Proposal

Our proposal is to establish a composting system in Oneota Market. Luther has claimed to be very environmentally conscious; enacting this change to Oneota Market will greatly reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills and will further Luther’s name as a ‘green’ campus. Additionally, since there are successful composting systems elsewhere on campus (i.e. the cafeteria), it should be relatively simple to add another location to the already established cycle on campus. We have spoken to various Luther staff members who helped point us in the right direction, and are now in the process of setting up this system.

Summary

Obstacles & Specifics

As we delved deeper into the project, we discovered two main obstacles preventing Oneota from implementing composting. First, the aesthetics: Oneota requires a container that is both practical and fits with the Union décor. Second, the space: in adding a compost bin, one of the recycling spots in the Oneota pillars would need to be removed.

We also found out that the old system of composting was in the midst of a change: instead of using the traditional larger bins, Sustainability is now switching to bagless, five-gallon buckets. We anticipate that these buckets, due to their size, will fill up quickly and will need to be replaced often. Multiple buckets will be necessary to maintain an effective rotating system. Each station can hold two buckets per cabinet, one bucket on top of another upturned one. We may also need to install a wooden shelf for better stability. Maren Stumme-Diers, assistant sustainability coordinator, has contact with the carpenters if this is necessary.

As it is now, there are two trash receptacles and two recyclable bins, with no room to put in compost. Therefore, our plan is to switch one of those recycling containers into a compost bin. Depending on the findings of the waste audit (taking place Thursday, December 9th), we may need to also place a new redeemables container next to each dish station. These containers, as mentioned above, need to be aesthetically pleasing in order to be approved.

On each dish station, one of the recyclable receptacles is incorrectly labeled as trash, so it is necessary to accurately label it as compost.

Aesthetically pleasing redeemables bins could cost up to hundreds of dollars apiece, and we could need two of them. The signs will have a cost, although hopefully not a significant one.
Work so far:

We spoke with Debbie Aske, who was enthusiastic and cooperative. She helped us set up a waste audit and directed us to Trish Neubauer, coordinator of student activities and the Union.

We met with Trish and proposed our project to her. She was very supportive of the idea, especially since we kept things simple by not requiring drastic infrastructure changes. She emailed a member of the renovations committee to find out information about where the current signs came from so that the purchase of the new signs could match the style of the current ones.

We presented our project to the Food, Purchasing, and Waste task group on Monday, December 6th. Some advice we took from that meeting was simply to change one of the recycling containers into compost, and have diners put their redeemables in containers elsewhere.

Still to be Done

Our next step is to obtain the five-gallon buckets from sustainability coordinator, Dan Bellrichard, to place in Oneota Market. Through the Union fund, Trish will also purchase two new compost signs for the pillar stations. We will also need to explain to the Oneota staff about the composting process so they know where to take the waste.

Depending on whether or not we deem it necessary after the audit, we will look in to choosing an aesthetically pleasing, and hopefully inexpensive, redeemables bin with the help of Dan.

On Thursday, December 9th we will perform our waste audit to see how much trash and recycling Oneota produces and compare that with what could be composted. We will also be posting pre-advertising to prep the college population for the upcoming change. We will contact Alli Brenny for assistance with this advertising. Postings notifying the campus of this change will also be made in Chips and Tuesday.

Our goal is to implement the Oneota composting system by the beginning of spring semester 2011.

Rationale

Composting provides nutrients to plants and soil, thus reducing the need for fertilizers which, when used in abundance, can be harmful to the environment. The amount of waste sent to landfills is reduced through composting, creating a profound impact on the environment.

Composting and recycling are essential in the fight to reduce Luther’s environmental impact. Luther College promotes “being green,” making it logical for the school to follow its endorsed behavior. Oneota Market is the most visible eating establishment on campus; in making compost available, Luther would highlight and publicize its commitment to the environment.