



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: October 27, 2015

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Environmental Services Division, Finance Department

SUBJECT: Foodscraps Composting Partnership With Downtown Santa Barbara

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive a report from the Environmental Services Manager regarding the City's composting partnership with Downtown Santa Barbara.

DISCUSSION:

In 1989, the State adopted the Integrated Waste Management Act, which required all jurisdictions to divert at least 50% of their waste from landfill disposal. To comply with this law, the City commenced curbside recycling and greenwaste service and worked with MarBorg to construct a facility to process and divert construction and demolition debris. A 2009 study of the City's remaining trash found that the foodscraps and soiled paper represented the largest remaining category of waste (30% by weight) disposed in the business sector. Landfilled organics not only occupy precious remaining airspace, but also generate methane, a potent greenhouse gas. For these reasons, the City initiated collection of source-separated foodscraps from food-serving businesses in November 2009.

There are approximately 500 food-generating businesses and schools in the City. Among this group, approximately 215 subscribe to foodscraps collection. Once collected by MarBorg, the City's franchised waste hauler, the organic material is transported to Engel and Gray in Santa Maria, where it is transformed into a nutrient-rich compost and applied to farms and vineyards throughout the County. The City diverts more than 3,100 tons of foodwaste from landfill disposal each year.

Approximately 150 of the 500 food-generating businesses in the City are members of the Downtown Santa Barbara business improvement district. Establishing new diversion programs at food-generating businesses located in the downtown corridor poses two

primary challenges. The first challenge is accommodating the large volumes of trash, recycling, and foodscrap that these businesses generate, as well as siting separate bins to house the materials on space-constrained premises. The second challenge is reaching decision-makers to promote the benefits of the foodscrap composting program.

Environmental Services has a long history of working with Downtown Santa Barbara members, with 30% currently participating in foodscrap composting. This 30% represents the businesses with ideal conditions for implementing such a program: ample enclosure space to accommodate an additional waste stream and responsive, on-site decision-makers. In 2015, the remaining businesses face significant challenges to foodscrap program implementation.

Recently, however, Downtown Santa Barbara offered their assistance, which has proven invaluable in reaching the more challenging businesses. Specifically, Downtown Santa Barbara distributed foodscrap collection recruitment materials to its food-generating members; connected Environmental Services staff with decision-makers at the businesses; and, consistent with its own sustainability goals, encouraged members to divert foodscrap from landfill disposal. The efforts of Downtown Santa Barbara enable Environmental Services' outreach team to be more effective, putting them in direct contact with business owners and managers, who have already been introduced to the basics of the program.

All foodscrap collected in the City are made into compost by Engel and Gray. The compost is then re-applied to farms and vineyards in the County to help grow new food. Downtown Santa Barbara has also found a way to "close the loop" within its own borders. At the end of summer, the landscape beds that line State Street are worn down by foot traffic, Fiesta confetti, and, in recent years, by drought stress. For this reason, earlier this month Downtown Santa Barbara applied Engel and Gray compost to rehabilitate the landscape beds, many of which are located in front of the very food-generating businesses that supplied the foodscrap as feedstock for the compost.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

There are no financial or budgetary impacts to the City as a result of this action.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

The City collects and diverts approximately 3,100 tons of source-separated foodscrap from landfill disposal each year. A substantial portion of this material is collected by restaurants, cafes, and other eateries located in the Downtown Santa Barbara district. When organic material decomposes in a landfill in the absence of oxygen, methane, a greenhouse gas twenty-one times as potent as carbon dioxide¹, is produced. As a

¹ Landfilling of Waste - California Air Resources Board
<http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/waste/landfillingofwaste.pdf>

result, methane from landfills represents about one (1) percent of the statewide greenhouse gas emission inventory². Oxygen-rich aerobic composting of foodscraps produces a fraction of the greenhouse gas emissions that result from landfill disposal. For this reason, foodscraps composting is listed as one of the City's carbon emission reduction strategies in the City's Climate Action Plan³.

Foodscraps composting also contributes to the overall diversion rate of businesses and schools in the City, accounting for 10 percentage points of the current 34% diversion rate.

PREPARED BY: Matthew R. Fore, Environmental Services Manager

SUBMITTED BY: Robert Samario, Finance Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office

² Ibid

³ City of Santa Barbara Climate Action Plan, September 2012

<http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/services/planning/erd/resource/cap.asp>