Mill + West Valley Pilot Summary

Executive Summary

The Mill + West Valley pilot demonstrates how a technology-forward approach to food scrap recycling can achieve measurable, sustained results in multifamily housing – a setting where traditional organics programs struggle to surpass 10% diversion rate.

Over six months, the pilot showed that the Mill food recycler increased building-level diversion, reduced household food waste, improved resident quality of life, and drove operational benefits — all while requiring minimal ongoing support.

Key Results

- The Mill West Valley pilot achieved a 48% building level participation rate
- Mirroring a trend Mill observes nationally, West Valley households reduced food waste generation by up to 20% over the first five months of use. Post pilot, 79% of surveyed residents said they now view food scraps as more of a resource.
- Mill delivered a 5x increase in multi-family building level diversion, rising from just 6.7% prior to the program to 31.3%.

The Challenge

Multifamily dwellings remain one of the hardest segments for cities to engage in organic recycling programs. Key challenges include small kitchen spaces, concerns about ick factor, and high resident turnover.

In collaboration with West Valley Recycles and HF&H Consultants, the Mill + West Valley Pilot explored how a technology-forward solution can help cities meet ambitious diversion goals and reduce the amount of food sent to landfills.

Across Mill's national customer base, users demonstrate steady participation, near-zero contamination, and durable behavior change. This pilot tested whether these same outcomes could be achieved in a context where residents:

- Received Mill at no (or low) cost to themselves,
- Weren't previously known to be searching for a food scrap recycling solution
- Lived in multifamily housing.

The Pilot Setup

Two multifamily properties were identified to represent typical building characteristics in the region—comparable in size, rent levels, and waste infrastructure. We prioritized selecting properties that were renter occupied, at or below average rent for the area, and with central collection areas (no trash rooms or chutes).

At the treatment site, all residents were eligible to receive a Mill at no cost to them. Residents were then instructed to empty their Mill in the existing compost carts located next to the landfill and recycling carts on the property.

Residents were recruited to participate through a mix of on-site events, physical collateral, and digital communications from Mill and the property manager. During the course of the pilot, Mill provided ongoing recruitment and customer support. The vast majority of residents were unaware of the organics recycling mandate, had never heard of a food recycler, and weren't searching for a food scrap solution – making them a perfect cohort for this pilot study.

Data was collected through three methods: pre- and post-pilot building-level waste audits, Mill's built in scale and sensors which provide real-time insights around engagement and impact, and resident surveys.

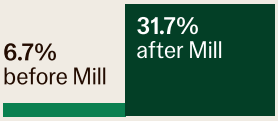
Results and Impact

Participation at the treatment property was strong: **48% of occupied households opted in** to receive a Mill food recycler, despite most residents having little prior experience with food scrap recycling. Once enrolled, residents used the devices consistently and required very little support (only one inbound support ticket over six months).

48%
of occupied households opted in

Over the course of the pilot, participating households added **over 2,000 pounds** of food scraps to their devices—**an average of 0.5 pounds** per household per day—aligning closely with Mill's national benchmark for multifamily customers. **Building level diversion improved fivefold, from 6.7% to 31.3%,** while the control site's diversion declined over the same period.

Building Diversion



Residents reported noticeable quality-of-life improvements: **93%** said Mill made managing food scraps easier and less unpleasant and **93%** reported taking out the trash less frequently. **Half of surveyed participants** said they ate more fruits and vegetables during the pilot because food scrap management felt cleaner and simpler and 79% said they now view food scraps as a resource rather than waste. By month five, participating households had reduced their food waste generation by up to **20%.**

Operationally, residents and property management observed cleaner waste areas, fewer pests, and a drop in overflowing landfill carts. Compost cart cleanings were rarely needed — saving staff time and improving building hygiene.

Lastly, 100% of survey respondents said they would continue using their Mill.

Conclusion

The Mill + West Valley Pilot shows that Mill's technology-forward solution can drive measurable diversion and complement existing collection systems. Mill simplifies separation, eliminates odor and mess, and provides clear data on diversion and engagement.

For cities aiming to meet state and local mandates, Mill offers a scalable, resident-friendly tool that catalyzes household behavior change and reduces operational strain. This pilot makes the lesson clear: when food recycling is the easiest option, residents use it.

"My maintenance guy used to have to clean out [the compost bins] and wash them out. And now, we haven't been doing that...hardly ever."

– **LOU Y.**, Property Manager

"When you go to the trash, there's not a bunch of food sitting up there on top of it getting attacked by flies. That is a noticeable change."

– **RUDY C.**, Program Participant

"[Mill] lessens the weight of trash [and use of bags] thereby reducing the amount of trips to the dumpster (especially since I live upstairs)."

– **GEN C.**, Program Participant