

The “Dirt” on Composting in Corvallis

Moving Towards a Zero-Waste Future

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Introduction

- The Coalition's Goal:
 - 75% waste recovery rate by 2020
- Class Goals
 - Deliverables to the Coalition
 - Learning Outcomes



Overview

- Background and Objectives -- Nathan Davis
- Findings -- Iaroslav Vugniavyi
- Recommendations -- Stephen Naimoli
- Conclusions
- Questions and Answers

What is Composting?

- Yard Waste
- Food Scraps
 - Backyard composting pile
 - Republic Services yard waste bin



Background

- Community Sustainability Action Plan
- Waste Prevention Action Team
- Recycling Block Captain Program



Objectives

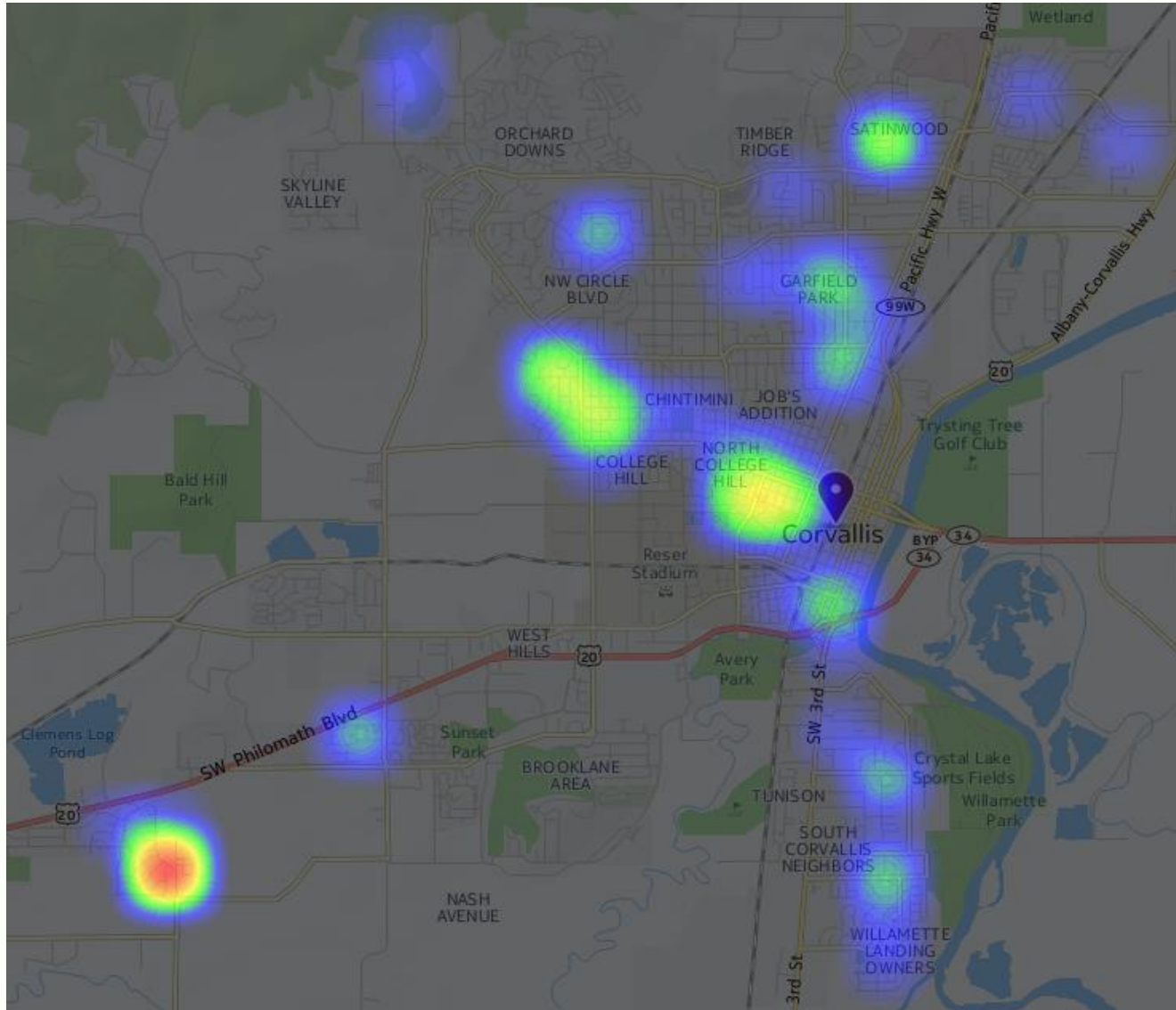
- Generally
 - How can the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition encourage residential composting?
- Research Questions
 - Baseline Statistics
 - Motivations and Barriers
 - Best Practices

