

Rescue, Recycling, and Waste Prevention

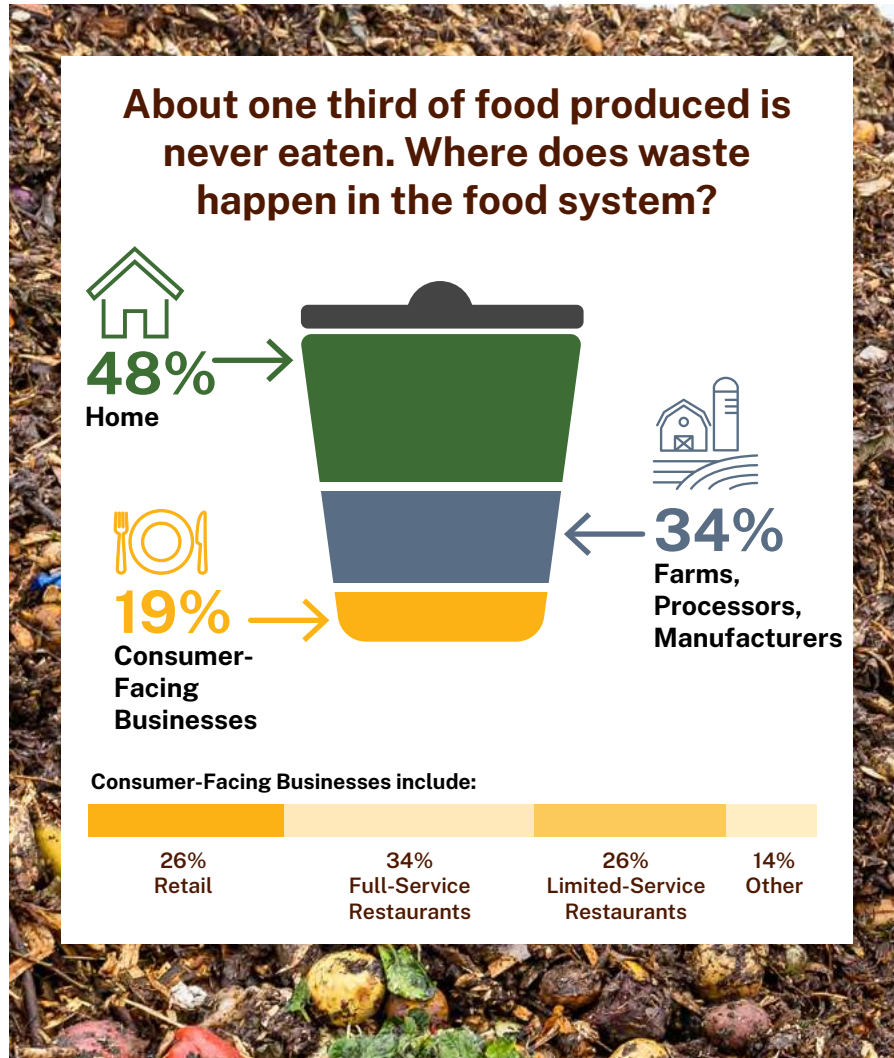
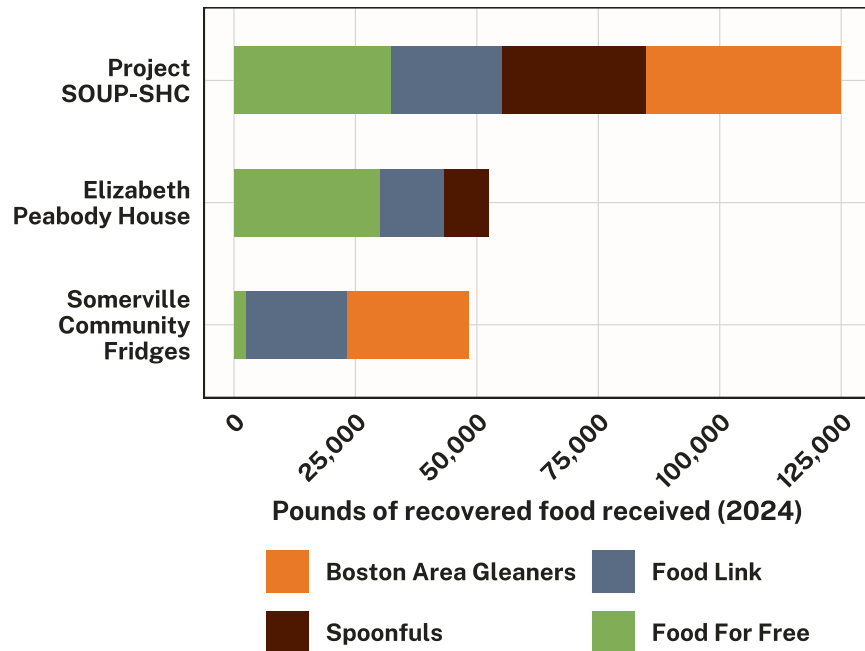


Photo credit: Food For Free

- **Diversion of excess retail food is well established in and around Somerville**, while consumer-level food waste remains less well documented and addressed.
 - » Systems exist to redirect surplus food from retailers to emergency food providers, including several non-profit food rescue organizations and technical support and collaboration from the state government.
- **Food rescue operations are a growing part of food waste management but remain less common** than other types of processing because rescue is more logistically challenging.



Photo credit: Boston Area Gleaners



- In 2024, local food rescue non-profits distributed about **250,000 lbs of recovered food to Somerville food assistance programs**. The figure above shows the largest recipients and suppliers.

- Household food waste reduction efforts are less developed.** Somerville has two composting programs in progress but lacks waste prevention and rescue campaigns directed towards individuals.
- Somerville currently **does not** have food rescue programming that **extends or adds value** to rescued food.



In 2025, Somerville began a curbside food waste collection pilot in East Somerville (left). Residents voted to fund Public Community Composting through Participatory Budgeting's second round in 2025. This funding will support public compost drop off sites in high-impact, accessible locations.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS FOOD WASTE:

- Support **expanded partnerships and funding for Somerville's food rescue operations** consistent with Somerville's Zero Waste Plan goals.
- Develop a **city-wide messaging** campaign to **reduce household food waste**.
- Identify institutional partners who can **support successful reuse programs for prepared foods**.

Want to learn more?
Find the full
assessment here:

