

**Toward Zero Waste is a 501(c)(3)
nonprofit organization dedicated to
promoting waste-conscious living in North
Carolina through inspiration, education,
and action.**



As a registered non-profit since 2019, our best successes involve collaboration with local municipalities, businesses, and other non-profits.

- Collaborated with the Town of Cary on their Food Waste Recycling Drop-offs
- Facilitated a public-private partnership between Wake County and Kane Realty to provide Midtown Farmers' Market Compost Drop Off
- Provided over 500 reusable, handmade bags to the Downtown Cary Farmers' Market by our Toward Zero Waste Makers in 2024



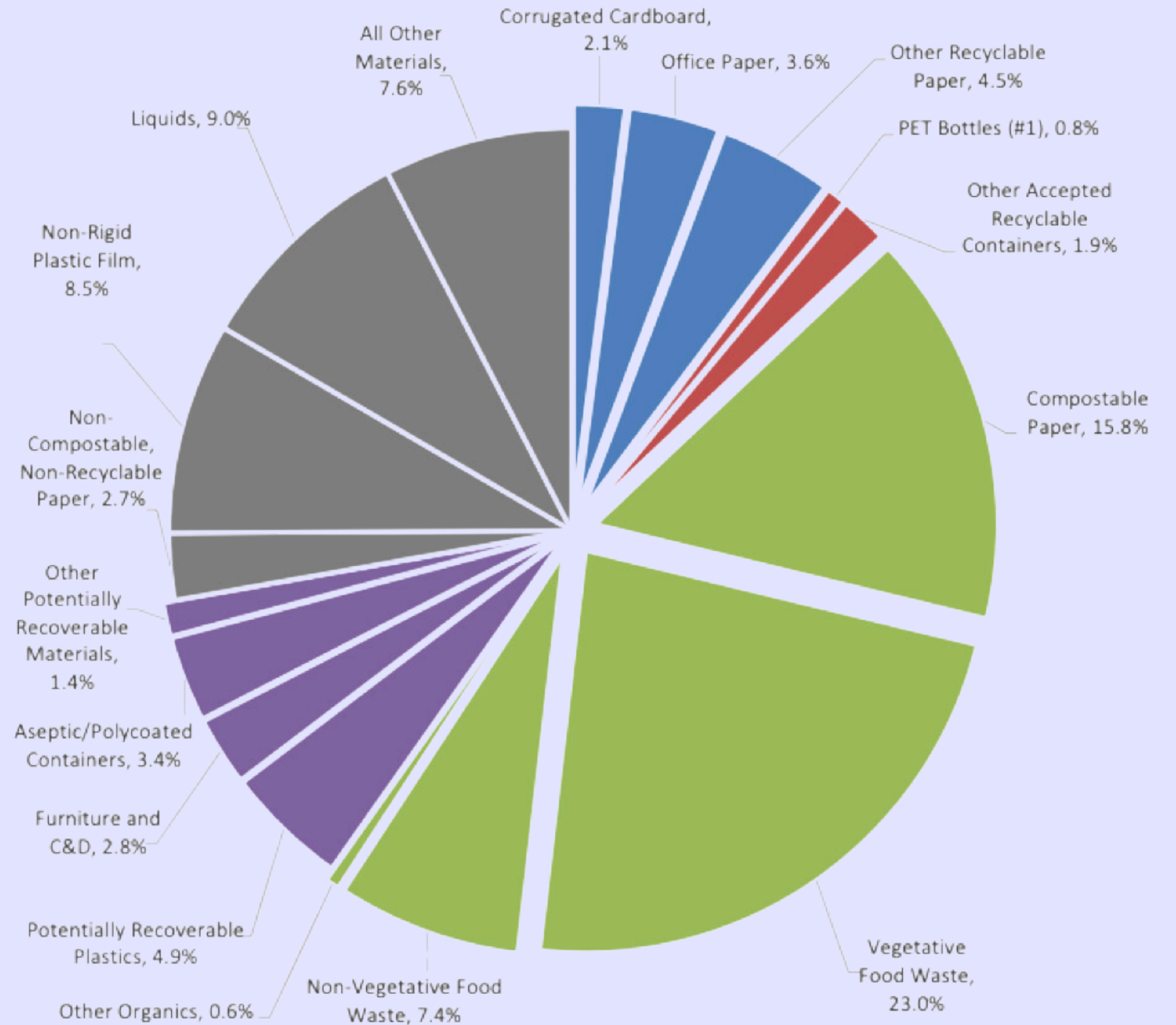


BACKGROUND

WCPSS 2023 Waste Composition Study

- Nearly half of elementary school waste was compostable, 30% was food waste, 16% compostable paper
- Study noted an abundance of unopened single serving packages of vegetables and fruit

Figure 3-1: Composition of Elementary School Waste





BACKGROUND

- In 2021-22, 33% of students in WCPSS received free/reduced meals
- In 2024, lunch waste audits at Wiley Elementary and Olds Elementary found 20-35% of waste, by weight, was recoverable food, second only to compostable food scraps, and ahead of trash



- In 2024-25, WCPSS has 199 schools, which could mean thousands of pounds of saved and redistributed food each month



THE PATH FORWARD



A food recovery program by Toward Zero Waste with Wake County Public School System to capture wholesome leftovers from Child Nutrition Services and feed students, rather than landfills.



WHAT TZW HAS...

- Funding from the Lonnie & Carol Poole Family Foundation, and other donors, for research, implementation and oversight at up to 8 pilot schools
- Insurance coverage as a NonProfit
- Working relationships with a wide range of community stakeholders: Wake Co Environmental Services, NC DHHS, NC DPI School Health Advisory Council, NC DEQ, NC Composting Council, Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC, etc.

WHAT TZW PROPOSES....

- Piloting a food recovery program in WCPSS
 - Beginning with 8 WCPSS elementary schools, with goal of expanding in the future