Approach

- Survey



Map of covered areas



Approach

- Survey
- Focus Groups
- Case Studies

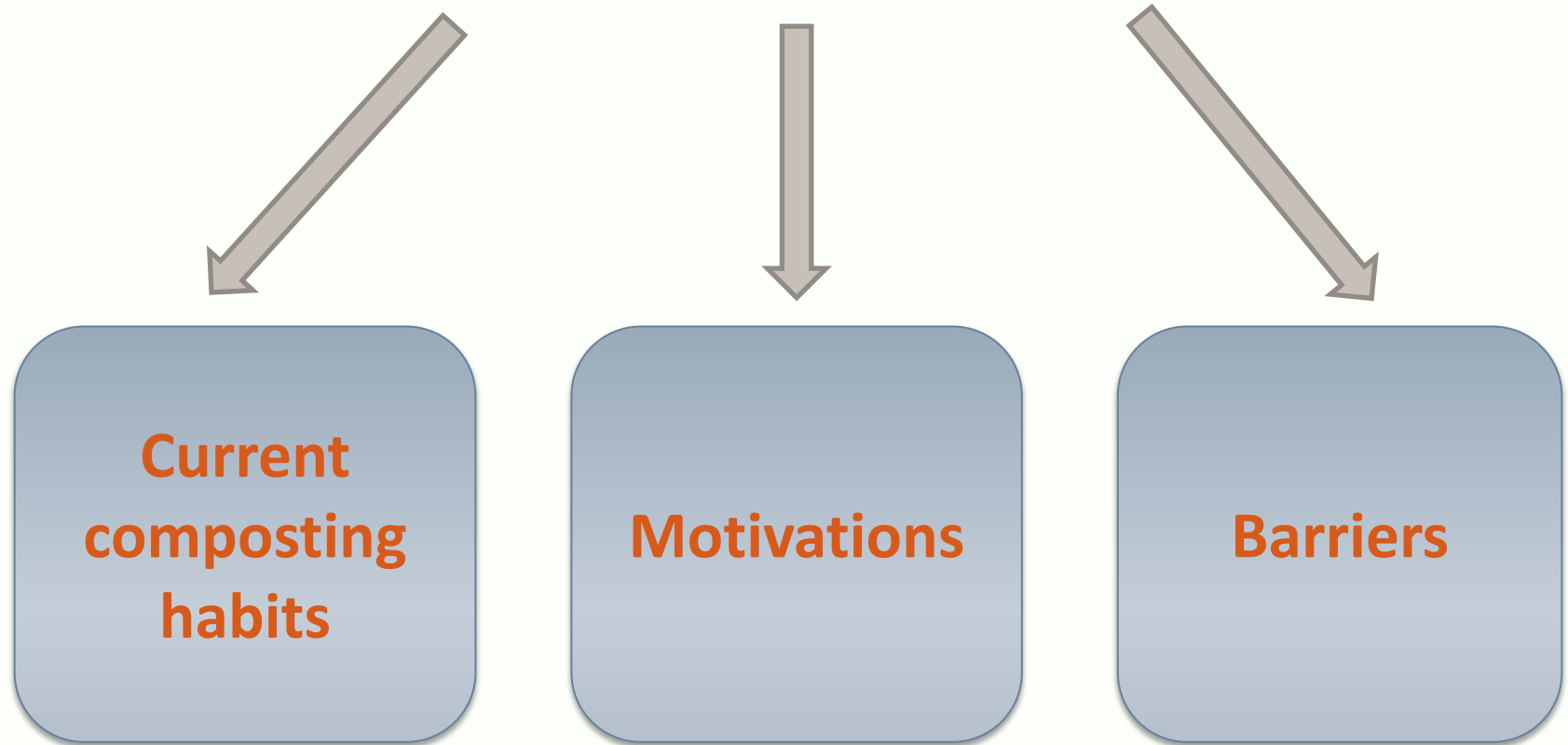


Findings



Photo Source: <http://www.expert2rich.com/>

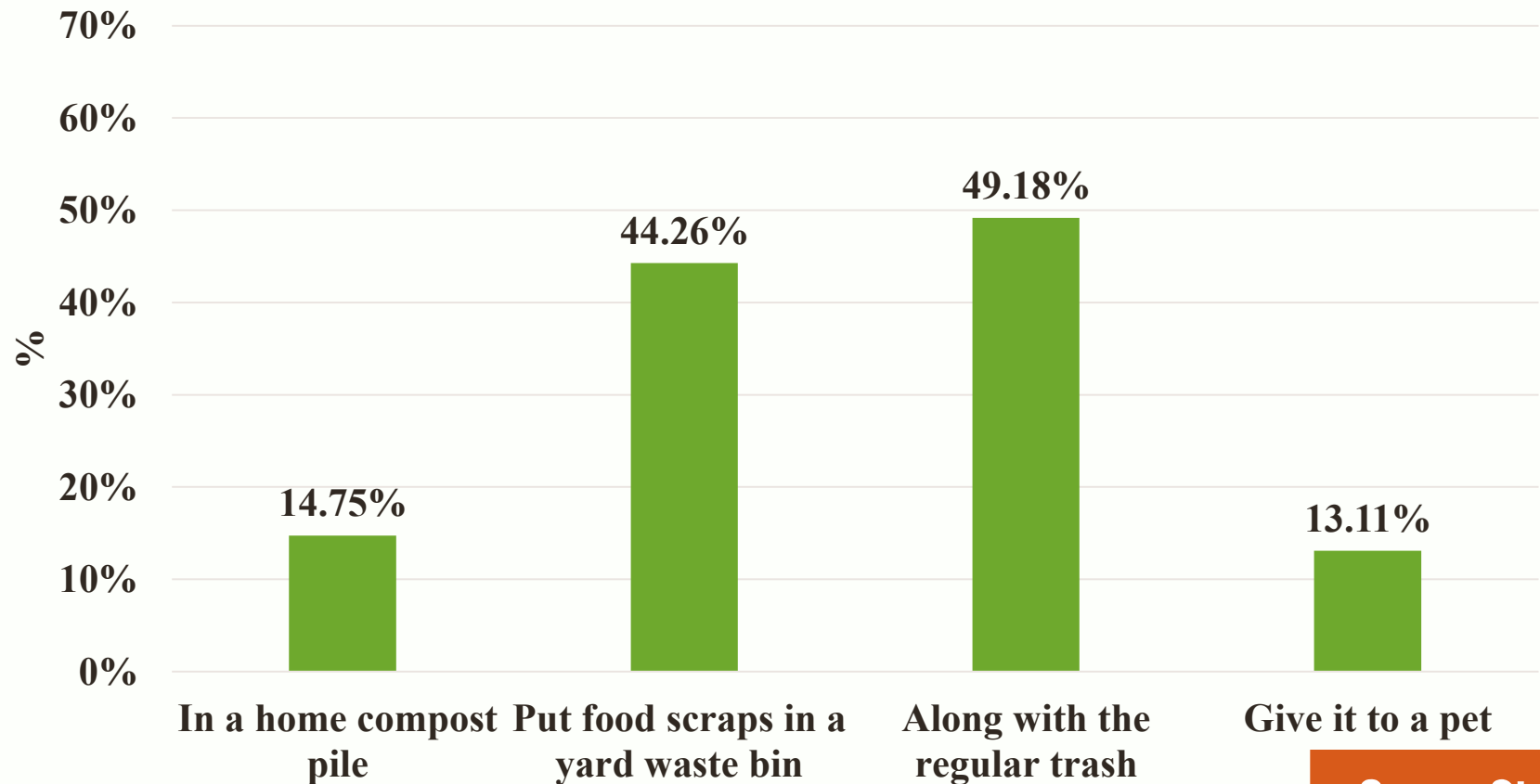
Key Findings



**What are Corvallis
residents'
current food waste
disposal
and composting habits?**

49% of survey respondents throw food scraps away with the regular trash; 44% compost food scraps in the yard waste bin; and 15% use a home composting system

