



MEMORANDUM

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

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To: The City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity
From: Luke Knapp, Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Date: January 30, 2020
Subject: Oakland Recycling Operations

At the January 13 meeting of the City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity, a request was made for more information on Oakland, California's recycling policy, particularly in reference to Oakland's bin size, outreach, and enforcement policies. Oakland's recycling practices increased in scope in 2015, when the Oakland Recycles program launched. Below is more information on this program and the City of Oakland's policies regarding enforcement, regulation, and outreach.

Expanded Services

When Oakland Recycles launched in 2015, it significantly expanded Oakland's recycling and waste collection operation. The Texas-based corporation Waste Management was contracted as its exclusive provider of trash and composting services, the Oakland-based company California Waste Solutions was contracted as its exclusive provider of recycling services, and the local nonprofit Civicorps assists with composting services as well.

Adding composting services for all residents was a significant expansion (previously only single-family homes automatically received composting pickup). The City began providing every multi-family building with a green compost bin, and instructions on how to properly sort compost, recyclables, and garbage. Property managers are additionally provided with free kitchen pails and recycling caddies for their tenants. The City also expanded its customer service features with customer call centers established throughout the city. Bulky item pickup expanded to every housing unit, up to 1.5 cubic yards in size, as well as more dates throughout the year for free bulky item drop off.

Outreach

Oakland Recycles prioritized outreach to multi-family apartment buildings. Oakland Recycle Ambassadors are employed to perform a free evaluation of a multi-unit building's current trash, compost and recycling output and the appropriate corresponding service. Property managers are also provided with:

- Free property manager toolkit.
- Free resident toolkit.
- Property owner/manager checklist, including a Move In/Move Out Resource letter to all residents, an optional pledge for residents to sign indicating their promise to

recycle and compost correctly, and “What Goes Where” posters for the building’s common areas.

Costs/Fees

To cover the expense of the expanded recycling services, the City increased the fees for carts at single-family, multi-family, and business properties. Surcharges and fines also increased for overages and contamination. Below is a chart that shows the fees associated with contamination in bins at single- and multi-family homes.

Incident	1-2	3 Within 6 months of 1 st incident	4 Within 6 months of 3 rd incident	5+ Within 6 months of 4 th incident
Result	\$0 (Warning)	\$25	\$50	\$50

For businesses, the business will receive a warning letter for 1-4 incidents, and on the 5th incident will have its service discontinued.

Impact

The Oakland Recycles program began as part of Oakland’s Zero Waste goal, which was adopted in 2006. The plan emphasized education and outreach to multi-family buildings – a focus on building-type rather than geographic area. The emphasis seemingly has paid off, as a 2018 Alameda County waste characterization study found that food, food-soiled paper, and plant debris in the garbage had decreased by 28% since the previous study in 2008. The study also found that the residential sector had made significant progress towards reducing recyclables and organics in garbage, with a 41% overall decrease since 2008. The focus on multi-family residential buildings is also clear as the commercial sector showed mixed results - decreases in food, food-soiled paper, and plant debris in garbage, but increases in other recyclable materials found in the garbage.

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