

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Love 'Em and Leave 'Em*

- **Year Complete:** 2014
- **Local Government:** City of Yonkers, NY
- **Local Foundation:** Westchester Community Foundation

Project Purpose

To develop a training, marketing and legislative campaign for on-site leaf mulching to reduce waste, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and generate cost-savings for property owners, landscapers, and taxpayers.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

- Cities should first adopt mulch-mowing on municipal property, even if on one small property, for at least one season to effectively promote the practice. This will build familiarity and confidence in the results and enable the city to lead the community-at-large by example.
- Landscapers are more receptive to learning from other landscapers, municipal groundskeepers and trusted equipment dealers than environmental organizations.
- Address concerns early on by Public Works Commissioners. This will help realize savings in overtime labor, equipment and fuel costs, and prevent budget cuts and loss of personnel.
- In New Rochelle, the director personally contacted neighborhood associations and civic organizations to tell them about LELE, which generated requests for training programs.
- In Yonkers, the director relied on the marketing campaign to the general public to promote general awareness about the Mayor's commitment to sustainability.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

Local foundations must understand and be sensitive to the political dynamics in the cities with which they partner. Sustainability directors navigate between Mayors, City Councils, department heads, commissioners, and the public. It was important to respect tactical decisions regarding policy and public engagement.

Additional Information and Resources

As of 2017, the city of Yonkers had saved its taxpayers [nearly \\$2 million](#) with their mulching program. More information on these efforts can be found [here](#).