How do residents of surveyed areas dispose their food scraps?



N=60

30% of non-composters surveyed have tried composting in the past

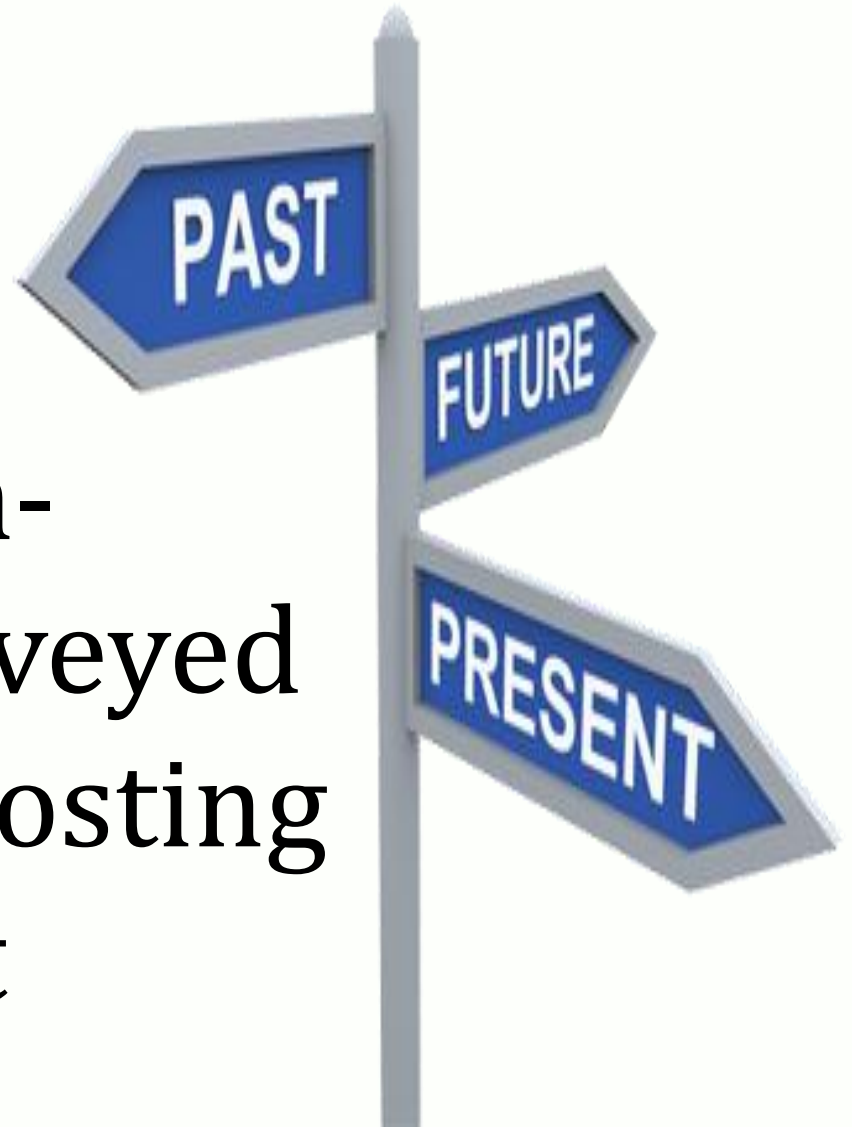
