

SENT TO COUNCIL:

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Memorandum  
by City Manager's Office  
JAN 19 2010

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: John Stufflebean

SUBJECT: RECYCLE PLUS PILOTS

DATE: 1-13-10

Approved

Date

1-19-09

### INFORMATION

On September 22, 2009, the City Council approved funding for three Recycle Plus pilots in selected neighborhoods throughout the City for a period of 18 months. The pilot programs are promoted under the name *Food for the Earth* to advance the concept of sorting compostable materials from garbage. Two of the three pilots, the Garbage Processing Pilot and the Yard Trimmings Cart Pilot, were launched in November 2009. This memorandum focuses on the March 1, 2010 launch for the third pilot, the Food Scraps and Organics Pilot, and the public outreach plan that is in place to ensure a smooth transition for every pilot participant. A status update of the previous two pilots is provided in Attachment 1.

#### Purpose of the Food Scraps and Organics Pilot

The Food Scraps and Organics Pilot will allow us to:

1. Test the collection of food scraps and organics using a cart-based system. Some of the reasons for conducting this pilot are:
  - limited landfill capacity for an expanding population;
  - organic material makes up 44% of the waste going to landfills;
  - diverting organic material from landfills is needed to achieve Zero Waste goals, which were established to counter the real dangers of climate change and worldwide resource depletion; and
  - San José should take advantage of regional organic management efforts by joining the other cities in the Bay Area that already have a food scraps/organics collection program.
2. Collect information and public feedback to prepare the next Recycle Plus contracts to meet the Green Vision goal of Zero Waste by 2022. The current Recycle Plus contracts will expire in 2013, absent an extension.

### **How the Food Scraps and Organics Pilot Works**

Organic materials, such as yard trimmings, food scraps, paper napkins, and paper plates, are all compostable items that can be turned into valuable compost instead of being disposed of in landfills. The goal of the Food Scraps and Organics Pilot is to promote the practice of collecting organics for curbside pickup. Due to sanitary concerns with collecting food scraps and organics along with yard trimmings in piles on the street, the use of yard trimmings carts is necessary for curbside collection. Pilot participants who currently dispose of yard trimmings on the street will be required to use a yard trimmings cart. Pilot participants will receive a yard trimmings cart at no charge, and additional carts will be approved as needed. Residents will also receive a kitchen pail and compostable pail-liners to provide a convenient means of collecting organics at home. After collecting organics in the kitchen pail, residents will be asked to place their bagged food waste into the yard trimmings cart for collection on their regular weekly curbside collection day. GreenWaste Recovery, the City's contractor for organics collection and processing, will then compost the yard trimmings, food scraps, and other organics.

### **Selection of Pilot Areas**

Pilot areas were selected according to current Recycle Plus contract provisions and to achieve a broad representation of households citywide. Current contracts limit each pilot to no more than ten percent of the total units served in the city. As a result, the Food Scraps and Organics Pilot includes approximately 5,000 single-family households (2.4% citywide) in Council Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8. Pilot areas were selected based upon the collection day, collection route, proximity to stormwater catch basins, area vegetation, and Council District, and to provide data representative of the entire city. The attached maps identify the neighborhoods selected for this pilot and other pilot programs citywide. Approximately 20% of households already use a cart for yard trimmings collection.

### **Communications Plan**

The launch of the Yard Trimmings Cart Pilot in November 2009 provided valuable information that will be used to ensure a smooth implementation of the upcoming Food Scraps and Organics Pilot. Public feedback facilitated improvements to program operations and outreach methods, and it provided staff with a better understanding of the issues needed to be considered before citywide implementation. Pilot preparations will focus on internal coordination and extensive public outreach and assistance. The following summarizes the key milestones as part of the pilot rollout strategy:

January 19-21	Conduct Trainings for Customer Service Center/Council Staff
Week of Jan. 18	Mail Introduction Packet to Residents
Early February	Host Community Outreach Events in Pilot Neighborhoods
February 15 - 26	Deliver of Kitchen Pails and Yard Trimmings Carts to Residents
March 1	Begin Pilot
March 2010	Transition Period (Both Loose and Cart Collection Provided)

Internal Coordination

Preparation for the pilot rollout includes coordination with Council staff and trainings for the Call Center. Staff met with Council staff in December and early January to review program details and to reaffirm the public outreach plans. Beginning the week of January 18<sup>th</sup>, extensive training will begin for Call Center staff and front line customer service employees. A training session is also being scheduled with Council staff to prepare them to respond to anticipated customer questions.