SHARE PROGRAM GOALS



- **Reduce** the amount of wholesome prepackaged unopened food thrown out as waste at schools.
- **Establish** a food recovery program to distribute the food items first to students. The food is available to any student in the school, thereby eliminating stigma.
- **Increase** student engagement by increasing awareness of hunger and respect for their environment.
- **Respect** resources and guidelines of WCPSS Child Nutrition Services by feeding people, instead of landfills.



SHARE PROGRAM RESEARCH



BEDFORD, MA



FOOD SHARE

Are you done with your cafeteria lunch?
Place it in a bin for others to eat.

Hot Food Cold Food Plastic Utensils & Condiments Fruit & Packaged Snacks

Please contact San Mateo County Environmental Health Services at (650) 372-6200 if you have food safety questions.

SAN MATEO, CA

SHARE TABLE

Any student may place unwanted and unopened food or drink from their cafeteria meals on the Share Table. Any student may take food or drink from the Share Table at no cost.
*Leftover food on the Share Table will be removed at the end of the last meal period.

Food you can share:

- Unopened packages (ex: chips, crackers, cheese sticks)
- Whole fruit with peel (ex: orange, banana)
- Unopened snack bars, cereal
- Unopened milk cartons, juice cartons, yogurts
- Dried fruit (ex: raisins)

Not Allowed:

- Opened packages
- Opened milk cartons, yogurts, cheese sticks
- Food from home
- Hot foods
- Anything with a bite out of it

ALL share table items MUST be unopened.

FAIRFAX, VA



SHARE PROGRAM PILOT

PHYSICAL SETUP



- **SHARE Collection Cart** stationed in the cafeteria during meal services (breakfast and lunch)
- **SHARE Fridge and Pantry Cart** located in a central area or front office
 - Pantry Cart is mobile to easily offer food in various settings
- Throughout the week, items in the SHARE Fridge and Pantry Cart can be obtained as needed by students and staff...
 - Students coming in late and missing breakfast
 - Students missing classroom snacks
 - Students hungry when reporting “not feeling well”
 - Students at dismissal
 - Students attending after school activities, etc.





