Compost Pilot Program at Multi-resident Apartment

Erin Fabris
Sustainability Coordinator, Housing, University of Southern California
Outline

1. Background
2. Set-up and implementation
3. Results
4. Takeaways and next steps
University of Southern California recently adopted goal of 75% waste diversion from landfill by the year 2020.

California Assembly Bill 1826 – mandatory organics recycling

Interest from student body – 95% of students think it is important that USC address its impact on the environment.
Players

Residential Education

Housing

Sustainability
Building

Parkside Apartments
- 5 floors
- 140 units
- 250 residents
- Apartment style units
- Trash room on each floor
Set-up

**Collect**
Food scraps in kitchen caddy in apartment

**Transport**
Food scraps in compostable bags to trash room (one on each floor)

**Deposit**
Compostable bag into compost bin in trash room

**Replenish**
Caddy with compostable bag from dispenser located in trash room
Implementation

Residential Education

- RA’s trained on program
- Maintenance team trained on program
- Education tabling session
- Tabling session in lobby, handed out kitchen caddies

Project proposed

Materials purchased and placed in building

Summer 2015

Education tabling session, collected feedback from residents

Fall 2015

Spring 2016

Summer 2016

Project maintenance

Housing
Results

Have you been diverting your food scraps using the compost caddies?

- Yes: 64%
- Started, then stopped: 15%
- No: 10%
- Didn't know about the program: 10%

How satisfied are you with the food compost program?

- Very satisfied: 26%
- Satisfied: 51%
- Neutral: 21%
- Dissatisfied: 3%
- Didn't know about the program: 3%
Takeaways

What worked

- Faculty-in-residence
- Apartment style units
- Building set-up

Needs improvement

- Education
- Language
- Meal plans
Next Steps

Continue the program in the fall, using feedback from residents to improve

Expand program into other residences
- 10 on-campus
- 33 off-campus
Thank you!

Erin Fabris  
Sustainability Coordinator, USC Housing  
University of Southern California  
efabris@usc.edu | (213) 740-5279
Appendix Slides

1. Tabling in Lobby
2. Signage
3. Signage
4. Compost Signage
5. Recycling Signage
6. Landfill Signage
7. Survey Results
8. Survey Results
9. Survey Results
10. Survey Results
Tabling in Lobby
Signage

STOP. THINK. SORT.
Compost Signage
Recycling Signage
Landfill Signage
How often do you empty your food compost caddy into the building's green compost bin?

- Just about every day: 3%
- 3 or 4 times a week: 5%
- 1 or 2 times a week: 23%
- About once every 2 weeks: 18%
- About once every month: 36%
- I don't compost: 15%
Survey Results

I would compost more if..... *select all that apply*

- I had a better understanding of what is compostable: 41%
- I had a better understanding of: 31%
- I wasn't concerned about odor: 23%
- Composting was cleaner: 23%
- Composting was easier: 23%
- I regularly compost my food scraps: 18%
- I wasn't concerned about pests: 18%
- Other: 15%
- I saw the benefits of composting: 13%
- Composting took less time: 13%
- I knew more about the program: 13%
Would any of the following measures encourage you to compost more? Select all that apply.

- More materials (compost caddies, bags, etc.): 41%
- More information on which materials are compostable: 38%
- Incentives to compost (money, prizes, etc.): 36%
- Implementing a system that is more intuitive/easier to use: 33%
- More information on the benefits of composting: 33%
- More information on the program: 26%
- Other: 5%
To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the compost pilot program in your building?

A. I understand what food is allowed in the green compost bin
B. Other residents in my building understand what is allowed in the green compost bin
C. The program reduces mess in my kitchen
D. The program reduces odors in my kitchen
E. The green compost bin has a convenient location
F. The system is easy, clean, and convenient