

# Support of Community Compost in Potsdam NY

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**Introduction:** Our purpose in this study was to examine the amount of support the town residents and Suny Potsdam students had for the implementation of a community compost center in Potsdam New York. Additional information was gathered from the Clarkson Composting Report from 2018. Our project is different from this report in respect to our project focusing on outreach to the community.

**Background:** Each year, about 3.9 million tons of New York's food waste ends up in landfills. This waste could easily be composted, thus reducing our dependence on landfills. Our study seeks to determine the extent of public support in the Town of Potsdam for building a community compost facility. We collected data from residents and SUNY Potsdam students about their opinion on the subject of community compost and on possible locations for a compost center. We aimed to assess whether there is sufficient public support and willingness to fund of a compost center in the Town of Potsdam to warrant moving forward with its construction. We hypothesized that the community would support the compost center, with residents preferring it be on campus, and students preferring it be in the town.

**Methods:** We developed a survey that encompassed questions from where someone would want the center, how much money they are willing to contribute, and even if they agreed with its creation in the first place. Once we had obtained IRB approval, we built our digital survey using Qualtrics<sup>XM</sup>. We shared the link to the survey through our social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat from April 2, 2020 to April 13, 2020. Once we had a sufficient sample size, we downloaded our data and analyzed it using Microsoft Excel to create graphs and conduct t-tests.

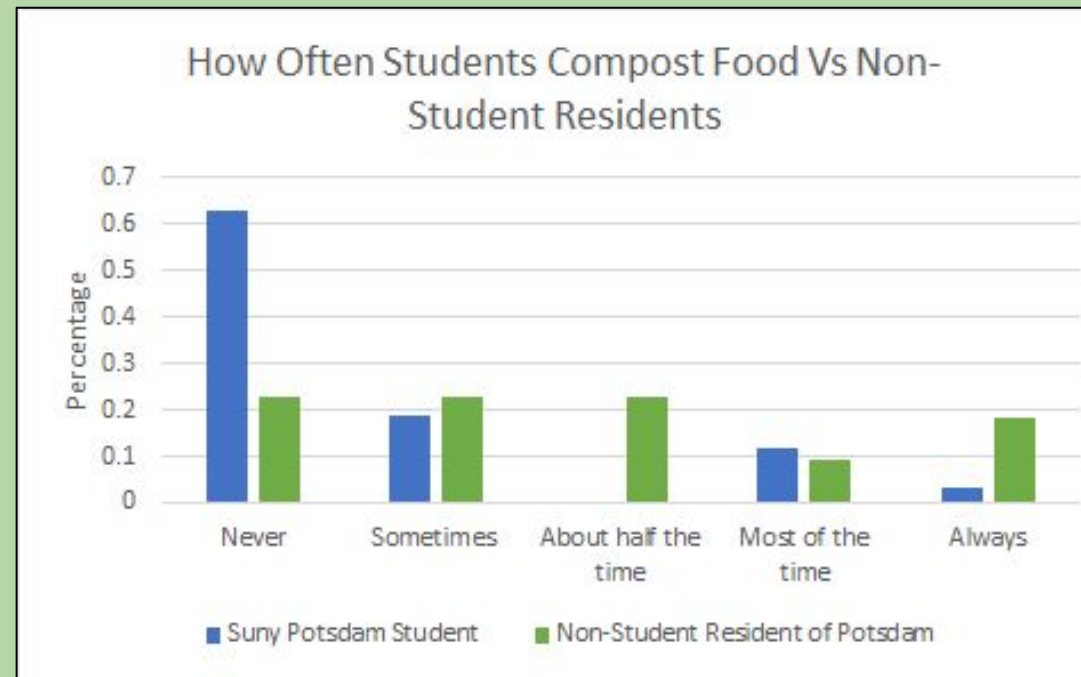


Fig 1: Students reported composting food waste less often compared to Non-Student Residents, (ttest, p=0.0014)

