

FEEAST Durham Initiative: A Hub for Food Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainability

Introduction and Overview:

The Food Excess, Entrepreneurship, Applied Science, and Training (FEEAST) Durham initiative is a transformative project designed to tackle critical environmental, economic, and public health challenges. With a focus on reducing food waste, fostering waste-based entrepreneurship, and improving community health outcomes, FEEAST Durham represents a new model for sustainable urban development.

The initiative will employ cutting-edge waste management technologies, create green jobs, and enhance access to nutritious foods in underserved



communities. As a replicable model, FEEAST Durham will not only address local needs but also inspire similar initiatives across the country.

Goals of FEEAST Durham:

1. Reduce Food Waste:

- Implement smart waste management systems to reduce the volume of organic waste sent to landfills.
- Use innovative composting techniques to transform waste into valuable resources.

2. Promote Waste-Based Entrepreneurship

- Encourage new businesses to upcycle food excess into marketable products.
- Create green jobs that stimulate local economic growth and support sustainability.

3. Enhance Community Health

- Improve access to nutritious, upcycled food products for modest-wealth communities.
- Educate the public on sustainability and healthy eating habits through outreach and community programs.

These goals align with the broader focus on climate justice, environmental health, and economic development, particularly in modest-wealth and BIPOC communities.

Development Concept for FEEAST Hub Durham:

The FEEAST Durham Hub will be a 25,000 sq. ft. commercial development located in Durham. It will serve as a multi-functional facility for food entrepreneurship, innovation, and community collaboration, featuring:

10,500 sq. ft. of Restaurant and Retail Space

This area will showcase innovative food products and serve as a training ground for local entrepreneurs.

4,000 sq. ft. Commercial Test Kitchen

A commissary kitchen will allow entrepreneurs to develop, test, and refine food products.

2,000 sq. ft. "Street Lab" for Product Innovation

This space will be used for testing new upcycled products and receiving real-time feedback.

5,000 sq. ft. Flex Space

Designed for events, workshops, and training programs, this area will host educational events related to sustainability, food innovation, and waste management.

Open-Air Food Court and Stage

A public space for dining and entertainment, providing a community gathering point for light entertainment and food-related events.

Strategy and Implementation

FEEAST Durham will be implemented through a comprehensive strategy that integrates advanced technology, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. The core components include:

1. Landfill Diversion of Food Waste

- Deploy smart waste management systems, such as bins with real-time sensors, in key locations like markets, schools, and community centers.
- Utilize data analytics to monitor food waste patterns and implement targeted interventions.
- Build composting and recycling infrastructure to convert food waste into useful compost for local farmers and community gardens.

2. Promotion of Waste-Based Entrepreneurship

- Business incubation and support: Provide resources and mentorship for businesses that upcycle food excess into consumable products such as soups and sauces.
- Facilitate product innovation and attract investment in waste-based ventures.
- Offer workshops to equip entrepreneurs with the skills needed to succeed in this emerging market.

3. Enhancement of Community Health

- Ensure food excess is repurposed into nutritious food products for underserved communities.
- Support compost-based community gardens, which will offer fresh produce and serve as educational hubs for sustainability practices.
- Run public education programs to raise awareness of food waste, healthy eating, and sustainable practices.

Partnership and Workforce Development:

FEEAST Durham will collaborate with local workforce development organizations to create the Certified Food Waste and Systems Innovation Credential—a first-of-its-kind certification to support the growing demand for skilled workers in waste management and food systems innovation. By fostering partnerships with institutions such as Duke University, Durham Technical Community College, and North Carolina Central University, the initiative will ensure local talent is trained to lead the green jobs of the future.

Expected Outcomes

The FEEAST Durham initiative is designed to deliver measurable outcomes:

- **Reduction in Landfill Waste**
A significant decrease in the volume of food waste sent to landfills, reducing methane emissions and other environmental pollutants.
- **Creation of Green Businesses**
The development of waste-based businesses that will drive economic growth and create sustainable jobs in the local economy.
- **Increased Access to Nutritious Food**
Underserved communities will benefit from healthier, repurposed food options, promoting public health and reducing food insecurity.
- **Sustainable Environmental Impact**
The adoption of innovative waste management strategies will improve air and water quality, reducing pollution in the region.
- **Scalable Model for Replication**
The success of FEEAST Durham will serve as a replicable model for other regions seeking to reduce food waste and promote sustainable economic development.

Conclusion

The FEEAST Durham Initiative presents a comprehensive, community-focused approach to tackling food waste, fostering green businesses, and enhancing public health in Durham. By building strong partnerships with local organizations, FEEAST Durham aims to establish itself as a model of sustainability and economic development. With a focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, and environmental justice, this initiative will create lasting benefits for Durham and beyond.