

MEMORANDUM

Public Works Department



DATE: May 21, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

THROUGH: Steve McHarris, City Manager *Steve McHarris*

FROM: Tony Ndah, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: Solid Waste Collection Assessment of Single-Family Households

Executive Summary

Senate Bill 1383 (SB 1383), which becomes effective on January 1, 2022, mandates jurisdictions to divert organic waste from the landfill by requiring all residents and businesses to collect organic waste, such as food scraps. This informational memorandum outlines steps staff is taking to prepare for SB 1383 by assessing the current waste collection system implemented for single-family households. The assessment will consist of data collection through lid-flips of recycling and food scraps containers of single-family households and an online resident survey. The results of the assessment, which will be shared with the Council, will inform outreach and education strategies to encourage successful recycling and food scraps program participation.

With a focus on single-family households and partially due to the Pandemic, multi-family dwellings and commercial businesses will be assessed in 2022 as required by SB 1383.

Background

According to the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), organic waste makes up two-thirds of California's waste stream. Organic waste (such as green waste, food waste, paper, and cardboard) that is landfilled undergoes anaerobic breakdown, which creates methane, a more powerful greenhouse gas than CO₂. Landfilled organic waste is a significant source of air quality pollutants and contributes to climate change. California recognized the negative environmental impacts of landfilled organic waste with the passage of SB 1383 in 2016. In an effort to reduce greenhouse emissions, SB 1383 directs jurisdictions to divert organic waste from the landfill by requiring organics collection to all residents and businesses and to ensure collection compliance.

In anticipation of the SB 1383 organic waste diversion requirement, the contract with Milpitas Sanitation, Inc. (MSI) required MSI to immediately implement food scraps collection for all single-family homes in Milpitas by providing a split cart container to collect trash on one side, and food scraps on the other. Additionally, split cart recycling containers (paper/fiber on one side, metals/plastics/glass recyclable items on the other) are also provided to all single-family homes with garbage container service. This is an important program that is intended to provide cleaner materials to maximize recyclability of materials and reuse/diversion of food scraps.

Analysis

Prior to SB 1383 becoming effective, staff will assess the current waste collection system through a visual assessment of recycling and food scraps containers (i.e., "lid flips") of single-family households and an online resident survey. The assessment will determine baseline participation in the recycling and food scrap programs; identify reasons for, and issues preventing participation in the programs; pinpoint issues to improve participation in the programs; and assess attitudes toward the value of, and satisfaction with, all waste collection services.

Visual Assessment of Recycling and Food Scraps Containers

Lid flips consist of staff members checking a random sample solid waste and recycling containers to perform visual assessments on the contents prior to collection. This method allows for observing baseline participation in the recycling/food scraps programs, identifying contamination, assessing issues related to the recycling containers and food scraps side of the garbage containers, and noting the presence and prevalence of overfilled/underfilled containers.

Online Resident Survey

Alongside the lid flips, surveying single-family residents determines the self-reported baseline participation in the recycling and food scrap programs, and identifies the self-reported reasons for, and barriers to, participating in the programs. The survey will include the following topics:

- Participation in the recycling and food scraps programs (frequency, fullness);
- Perceptions of the recycling and food scraps programs;
- Reasons for, and barriers against, participation in the programs;
- COVID-19 impacts to waste generation;
- Awareness of, and participation in, existing curbside programs (bulky item collection, household battery collection, used motor oil collection, cooking oil collection);
- Satisfaction with curbside services;
- Questions, compliments, or concerns about collection service;
- Sources of information used by residents; and
- Demographic information.

The survey will be promoted through social media (Facebook and Nextdoor), the City's sustainability newsletter (Sustainable Milpitas), and the City's email list serves, and other communication channels.

Next Steps

Staff will work with Gigantic Ideas Studio (GIS) to release the survey through Survey Monkey for a duration of three weeks during the latter part of May. Once the survey ends, GIS will compile and analyze responses and will review findings with City staff. The lid flips are planned to take place during the week of May 24th, and staff will coordinate messaging with MSI in case residents contact the hauler about seeing staff assess their waste on collection day. Survey results, along with the lid flips review, will be used to inform outreach and education strategies to encourage successful recycling and food scraps program participation, and will be shared with the Council.

With a focus on single-family households and partially due to the Pandemic, multi-family dwellings and commercial businesses will be assessed in 2022 as required by SB 1383.