

# FOOD WASTE & RESCUE POTENTIAL IN ATLANTA

By tackling food waste, cities can rein in climate emissions, reduce municipal waste costs, and help relieve community food insecurity.

Through NRDC's Food Matters project, we have estimated a city-wide baseline level of food waste and assessed the potential for increased rescue of surplus food. This snapshot can help identify opportunities for policy, outreach and interventions to achieve the city's goals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION IN ATLANTA



Food scraps collection from residences and consumer-facing businesses is a critical component of meeting zero waste goals. Engaging residents in food scrap reduction and recycling will be critical to improved waste management.



Food wholesalers and distributors are a sizeable component of Atlanta's total food waste generation and may be an area of opportunity for reduction and food rescue. Often, these businesses have similarities to retailers which make donation simpler than for consumer-facing businesses with prepared food offerings.



Targeting hospitality businesses and/or event facilities with food waste prevention and rescue technical assistance could prove to offer the largest return on concentrated effort because this sector has relatively few facilities, which would make concentrated efforts potentially more impactful.



New food donors may need technical assistance to overcome barriers to donate additional surplus food.



Health inspectors can be invaluable assets in educating licensed food facilities on how to safely donate surplus food. Improved communication and education for foodservice businesses will be necessary to fulfill the ambitious scenario predictions.



Coordination with local rescue organizations can help identify current donation levels and the untapped portion of the rescue estimates.



DOWNLOAD THE FOOD  
MATTERS TOOLKIT

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ATLANTA  
EFFORTS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE

[www.aglanta.org/food-matters](http://www.aglanta.org/food-matters)  
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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NRDC'S  
FOOD MATTERS INITIATIVE

[www.nrdc.org/food-matters](http://www.nrdc.org/food-matters)  
[foodmatters@nrdc.org](mailto:foodmatters@nrdc.org)

### KEY FACTS

**18%**

food insecurity  
in Atlanta

**125K**

tons of food waste  
in Atlanta

**40%**

of all food in the  
U.S. is wasted

**\$218B**

of food waste each  
year in the U.S.

**8%**

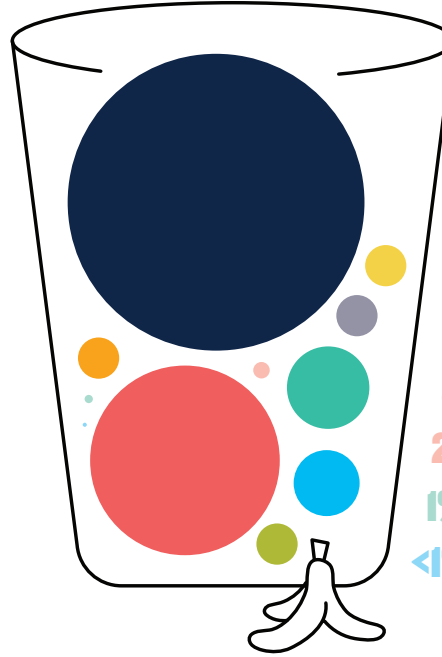
of global greenhouse  
gas emissions come  
from food waste



# FOOD WASTE IN ATLANTA

Though actual measurement of wasted food is optimal, waste audits can be costly, time-consuming, and sometimes impractical. The model for calculating these estimates using proxy metrics was identified from a range of national sources and NRDC's original research.

We estimate 125,000 tons of food waste are generated in Atlanta each year. Residential is the highest food waste producing sector at 44,800 tons of food waste per year followed by restaurants, totaling 29,000 tons.



- 36% RESIDENTIAL**
- 23% RESTAURANTS**
- 10% FOOD WHOLESALERS**
- 8% HOSPITALITY**
- 5% EVENTS & RECREATION**
- 5% GROCERS & MARKETS**
- 5% HEALTH CARE**
- 5% COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**
- 2% FOOD MANUFACTURING**
- 1% K-12 SCHOOLS**
- <1% CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES**

# FOOD RESCUE OPPORTUNITIES

Donation of surplus food serves an important role in meeting the immediate needs of those facing food insecurity. The maximum scenario used our most optimistic assumptions about the amount of surplus food potentially available for donation with full participation from businesses within each sector. Alternatively, the ambitious scenario used more realistic assumptions and existing donation patterns to estimate an ambitious but attainable expansion of food donation efforts.

While restaurants represent a larger portion of overall wasted food, much of that waste occurs after the food is served and is unsuitable for rescue.