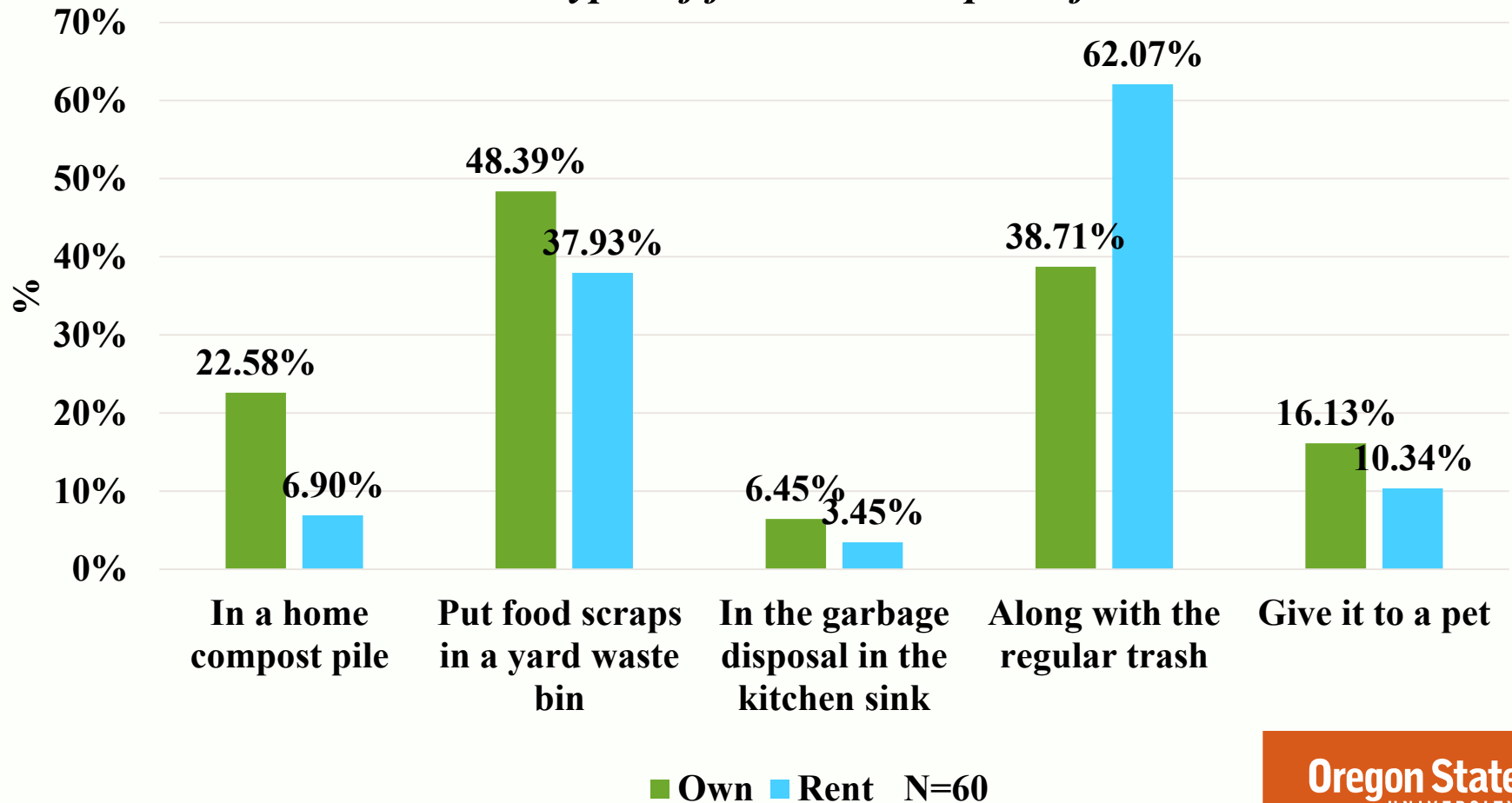


Photo Source: <http://www.shutterstock.com/s/past+present+future/search.html>

Homeowners are more likely than renters to compost food scraps and use a home composting system

