

Appendix 5 City of Atlanta Department of Aviation Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport  
Case Example

## **Appendix 5**

### **City of Atlanta Department of Aviation**

#### **Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL)**

Atlanta, Georgia

The City of Atlanta Aviation Department has committed to “GreeningATL” in order to achieve sustainability at the triple bottom line — people, planet, and profits. The Aviation Department is working to make Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) the world’s “greenest” airport through strategic management of resources, including those discarded as waste. ATL’s multifaceted waste management program includes waste reduction as well as recycling and composting for Airport employees, tenants, and passengers.

The Aviation Department developed a Sustainable Management Plan in 2011 and established a business unit dedicated to sustainability and resiliency in 2012. The plan guides decisions and activities, including those related to waste management, while the business unit is responsible for sustainability program implementation, including landfill diversion. To better understand the facility’s waste stream, a waste stream composition study was completed in 2013. This study determined that 80% of the waste stream was eligible for diversion. ATL has committed to 90% landfill diversion by 2020.

In addition to quantifying typical materials such as paper, plastic, cardboard, etc., ATL’s waste stream composition study also included measurement of the volume of liquid in the waste stream, including ice that eventually melts in the waste bags and containers. Based on this study, ATL collaborated with a recycling bin supplier to design custom containers and lids with restricted openings for the separation of recyclable materials in the passenger terminals. Based on Airport staff observations of passenger behavior, these containers were installed following the “buddy system” by pairing them with trash cans and placing them together at regular intervals approximately one to one and half gates apart. The original signage for these containers featured simple imagery to illustrate what types of materials went in each bin. ATL is in the process of converting container signage and labeling to standardized recycling labels from Recycle Across America ®.

ATL has implemented sustainable initiatives in the facility’s food courts. For example, ATL recently completed the procurement process for food and beverage operations and the Request for Proposals included requirements for the use of Biodegradable Products Institute - Certified Compostable and Cedar Grove accepted serviceware and carryout containers. The concessionaires are also required to eliminate use of Styrofoam items by the end of 2017 due to the difficulties associated with managing this material. The scale of food and beverage operations at ATL is shaping food packaging for international restaurant brands; for example, companies are working to eliminate the wax lining in their coffee cups and food wrap paper and to design a compostable hot beverages lid to meet ATL’s compostable requirements. These changes would be implemented throughout these organizations’ worldwide operations resulting in significant cost savings and environmental benefits.

Airport employees noticed that toilet paper was arriving at ATL in cardboard boxes and on rolls with cardboard cores. To reduce the generation of waste from this packaging, ATL worked with the supplier to procure coreless toilet paper rolls and for them to be wrapped instead of boxed. The removal of the core is estimated to eliminate 1,500 tons of waste and wrapping instead of boxing is estimated to prevent 3,000 tons of waste.

ATL has determined that an on-site recycling and compost facility presents the best opportunity for the efficient management of these materials. This is due, in part, to the long travel distances (more than 80 miles) to the closest established commercial composting facility. After four attempts, ATL recently selected a strategic partner to operate such an on-site facility, to be called "Green Acres ATL Energy Park." The facility will accept ATL's full waste stream; it will be fully enclosed and negatively pressurized to control odors. ATL's waste stream has a high moisture content; liquid collected from the stream will be filtered and reused for landscaping.

ATL is looking forward to completing the signage and label replacement project, working with concessionaires to meet the compostable material requirements; and partnering to open Green Acres ATL Energy Park.