



CASE STUDY

Elemental  
IMPACT

# Proven Steps Culminate Into Waste Reduction Success

Large venue operators such as sports stadiums, college universities and convention centers are not the only event producers achieving waste reduction success today. With proper planning and a committed team, events focused on waste reduction can be achieved regardless of their size.

Elemental Impact (Ei) founder Holly Elmore, facilitates partnerships between organizations large and small among the entire event supply chain – organizers, venue operators, foodservice providers, waste and recovery, to develop solutions enabling waste reduction. Afternoon in the Country event producers embarked on waste reduction with Ei and partners, and shared lessons learned.



*“Taking better care of our earth is the right thing to do. Whether an event is large or small, indoors or out, in fair or foul weather, we owe this consideration to the global event venue that we all share.”*

*Sue Anne Morgan,  
President, IdeaLand*

Known as one of Atlanta’s most unforgettable food and wine-tasting events, Afternoon in the Country (AIC) is a fund-raiser for local nonprofits and scholarships for women in the culinary profession. Les Dames d’Escoffier International, Atlanta Chapter joined the ranks of Atlanta Food Waste Heroes when they partnered with Ei to craft waste reduction practices at AIC.

Nestled within Serenbe, a progressive community connected to nature on the edge of Atlanta, The Inn at Serenbe hosted the 2015 AIC event. An idyllic location where nature, passion, creativity and community are valued, this community is set among acres of preserved forests and meadows with miles of nature trails that connect homes and restaurants with arts and businesses.

With over 1,800 guests sampling food served by over 90 restaurants, hotels and caterers, a significant amount of food residuals are generated, creating an opportunity for waste reduction best practices to divert food residuals from landfill to compost. AIC successfully collected and source-separated 1,800 pounds of food waste and serviceware for on-site composting, ultimately diverting it from landfill.

ideaLand

serenbe



NaturTec®



NatureWorks



## Compostable Serviceware

In partnership with Eco-Products, concession packaging items such as beer cups, nacho trays, portion cups, and straws were replaced with 100% BPI certified compostable alternatives made from renewable materials, including low-carbon-footprint Ingeo by NatureWorks. The AITC three-bin waste stations displayed serviceware signage provided by Eco-Products, educating guests on the benefits of compostable packaging.

## Collect, Sort & Compost

Used food packaging, utensils and leftover food was discarded by guests into designated collection bins lined with Natur-Bag® compostable waste liners provided by Natur-Tec®.

Waste Ambassadors monitored tri-bin waste stations, assisting guests with separating items for disposal and minimal contamination for compost.

Ei contracted with Let Us Compost, a curbside composting service for homes and businesses to orchestrate on-site food waste compost operations along with post-event follow-up, and 1,800 pounds were successfully composted.

## Challenges Overcome

Although AITC provided compostable food and beverage packaging for the over 90 stations, some restaurants brought their own conventional, non-compostable products. Contamination was prevented by replacing conventional items with compostable products where feasible, ensuring conventional items were placed in the trash bin at the waste stations, and filtering non-compostable items from the food waste stream prior to building the compost pile.

AITC organizers responded with impressive swift action to the unexpected challenges caused by the tremendous mud and continuous rain throughout the outdoor event. Thanks to the Ei Team and event staff working together, success was achieved amidst abundant lesson learned!

## Best Practices

Recommendations for achieving zero waste event success.

### Compostable Food Serviceware

- BPI compostable food and beverage serviceware are essential to generating a clean post-consumer food waste stream. Exceptions - pre-packaged aluminum, glass and PET beverages.
- Educate event foodservice providers and event volunteers on the WHY, WHAT & HOW to serve food and beverage in compostable packaging.

### Food Waste Collection

- Evolve from a three-tier waste bin system of food waste, recycling, and landfill, to a two-tiered system of food waste and recycling.
- Provide clear signage with visuals at waste collection area designating proper disposal.
- Volunteers/event staff monitor attendee disposal to ensure items are placed in proper bins and to prevent contamination.

### Food Waste Destination

- Ensure a plan is in-place for donation of leftover food in accordance with the Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.
- Deliver remaining food waste, back & front-of-the-house, to a composting site operating within state food waste composting permit regulations.

*Photos ©Holly Elmore*

## Full Engagement

Zero food waste events requires full engagement and support from organizers, sponsors, venue operators, foodservice providers, and attendees. Afternoon in the Country is an example of what is achieved when the entire event supply chain come together, working towards the same goals. Thank you to all who joined Elemental Impact on this Zero Food Waste Journey.

Interested in solutions for producing zero waste events?

Go to [elementalimpact.org](https://elementalimpact.org) ✉ [holly@elementalimpact.org](mailto:holly@elementalimpact.org) 🐦 [@ElementalImpact](https://twitter.com/ElementalImpact)