SHARE PROGRAM PILOT

SCHOOL-BASED ROLES



- **SHARE Program Administrator:** Admin or staff who has delegated authority to implement the SHARE program, including assigning and overseeing the roles below.
- **SHARE Cart Supervisor(s):** One or more persons to supervise the SHARE collection cart during each meal period (staff, PTA, etc).
- **SHARE Stocker(s):** One or more persons to take items from the collection cart after daily meal services, verify their conformity with recoverable item guidelines, and transfer them to the SHARE pantry cart and refrigerator located outside the cafeteria (for ease of ongoing access throughout the school day/week) (staff, PTA, etc).
- **SHARE Cleaner(s):** One or more persons to check freshness of foods at the end of the week and to clean fridge/rolling carts as needed (staff, PTA, etc).



SHARE PROGRAM PILOT

RECOVERABLE ITEMS



PACKAGED SNACKS

- CRACKERS
- COOKIES
- PASTRIES/MUFFINS
- CEREAL
- GRANOLA BARS
- CHIPS

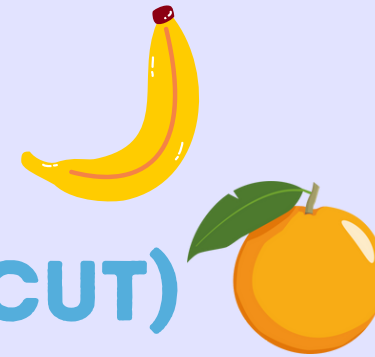


CONDIMENTS AND UTENSILS

- PACKAGED FORKS AND SPOONS, KETCHUP PACKETS, SYRUP, ETC.

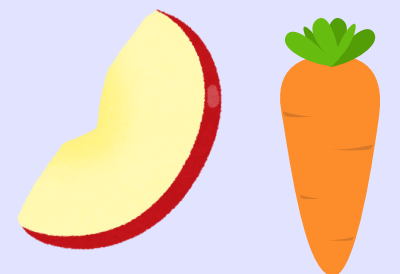
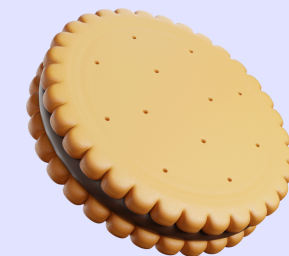
FRESH FRUIT

- BANANAS
- ORANGES (UNCUT)



COLD FOOD

- FRUIT JUICE
- PRE-PACKAGED AND SEALED FRUIT CUPS (DICED PEACHES, MIXED FRUIT, ETC)
- HUMMUS CUPS
- UNCRUSTABLES
- BAGS OF FRESH FRUIT OR VEGETABLES



NOT RECOVERABLE DURING PILOT:
TIME/TEMPERATURE CONTROLLED FOR SAFETY FOODS (MILK, YOGURT, ETC.), FOODS FROM HOME, OPENED FOODS



SHARE PROGRAM PILOT

SCHOOL SUPPORT



- All supplies will be provided by TZW:
 - Rolling collection cart with bins
 - Clear view refrigerator, with thermometer
 - Rolling pantry cart with bins
 - Signage for carts and refrigerator
 - All program documentation, including SHARE Program Guidelines and a Community Flier
- Facilitation of surplus food donation to a local food pantry
- Volunteers from partner organizations specifically to help with pilot phase implementation, including data collection (e.g., League of Women Voters, NC Composting Council, Capital Area Food Network)





SHARE PROGRAM PILOT

MEASURING PROGRAM SUCCESS



- TZW and its volunteers intended to collect data during the initial weeks of program implementation
 - Food items recovered
 - Food items accessed for consumption
 - Food items that have to be donated offsite or disposed
- Feedback will be collected from schools and volunteers regarding program process and impact
- Combined, this data will shed light on program utilization and effectiveness

