



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Zero Waste Advisory Commission

**Recommendation Number (20230111-4): Resolution on Multifamily Composting**

**WHEREAS**, it is the Responsibility of the Zero Waste Advisory Commission to review, evaluate and make recommendations to City Council, city management and city staff regarding policies concerning solid waste, recycling, composting, and Zero Waste goals; and

**WHEREAS**, Austin Resource Recovery waste audits indicate that about 37% of waste from multifamily properties is organic material that could be composted; and

**WHEREAS**, Austin Resource Recovery does not provide composting collection at multifamily properties with greater than four units; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately 55% of Austin residents live in multifamily housing of greater than four units and therefore have no convenient access to composting; and

**WHEREAS**, it is impossible for Austin to reach its Zero Waste goal without providing multifamily residents convenient access to composting; and

**WHEREAS**, reducing organic waste in landfills is important for achieving the goals of the Austin Climate Equity Plan because organic material in landfills produces methane, which is a powerful greenhouse gas; and

**WHEREAS**, the adoption of composting services should ultimately reduce trash hauling costs due to decreased volume in the trash; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in the community's interest to reduce the amount of waste put in landfills to avoid building new landfills, which often cause environmental injustices; and

**WHEREAS**, consistency in access to composting and recycling throughout the Austin community is important; and

**WHEREAS**, Austin Resource Recovery conducted a multifamily composting pilot that demonstrated that composting is feasible and affordable at multifamily properties and that a large portion of residents will utilize composting services if they are provided; and

**WHEREAS**, the multifamily composting pilot demonstrated that education around composting is important and that physical tools and materials are most helpful; and

**WHEREAS**, face-to-face conversations are most effective for motivating people and Austin Resource Recovery doesn't currently have sufficient staff to conduct outreach to residents at multifamily properties; and

**WHEREAS**, Austin Resource Recovery data shows that a majority of multifamily properties are not providing the required recycling education to their residents; and

WHEREAS, in 2000 the City of Austin adopted a comprehensive Master Plan and in 2019 Passed Resolution 20191017-028 recommending organic waste collection be provided at all commercial and multi-family properties; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission recommends that Austin Resource Recovery drafts an amendment to the Universal Recycling Ordinance to require composting collection at all multifamily properties by June 2024.

The ordinance should:

1. Require commercial composting services be provided at all properties;
2. Establish requirements for materials to be collected;
3. Establish minimum composting capacity per unit served;
4. Require co-locating compost collection bins within 25 feet of trash and recycling;
5. Establish requirements for signage on compost bins;
6. Establish that bins, not dumpsters, are the appropriate collection containers for compost, unless a property demonstrates a need for greater capacity and an ability to keep contamination out;
7. Establish requirements for educating residents;
8. Establish that costs for composting, recycling and trash services cannot be marked up by property management by more than 10% over the cost that the property pays to the service provider(s), unless a property can demonstrate costs beyond 10%;

9. Establish a phase in schedule with larger properties meeting the requirements by December 2023 and the smallest properties no later than June 2024; and
10. Include a similar variance process as is in place for multifamily recycling requirements, plus the ability to apply for variances for type of collection bin and administrative costs.


**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission recommends that Austin Resource Recovery develop a plan for the city to provide all multifamily residents with initial and continuing education at least twice per year on composting and recycling. This education should include information about why composting and recycling are important, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, avoiding building new landfills and meeting the city's Zero Waste goal. Austin Resource Recovery should work collaboratively with any other city departments that will be helpful to achieve this task, including overcoming any funding challenges. The education plan should be primarily focused on in-person interaction and resources, including providing free kitchen compost collectors.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission recommends that Austin Resource Recovery examine existing composting incentives and adjust them as necessary to allow smaller multifamily properties to utilize incentives to implement composting before they are required to.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission recommends, supports, and encourages Austin Resource Recovery to dedicate sufficient staff to oversee the proper implementation and enforcement of the URO, including multifamily composting.

Date of Approval: January 11, 2023

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 7-0 vote; Commissioners Barona, Steyaert, Myers, and Powell were absent.

Attest:  \_\_\_\_\_

(Staff or board member can sign)