



North Platte Case Study



North Platte's Innovative Partnership to Create Compost with Bio-Ag



North Platte is a city of about 23,000 people in west-central Nebraska. It is located along I-80 and at the confluence of the North and South Platte Rivers. The Union Pacific Railroad Bailey Yard, located on the edge of North Platte, is the largest railroad classification yard in the world and features the Golden Spike Tower and visitor center, offering a birds-eye view to operations from an 8th floor viewing platform. North Platte is the county seat of Lincoln county and is also home to many Buffalo Bill Cody experiences, art venues and unique shopping.



Layne Groseth is the [Public Service Director](#) for North Platte. Garbage collection is done for about 8,600 households. Garbage is collected weekly. One cart costs \$24.95/mo. And extra carts are \$4 each. Garbage goes from the local transfer station to a landfill about 70 miles away. Disposal fee is \$30.50/ton. Yard waste is collected for composting. North Platte charges \$15/ton for yard waste disposal. Weekly residential pick-up of yard waste occurs from April 1 through November. Residents and landscapers can also drop off yard waste and tree trimmings or storm debris. The cost to pick up yard waste is included in the cost residents pay for garbage pick-up.



[Bio-Ag Solutions](#) is a commercial compost producer headquartered in Hershey, NE. In addition to compost production from cattle feedlot or poultry manure and other organics, Bio-Ag makes and sells compost tea, and offers soil sampling, seed, customized agronomic solutions, and pivot parts. They offer an Organic Materials Review Institute Listed Humus Compost as well.

North Platte initially paid Bio-Ag to pick up the yard waste for composting with feedlot manure. It allowed the city to save money they were

spending to operate their own compost facility or to dispose of the yard waste. Currently, Bio-Ag picks up the yard waste for free. North Platte has space to store the yard waste outside until Bio-Ag picks it up. North Platte did purchase two pieces of equipment to chip or grind the wood waste. A used belt roto chopper was purchased for \$515,000 and a new, low-speed grinder was purchased for \$645,000 with the help of a grant of \$600,000. Recently, some other companies have expressed interest in getting the yard waste from North Platte as well.

Giving away yard waste for a private company to compost is good for North Platte. It saves the city money and is good for the environment. Storing and chipping wood waste allows the city to get mulch without composting on municipal land.

The challenges in day-to-day operations for the city are the expenses of fuel and labor plus maintenance of the grinders. It is also a challenge to get yard waste from residents that is trash-free. Educational campaigns have been used to try and eliminate the trash but they have not been too successful. Sometimes, if the amount of trash is highly visible in the yard waste, the hauler will not pick it up.

While there are still some challenges to cooperating with private businesses to use municipal yard waste for composting, overall, it is the best choice for North Platte and the environment.

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