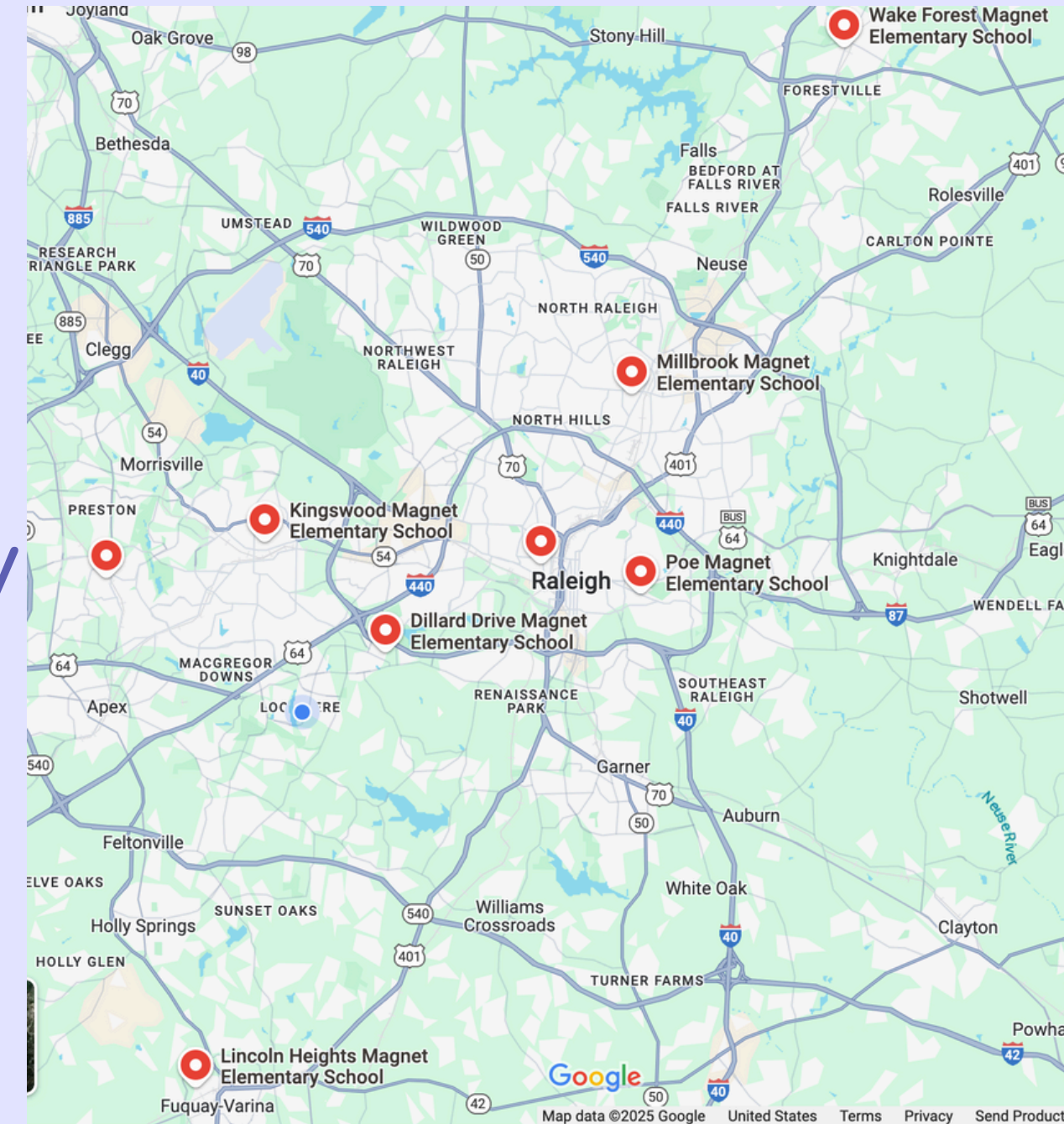




PILOT SCHOOLS



- Davis Drive Elementary
- Dillard Drive Magnet Elementary
- Kingswood Magnet Elementary
- Lincoln Heights Magnet Elementary
- Millbrook Magnet Elementary
- Poe Magnet Elementary
- Wake Forest Magnet Elementary
- Wiley Magnet Elementary





BEYOND THE PILOT

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- Expansion of SHARE to additional schools within WCPSS
- Collaboration with other school districts looking to develop food recovery programs
- Advocacy on the State level for expanding the definition of recoverable items (e.g. milk, yogurt, cheese sticks)



SHARE PROGRAM CONTACTS

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