Public Outreach and Assistance

Official public outreach will begin the week of January 18th with a direct mail packet to residents of the pilot program. The packet includes a letter providing customers with instructions for the pilot program, information on when they should expect delivery of the pail and cart, and a schedule of upcoming public meetings. In response to Council office requests, some areas will also receive information in Spanish and Vietnamese. The packet will also include a survey to allow residents to provide initial feedback about separating food scraps and using a cart system to collect both food scraps and yard trimmings. Additional surveys are planned at the mid- and end-points of the pilot program, and customers can provide feedback at any time by calling the Customer Service Center or submitting an online form. To encourage survey response, customers will be offered a free extra-garbage sticker for returning the completed survey by April 1, 2010.

A series of community meetings have been scheduled prior to the March 1<sup>st</sup> rollout to address customer inquires and concerns. The following table lists the schedule of community meetings. Ongoing outreach events and surveys are also planned to gather feedback at various stages of the pilot program.

<b>Food Scraps and Organics Pilot Community Meetings</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
Wed. January 20 <sup>th</sup>	6:00 p.m.	Cassell Elementary School - Cafeteria 1300 Tallahassee Drive
Mon. February 1 <sup>st</sup>	6:30 – 8:00 p.m.	Edenvale Library 101 Branham Lane East
Tues. February 2 <sup>nd</sup>	6:30 – 8:00 p.m.	Evergreen Community Center 4860 San Felipe Road
Thurs. February 4 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 – 8:00 p.m.	Cypress Senior Center 403 Cypress Ave.
Tues. February 9 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 – 8:00 p.m.	Vinci Park Elem. School – Multi Purpose Room 1311 Vinci Park Way

Throughout the initial months of the pilot, staff and haulers will be especially focused on addressing customer concerns to ensure a smooth transition. The goal is to meet individual customer needs and maintain ongoing opportunities for public input. Periodic updates on the progress of the pilot program, including survey results, will be provided via the City Manager's Office Weekly Report, and, if needed, staff is prepared to hold public meetings to capture additional public input. Staff will continue to identify opportunities at neighborhood association meetings to present and obtain feedback from pilot residents.

### **Anticipated Customer Issues**

As experienced during the November 2009 Yard Trimmings Cart Pilot launch, a large number of customer inquiries are still expected despite implementing extensive public outreach. As with the Yard Trimmings Cart pilot, staff anticipates there will be general inquiries about the pilot program, requests for additional or smaller yard trimmings carts, and questions about the compostability of materials and how to dispose of oversized or extra yard material. There will also be requests from some residents to opt out of the pilot program, as well as requests for special loose in the street collection throughout the duration of the pilot. The following information identifies the solutions in place to address key concerns raised by pilot participants:

*Requests to Opt Out* – Beginning March 1, 2010, residents will be required to use yard trimmings carts to facilitate the collection of organics. To preserve operational efficiencies and the integrity of the pilot program, residents needing yard trimmings collection will not be able to opt out of the pilot. The pilot program is designed to accommodate customer needs as much as possible, including the provision of up to three carts of any size (32-, 64-, 96-gallon) free of charge. Although strongly encouraged, pilot participants will not be required to separate their food scraps and organics, and may continue to place this material in their garbage carts. Staff is committed to meeting the needs of individual residents throughout the pilot program, including providing on-site assistance to those who request it.

*Concerns about Limited Cart Capacity* – To help ease the change to the new program, there will be a transition period in the first month of pilot where yard trimmings will be collected both on-street and in carts. After the transition period, on-street collection will be reduced to once per month to accommodate large prunings that do not fit in the carts, supplementing the regular weekly collection of carts for yard trimmings and organics. To address concerns about reduced yard trimmings storage capacity, residents who routinely have more yard trimmings than will fit in the 96-gallon cart may request additional carts of any size.

*Availability of Disabled On-Premise Service* – Assistance will be available for residents who may have difficulty moving the new yard trimmings carts. These customers may apply for free disabled on-premise (backyard collection) service if they meet eligibility requirements. Disabled on-premise service is a full-service collection method where drivers push the cart between the property and the collection vehicle, and residents are not responsible for curb setout. Such service is provided free of charge to elderly or disabled customers who can demonstrate a special need. Requests for on-premise service require City approval and medical certification.

