

Organics Management Guide Submission

Name: Emma Tyler

Title: Municipal Partnerships

Organization: Mill

Email Address: katieg@mill.com

Website: https://www.mill.com/lp/municipalities?srsltid=AfmBOopxV7sRJP-P6ULYsyfseBKEG-4mCoE5EcGOij8V_uUQkrX34Os

Select the Primary Entity Type Please identify the category that best represents your project: Other

Other (please specify): Private / Municipal Partnership

Questions:

- 1. Background: Provide context for the program, project, or policy — why it was developed, when it began, and the problem or opportunity it addresses.**

Food scrap diversion in multifamily housing has historically underperformed compared to single-family programs, with many jurisdictions struggling to exceed 10% diversion despite years of education and outreach. In West Valley, California, this challenge reflected common barriers in multifamily settings, including limited kitchen space, odor concerns, contamination risks, and inconsistent participation. To address these structural and behavioral barriers, Mill partnered with the West Valley Solid Waste Management Authority and HF&H Consultants to pilot a technology-forward solution combining in-home food scrap recyclers with targeted outreach and community-based social marketing. The six-month pilot was designed to test whether this integrated approach could meaningfully increase diversion and sustain behavior change. A pre-program waste audit established that only 6.7% of building-generated food scraps were being properly diverted at the treatment site, underscoring the need for intervention

- 2. Summary: Briefly describe the initiative, including its goals, location, and primary outcomes.**

The Mill + West Valley Pilot was conducted at a multi-family building in Campbell, California (58 occupied households), with a comparable control site in Los Gatos, CA. Participating households received a Mill in-home food recycler at no cost and ongoing onboarding support. Over the course of the pilot, 48% of households enrolled. Building-level food scrap diversion increased fivefold, from 6.7% at baseline to 31.3% by the conclusion of the program.

3. Percent of Overall Diverted Material: If available, include data or estimates on the portion of the community or organization's total diverted material no longer associated with the waste stream that this program or policy addresses.

Prior to implementation, only 6.7% of building-generated food scraps were diverted to organics. After implementation, the building recycled approximately 103 pounds of food scraps per week out of an estimated 327 pounds generated weekly, resulting in a 31.3% building-level diversion rate. This represents a fivefold improvement in overall diversion performance.

4. Key Program Elements or Policy Provisions: Describe the structure and main components of your program or policy. Explain the investments origins (who, how much). Please include as many of the following elements as applicable: What types of materials are being managed? (e.g., surplus recoverable foods, food scraps, wasted food. How are these materials managed? Who is responsible for managing them? (Organizations, agencies, businesses, or other entities) What products are generated, and how are they utilized or managed? (e.g., compost, animal feed, energy products) Who funds the management of these materials? (Funding sources, grants, partnerships) Who generates these materials? (Identify the origin: households, institutions, businesses, etc.)

The program focused on managing residential food scraps generated by multifamily households. Participating residents used Mill's in-home food recycler to dry and grind wet food scraps into lightweight Food Grounds, reducing volume and odor before placing the material into the building's organics bins. Mill devices reduce food scraps by roughly 80% in size and weight, improving cleanliness and ease of handling. Mill provided the devices, onboarding, technical support, and device-level mass tracking, while the West Valley Solid Waste Management Authority partnered on program design and oversight. Property management played a critical role in communication and site coordination.

Over the course of the pilot, residents added approximately 2,075 pounds of food scraps to their devices, averaging 0.5 pounds per household per day. Materials ultimately entered the local organics processing stream, contributing to composting outcomes. Participating households received devices at no cost during the pilot, enabling evaluation of adoption and diversion performance in a government-sponsored context.

5. Regulatory Impact: Describe how laws, policies, regulations, and/or code have affected your program or project. This may include positive, negative, or neutral impacts. Consider noting which regulations apply, how they influenced implementation or operations, any challenges or barriers encountered, and how compliance requirements shaped program decisions.

The pilot aligns directly with California's SB 1383 mandate, which requires a 75% reduction in organic waste disposal by 2025. The regulatory framework created urgency for jurisdictions to improve multifamily diversion, a historically underperforming sector. The pilot demonstrates how in-home infrastructure can complement traditional collection systems and help jurisdictions meet statutory diversion requirements.