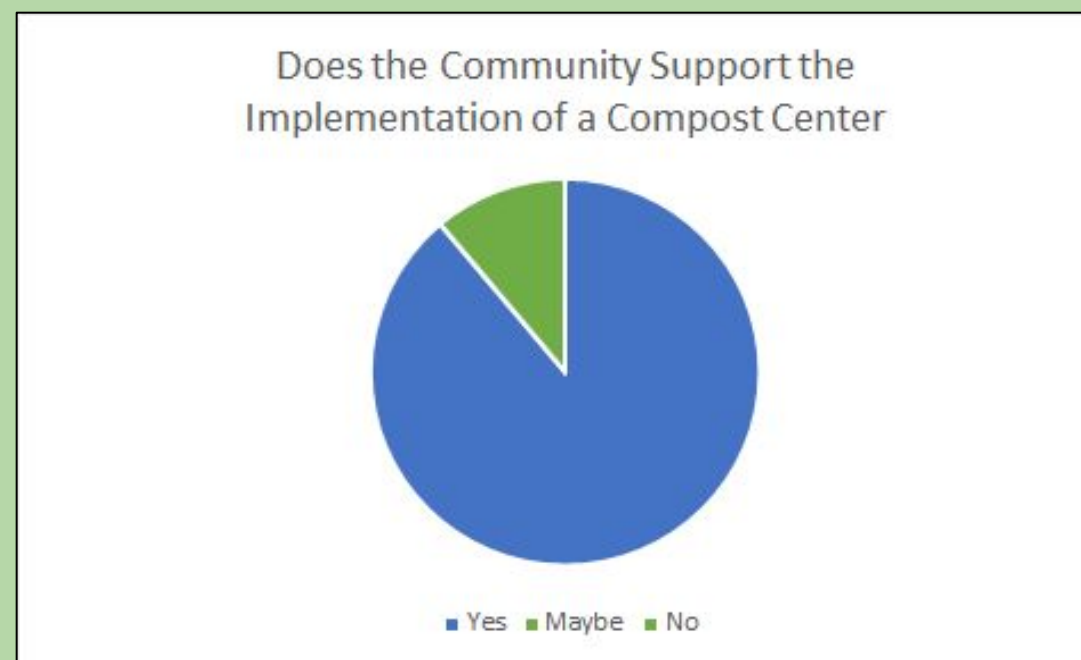


Fig 2: Support for a community compost center in Potsdam was overwhelmingly positive.