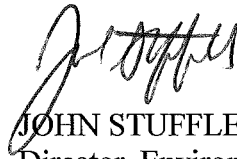
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### **Ongoing Customer Service**

Customer Service Representatives from the Call Center, along with other front line staff, received special training on the *Food for the Earth* program in October. Follow-up trainings have been scheduled to focus specifically on the Food Scraps and Organics program. As with other pilot programs, resident questions and concerns about the pilot programs should be referred to the Call Center at (408) 535-3500 for proper resolution. Escalated calls from Council offices can be re-directed to the pilot program hotline at (408) 975-2526 or the dedicated Recycle Plus public information email hotline, [PublicInput@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:PublicInput@sanjoseca.gov). The Recycle Plus Pilot Program website [www.sjrecycles.org/pilot](http://www.sjrecycles.org/pilot) provides a central clearinghouse for disseminating information about the pilot programs. The public may use the website to find information about their pilot as well as provide feedback through various online input opportunities.



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For questions please contact Donna Perala, Recycle Plus Program Manager, at (408) 975-2511.

#### Attachments:

1. Update on Yard Trimmings Cart and Garbage Processing Pilots
2. Citywide Map of Food for the Earth Pilot Areas
3. Maps of Food Scraps and Organics Pilot Areas by Council District (5 sheets)

## Update on Yard Trimmings Cart and Garbage Processing Cart Pilots

### **1. Yard Trimmings Cart Pilot**

The Yard Trimmings Cart Pilot began on November 9, 2009, which made the use of carts mandatory for yard trimmings collection. This pilot included 4,800 households in Council Districts 3, 6, 7, 9, and 10. Community meetings held during initial pilot launch provided useful feedback that led to improvements to the program. The following provides an update on the pilot and improvements made in response to public input:

**Extended Transition Period** – To accommodate the Fall leaf season, when leaf droppings from trees are the heaviest, on-street yard trimmings collection was extended to three months (November through January 2010).

**Follow Up Community Meetings** – To accommodate on-going feedback and to provide continuing public education about the importance of Zero Waste, follow-up community meetings have been scheduled during the third week of January, as follows:

- \* Tuesday, January 19, 2010 6:30pm – 8:30pm  
Roosevelt Community Center, 901 East Santa Clara Street, Rooms 1 & 2
- \* Thursday, January 21, 2010 6:30pm – 8:30pm  
Cambrian Library, 1780 Hillsdale Ave., Community Room

**Added Public Input Opportunities** – To encourage public participation in the pilot programs, multiple venues have been established to provide convenient opportunities for residents to offer suggestions about the pilot programs. These include the pilot website, email hotline, call center, and direct mailing address to program staff. Additional features on the website include an online comment box for direct feedback and email subscription for periodic updates, while neighborhood organizations can also request a staff presentation using the online tool.

**Collection Calendar** – In December 2009, pilot residents were mailed a quarterly update card and a 2010 collection calendar to inform residents to their monthly loose in the street collection days. The quarterly update also notified residents about the two follow-up community meetings scheduled for January 2010.

**Courtesy Reminder** – In addition to the collection calendar described above, pilot residents will receive a courtesy reminder in mid-January reminding them to begin using the yard trimmings cart if they have not already transitioned to that practice.

**Survey Results – 30% Response Rate** - As an incentive to on-going participation in the Yard Trimmings Cart Pilot, thank you cards and a free extra garbage sticker were mailed to the approximately 1,500 residents who completed the first Customer Satisfaction Survey. The survey measured public opinion on the use of carts for yard trimmings

collection. The same survey will be given at mid-point and conclusion of the pilot program to identify any perception changes towards the cart collection method. The results of the survey by Council District are as follows:

<b>Yard Trimmings Cart Pilot Customer Satisfaction Survey Results (30% Response Rate)</b>								
<b>Survey Question:</b> What is your opinion of the City using green yard trimmings carts to collect yard trimmings rather than collecting the yard trimmings loose in the street?								
Council District	Neighborhood	Opposed		Favor		No Opinion		Total # of Surveys
		%	#	%	#	%	#	
3	Naglee Park	54.8%	177	34.1%	110	11.1%	36	323
6	Willow Glen	50.3%	151	38.0%	114	11.7%	35	300
7	West Evergreen	20.0%	16	66.3%	53	13.8%	11	80
9	Hillsdale	45.1%	194	45.3%	195	9.5%	41	430
10	Almaden	51.9%	154	39.7%	118	8.4%	25	297
<b>Total</b>		<b>48.4%</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>41.3%</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>1,430</b>

## 2. Update on the Garbage Processing Pilot

The Garbage Processing Pilot involves back end processing of garbage by the garbage hauler to recover recyclable material from garbage collected from single-family residences. This pilot required no changes for customers, as the processing of the garbage occurs behind the scenes. The pilot collects an average of 100 tons of material per week. No problems have surfaced since the launch of this pilot program in November 2009. Staff is scheduled to conduct an audit of the pilot operations in January.

# Food for the Earth Pilot Areas