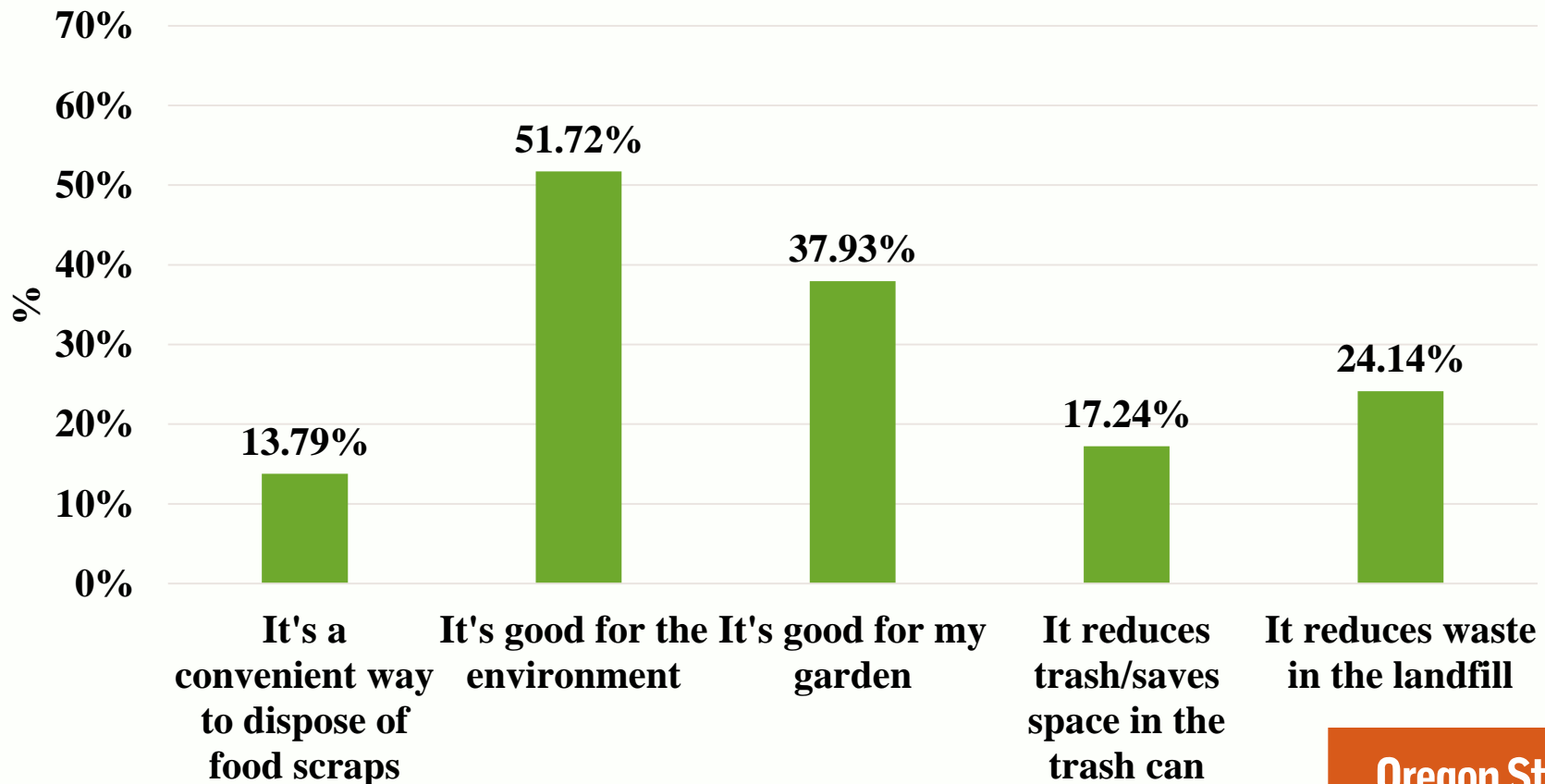
Types of food waste disposal for owners and renters



**Why are residents
motivated to
compost?**

Most households that compost do so because they believe it is good for the environment and seek to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in a landfill.