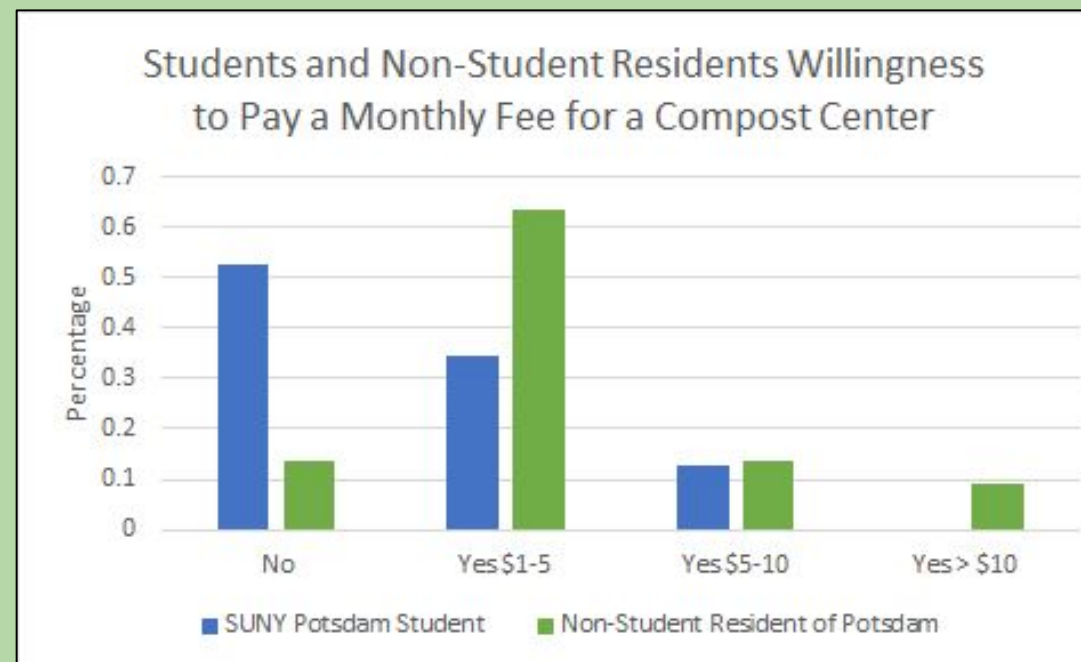


Fig 3: Students were less willing to pay an annual fee compared to non-student residents (ttest, p=.0024)

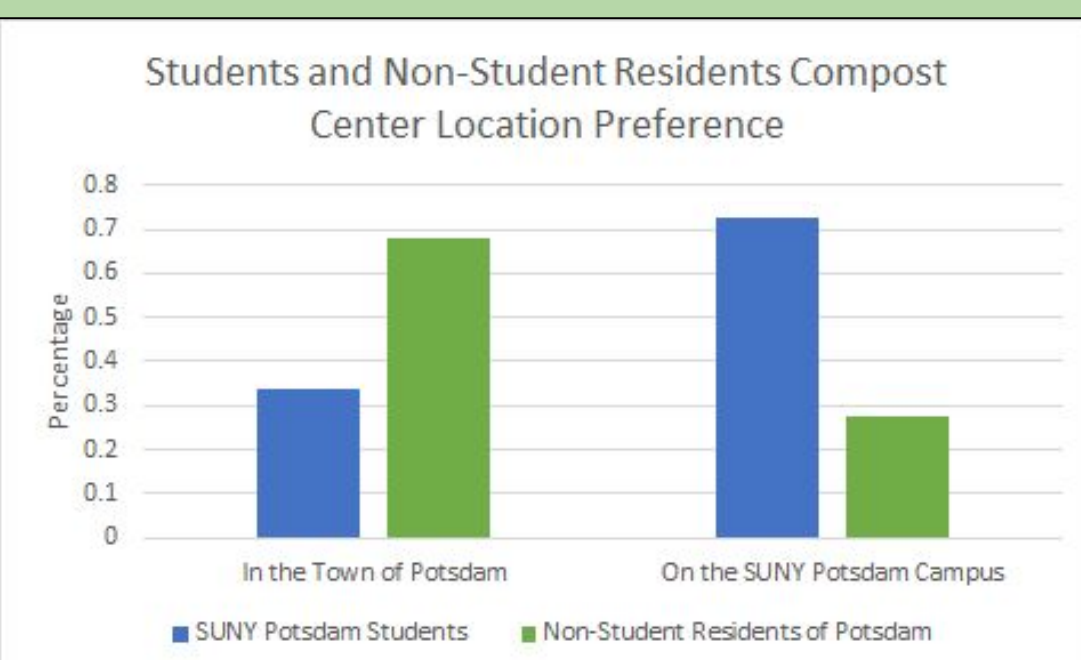


Fig 4: Recordings show that students prefer the compost be located on campus, while residents prefer it to be located in the town (ttest, p=.0014)

**Results:** Our final sample size was 81 participants, 59 being students, and the remaining 22 being non-student residents. Our data showed that even though students composted less than non-student residents, there was a general trend of support for the compost center (Figs 1,2). It was also found that non-student residents were more willing to pay a monthly fee, than students were (Fig 3). Students preferred the center be on campus, and residents preferred the center be in the town (Fig 2). These results did not support our original hypothesis.

**Conclusions:** There is overwhelming support for a compost center in the town of Potsdam, with ~88% of participants saying "yes" to its implementation, and the remaining ~12% saying "maybe." We did not record a single "no" in our study. From the data that we collected it seems that a community compost center would be supported and utilized by many people. In order to determine where it should be built a larger sample size would be necessary. Having a larger sample would help to represent the 15,000+ people living in the town of Potsdam.

## References:

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