6. Measurable Increase in Supply: Include data or qualitative outcomes showing growth in collection, diversion, or reuse volumes if available.

The program produced measurable increases in organics diversion. Building-level diversion rose from 6.7% to 31.3%, and participating households consistently added an average of 0.5 pounds of food scraps per day to their devices. Importantly, diversion remained steady throughout the six-month period rather than declining after initial enrollment, suggesting durable behavior change. These increases reflect both higher capture rates and more consistent participation in organics management.

7. Behavior Change: Describe whether the initiative resulted in measurable behavior change and explain how you determined this. If behavior change occurred, outline the strategies that proved most effective. Please include any available data or evidence that supports your findings.

The initiative resulted in measurable and sustained behavior change. By month five, participating households had reduced food waste generation by up to 20% mirroring a behavior change trend Mill observes in the national user base. Seventy-nine percent of surveyed residents reported that they now view food scraps more as a resource than as waste, and 93% stated that Mill made food scrap management easier and less unpleasant.

Notably, 100% of surveyed participants indicated they planned to continue using Mill after the pilot concluded. Effective strategies included in-person outreach, hands-on onboarding, property manager endorsement, and eliminating common barriers such as odor and mess. The combination of infrastructure and behavioral reinforcement proved critical to sustained engagement.

8. Benefits and Impacts (Economic, Environmental, and Social): Describe the economic, environmental, and social sustainability impacts of the program, policy, or initiative. This may include both positive and negative outcomes. You may address impacts such as costs or savings, job creation, waste reduction, emissions, resource conservation, community engagement, equity, or public health. Please include data or qualitative observations where available and note any trade-offs or challenges.

Environmentally, the pilot achieved a fivefold increase in diversion and demonstrated up to a 20% reduction in household food waste generation. Reduced contamination was also observed, consistent with Mill's national contamination rate of 0.1%. Operationally, the share of residents observing overfilled landfill carts declined from 33% pre-program to 8% post-program, and property management reported significantly reduced compost bin cleaning and maintenance needs. These improvements suggest potential labor and cost savings at the property level. Socially, residents reported meaningful quality-of-life improvements, including fewer trips to the dumpster and cleaner kitchens. Half of surveyed participants reported eating more fruits and vegetables during the pilot, attributing this change to easier food scrap management. Challenges included space constraints in smaller kitchens and the need to address tenant turnover with continued education

9. How Stakeholder Buy-In Was Achieved: Explain how the program gained support from key stakeholders (e.g., government agencies, businesses, residents, nonprofits).

Stakeholder buy-in was achieved through early collaboration between Mill and the West Valley Solid Waste Management Authority, careful site selection to ensure representativeness, and strong engagement from property management. In-person outreach proved especially effective in building trust and addressing resident concerns. Property manager communications lent legitimacy to the initiative and reinforced

participation as a community norm. Demonstrating both environmental and operational benefits helped secure ongoing support.

10. Stakeholders' Perspectives and Dynamics at Play: Highlight collaboration dynamics, challenges, or differing stakeholder interests and how they were addressed.

The pilot required alignment among residents, property management, the municipal authority, and Mill. Residents prioritized convenience and cleanliness, property management focused on operational efficiency, and the municipality sought measurable progress toward SB 1383 compliance. Tenant turnover posed an ongoing engagement challenge, but proactive property management helped sustain participation. The use of device-level measurement strengthened credibility among stakeholders by providing precise, longitudinal diversion data.

11. Lessons Learned: Share what worked well, what didn't, and recommendations for others seeking to replicate your approach.

The pilot demonstrated in-home technology can support increased diversion in multi-family settings, addressing some of the key behavioral barriers that prevent participation. Precise device-level data proved more reliable than point-in-time visual waste audits for measuring performance. Future programs may achieve even higher participation by integrating devices as standard amenities at move-in, normalizing food scrap recycling as a built-in community practice. Overall, the pilot shows that multifamily diversion rates can move from single digits to nearly one-third building-wide when infrastructure and behavioral strategies are aligned.