



# Compost Application on Multi-Use Turf in City Parks Study

An executive summary  
prepared for:



City of Phoenix  
June 2016

# Executive Summary

## About

The Parks Turf Compost Project is yet another step toward meeting the Reimagine Phoenix city-wide goal of 40% waste diversion by 2020; it's also another step toward solidifying the position of the City of Phoenix as a sustainability leader and a pioneer in the circular economy.

The premise of the project is that rather than collecting food scraps and yard waste and sending them to the landfill – the outdated linear model – the project team will explore the efficacy of turning these waste items into compost at a Phoenix-owned facility and then using that compost to improve the turf quality at Phoenix city parks, creating an internal circular economy.

Potential benefits to Phoenix and its citizens are many:

- Reducing and diverting waste from the landfill and associated methane emissions
- Exploring opportunities for cost savings
- Increasing revenue through growing the market for city-made compost
- Fostering collaboration between multiple City of Phoenix divisions and departments
- Improving quality of life by beautifying city parks
- Confirming City of Phoenix sustainability leadership nationwide

## City of Phoenix-ASU Collaboration

This project is a partnership between the City of Phoenix and Arizona State University, and collaboration has been key to the success of the Year One research. The team consists of the City Public Works Department, which is responsible for compost production, delivery, logistics and funding; the City Parks and Recreation Department, which is responsible for coordination, best turf practices and application; and ASU, which has provided a team from the Global Sustainability Solutions Services and various researchers from the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability and Swette Center for Environmental Biotechnology who are responsible for research, sampling, testing and third party verification.

## Research Agenda and Methodology

The research conducted during this project is designed to validate the effectiveness of using compost on city parks. During the five-year study, the project team will apply compost at several city parks and a team of ASU students and researchers will evaluate the impacts on turf quality, soil health and water usage.

During Year One research, work was done at nine parks around the City. ASU researchers took soil samples from each plot, which were then sent to three different

laboratories, where the chemical, physical and microbiological characteristics of each soil sample were tested, recorded and analyzed.

## **Year One Findings and Recommendations**

Results of the soil and turf data analysis show that compost does not have any negative impacts on the current turf. In fact, previous compost studies and the nature of compost lead the team to believe that compost application will be beneficial to multi-use park turf.

But it's important to keep in mind that the study was modeled to last three to five years, as it often takes time for there to be measurable changes in soils. Continuation of the study over the next three to five years will yield significant results and enable the City of Phoenix to identify the financial and environmental benefits of compost turf application.

It would be scientifically beneficial to expand the current applications to get a better understanding of the benefits of compost use. For example, the study could be expanded onto other turfs, like soccer or athletic fields or to entire parks, rather than isolated plots.

The new composting facility will be producing more than just compost, which provides additional opportunities for the City. Other outputs such as compost tea, bio-char and compost overs, all of which could be used by the city, and incorporated into an expanded Parks Turf project, or sold to provide additional revenue.

## **Next Steps**

- Plan for Year Two research. The City of Phoenix and ASU should come together to prepare a strategy for next year's research.
- Prepare for fall application. Public Works and Parks and Recreation along with ASU need to plan for the next year of soil testing and compost application.
- Review meeting. It's important for stakeholders to come together to discuss the findings and determine the future of the study. Ideally, the meeting should take place in January 2017.
- Turf mapping. City of Phoenix should complete a mapping of all turf in its park system, which can easily be done through GIS technology.
- Cost-benefit framework. The City of Phoenix and the Solutions Services team should develop a framework for robust cost-benefit analysis.

# Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by:

- Andrea Levy, Research Aide, Global Sustainability Solutions Services, Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives
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Additionally, the authors wish to acknowledge and thank the following, whose support and input in this project was invaluable:

## **City of Phoenix Public Works Department**

- Chuck Hamstra, Solid Waste Diversion and Disposal Division, Deputy Director, Public Works Department
- Stacy Hettmansperger, Solid Waste Diversion and Disposal Division, Operation Manager, Public Works Department
- Robert Martinez, Solid Waste Diversion and Disposal Division, Public Works Department

## **City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department Works Department**

- Larry Polk, Special Operations, Parks and Recreation Department
- Salvatore Chiovari, Northeast Division, Parks and Recreation Department
- Scott Coughlin, Northwest Division, Parks and Recreation Department
- Robert Gallegos, Northeast Division, Parks and Recreation Department
- David Ong, Downtown Division, Parks and Recreation Department
- Juan Rodriguez, South Division, Parks and Recreation Department

## **Arizona State University**

- Dan O'Neill, General Manager, Global Sustainability Solutions Services, Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives; Senior Sustainability Scientist, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability
- Dr. Raj Buch, General Manager, Global Sustainability Solutions Services, Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives; Senior Sustainability Scientist, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability
- William Campbell, Sr. Project Manager, Global Sustainability Solutions Services, Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives

- Dr. Rebecca Ball, Dr. Ball's Soil Biogeochemistry Lab, ASU's School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences
- Dr. Beth Pollidoro, ASU's School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences
- Dr. Sharon Hall, ASU's School Of Life Sciences
- Dr. Juan Maldonado Ortiz, ASU Swette Center for Environmental Biotechnology

### **Third Party Contractors**

- Dr. Emily Vaiu, Grand Canyon University

**Funding for this report was made possible by a contribution from the City of Phoenix.**