**. “We’re grateful for the leadership of Nashville Food Waste Initiative, our trusted partners in launching and sustaining the Mayor’s Food Saver Challenge. Hopefully this important program can serve as a model for other cities across the region.”

“Preventing good food from becoming waste has been a priority for Orlando for many years through our Green Works Orlando initiative,” said **Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer**. “Joining with other cities in the region to tackle this issue will help us collectively build resilience, progress on our climate action goals, and advance our efforts towards a circular economy.”

“Atlanta is committed to securing access to healthy food for all our residents. To get there, we need to ensure no food is going to waste. We’re excited to build on the work we’ve started with Food Matters in this expanded partnership,” said **Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms**.

“The City of Asheville has taken a holistic approach to disrupting food waste in our community,” said **Asheville Mayor Esther Manheimer**. “We will continue to advance our values of environmental and

social justice in making our city more sustainable in this continued effort with the Food Matters Southeast Regional Initiative.”

“Memphis is dedicated to investing in our neighborhoods with innovative solutions. We are excited to see this community-led partnership with Clean Memphis flourish as this project takes off,” said **Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland**.

“NRDC’s Food Matters project has pioneered tools and partnerships with cities to address food waste. We are proud to be partnering with this outstanding group of cities to address the complex and intertwined environmental and social challenges we face,” said **NRDC Healthy People & Thriving Communities Program Director Shelley Poticha**. “Healthy, good food is a key element of sustainability for every city and household; it is imperative that food doesn’t go to waste.”

Simultaneously, NRDC’s Food Matters project is also expanding its regional approach to five cities in the MidAtlantic. Baltimore will be the hub of the MidAtlantic regional initiative, and the other participating cities are Jersey City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Washington, DC.

### **Background:**

In 2012, NRDC helped spark a national dialogue about the alarming amount of food that goes to waste in our country when we released “[Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill](#)” (updated in 2017). Through this foundational piece of research, NRDC identified municipalities as a key intervention point for curbing food waste.

NRDC’s portfolio of work with cities includes original research estimating quantities and types of food wasted and opportunities to expand food rescue in U.S. cities; a [toolkit of policies and programs](#) for cities to tackle food waste; in-depth food waste initiatives with [Baltimore](#), [Denver](#), and [Nashville](#); and an array of [tools](#) to help cities prevent food from going to waste, rescue surplus food, and recycle food scraps, including implementing [Mayoral restaurant challenges](#), [training health inspectors](#) to advocate for food waste strategies, and deploying [Save the Food consumer education assets](#). Some of the lessons learned during this work included the importance of a systems approach, including building cross-agency teams and [engaging local partners](#).

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NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, MT, and Beijing. Visit us at [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org) and follow us on Twitter [@NRDC](https://twitter.com/NRDC).