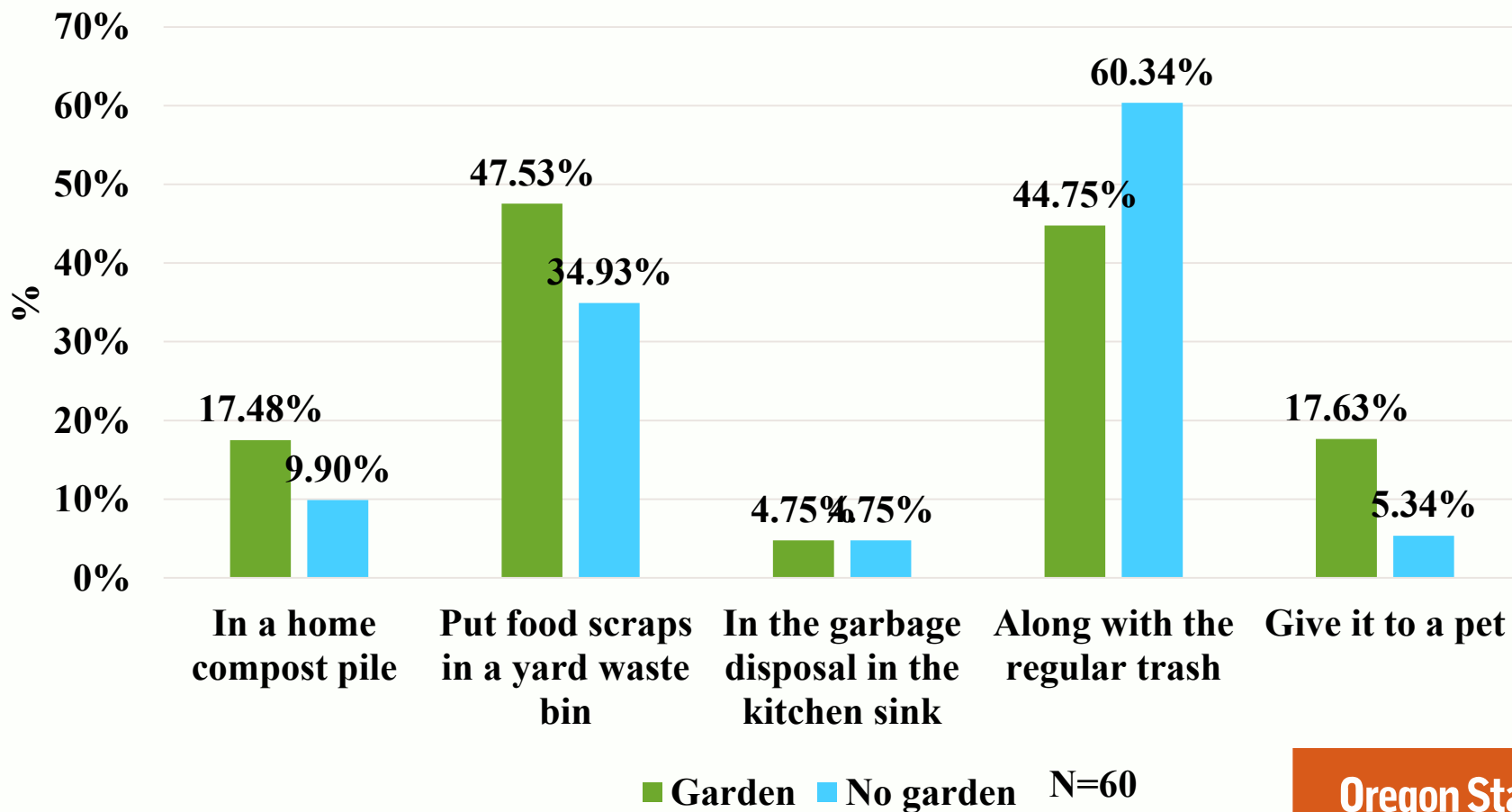
Why do surveyed households compost?



N=28

Households that garden are more likely to compost food scraps

Presence of a garden and types of food waste disposal



Composters stated that composting is a common practice amongst friends, which indicates the importance of social and community norms



Photo Source: <http://www.ucview.com/wiki>

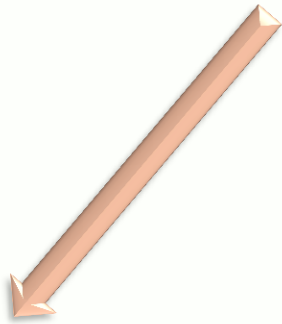
“I’ve never composted. My parents put everything in the garbage disposal. Now it goes in the disposal like everything else”

"I like the idea of composting. It feels like a very Oregonian and Corvallis value to compost food scraps“

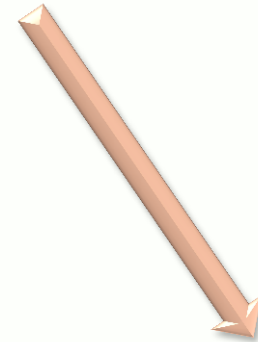
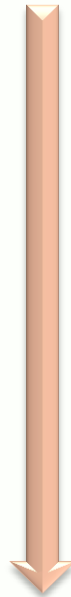
“Corvallis is way ahead of the game culturally and socially. That pressure is there, but maybe the functionality needs to catch up a bit ... It’s interesting how your behavior is defined by social pressures.”

**What are
identified barriers
to composting?**

A primary barrier to composting is lack of knowledge in:



Awareness that food
scraps can be placed in
the yard bin



Understanding
the importance
of composting

Understanding how to compost
and what can be composted



Photo Source: <http://www.southsouth.info/profiles/blogs/>

“There’s a lot understanding about the environmental benefits of recycling that there isn’t about composting.... I just don’t know what I’m not doing, and what sin I’m really committing [by not composting]”

“[Back when I didn't compost] I just didn't have the info.”

**Most non-
composters have
concerns about pests
or unwanted odors**



Photo Source: <http://www.pd4pic.com/icon-food-white-cartoon-page-can-out-free-trash.html>

Other barriers include:

Notion that composting is time-consuming

Lack of an established household system to collect food scraps

Low priority for composting

“For me recycling cans and bottles is a no brainer, but I just never thought of my food scraps as that big of a deal”

IMPORTANT

Photo Source: <http://www.fhcinc.org/patient-portal-disclaimers>

RECOMMENDATIONS



Provide stickers for yard waste bins

- Inform residents
- Clarify misconceptions



Photo Source: San Francisco Department of the Environment

Provide stickers for yard waste bins

Focus groups

- Composters suggested adding signage to yard waste bin
- Half of non-composters indicated it would help remind them

Provide kitchen bins

- Inform residents
- Increase convenience



Photo Source: Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Provide kitchen bins

Focus groups

- Usefulness of kitchen bins: relieve inconvenience

Case studies

- Portland Conservation Specialist: providing kitchen bins among highest contributors to increasing composting participation

Organize composting demonstrations at community events

- Role for RBCP
- Interactive
- Educate residents
- Create social norms

Organize composting demonstrations at community events

Focus groups

- Composting behaviors are ingrained
- Composters reference peers' behavior
- Non-composters do not see the importance of composting

Expand beyond a residential focus

- Government, businesses, non-profits, schools, etc.
- Create community norms



Expand beyond a residential focus

Case studies

- Social norms play a role in behavior

Focus groups

- Composting behaviors can be habitual, part of a lifestyle

“People...want to live in Boulder because of the reputation it has for being sustainable, and part of that is then doing their part to help achieve zero waste.” – Residential Sustainability Specialist, City of Boulder

Pilot programs at smaller scales before wider implementation

- Ensure effectiveness
- Receive early feedback

Pilot programs at smaller scales before wider implementation

Case studies

- All of the cases utilized pilot programs

Pilot programs help the city “really understand community opinions about the system” and focus on “targeting outreach and troubleshooting to meet those needs” – Conservation Program Specialist, City of Portland

Conclusions



Conclusions

Findings

- Statistics
- Motivations
- Barriers

Recommendations

- Supply residents with resources
- Expand outreach
- Pilot new programs

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THANK YOU

QUESTIONS
AND
COMMENTS

