



A Public Agency

# PUBLIC EDUCATION, OUTREACH AND LEGISLATION





## STAFF REPORT

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**To:** RethinkWaste Board Members  
**From:** Joanna Rosales-Jose, Outreach & Communications Manager  
 Lina Pietrzyk, Public Outreach Fellow  
**Date:** June 27, 2024 Board of Directors Meeting  
**Subject:** Public Spaces Diversion Program Review and Future Program Goals

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### Recommendation:

This staff report is for discussion purposes only and no formal action is requested of the Board of Directors.

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board and the public with a review of the Public Spaces Diversion Program, a workplan, and its future goals.

After launching two successful pilots in two Member Agencies in 2018, the Public Spaces Pilot expanded to a full program in the FY 19/20 budget, and staff collaborated with another five member agencies. The Public Spaces Diversion Program slowed down and paused due to staff turnover in early 2023. With the hiring of a Public Outreach Fellow in late 2023, staff can reprioritize diversion in parks and downtown corridors. As a result of a discussion at the March 2024 Board of Directors/Technical Advisory Committee/Contracting Partners Retreat, staff received feedback to revive the program through outreach strategies and Member Agency collaboration.

This staff report outlines the workplan to guide next steps, outreach strategies, and how we will measure success.

### Analysis

The relaunch of the Public Spaces Diversion Program will expand waste management standards enforced at residences, businesses and schools into the public sphere to strengthen agency messaging and goals associated with proper waste diversion. The Public Spaces Diversion Program will be revived in three significant ways—1. by reengaging with Member Agency staff to identify diversion opportunities in public spaces, 2. by implementing a tailored multi-level outreach plan for participating Member Agencies, and 3. by monitoring and tracking progress of the program. Staff will use both learned best practices and new strategies.

Staff created the below workplan to guide next steps, outreach strategies, and measures of success.

#### **1. Re-engaging with Member Agency staff to identify diversion opportunities in public spaces**

Staff will connect with relevant city departments through Board or TAC members and offer to collaborate on a pilot project as a limited scope, cost-effective method for introducing a 3-bin waste system in public spaces. In a fiscal

year, the current Public Spaces Diversion budget could cover as much as the following, dependent on the involvement level of the Member Agency:

- Bins/bin systems
- Bin signage design, printing and installation
- Staff time to facilitate Recology service changes
- Monitoring services (waste audit data)
- Outreach to inform the public of bin changes and proper sorting

One important strategy of the Public Spaces Diversion Program is to encourage standardization of signage in public spaces across the Agency's entire 100-square mile service area so that residents can experience consistency in public signage and the RethinkWaste outreach. Graphic 1 shows one style of signage for a 3-bin system that staff updated this year to align with agency messaging. Earlier this year, signage was provided to Burlingame Parks Department upon request. The signage update fee was covered entirely by RethinkWaste, and the printing fee was split 50/50 with the City of Burlingame.

Graphic 1:



## 2. Implementing a tailored multi-level outreach plan for participating member agencies

In collaboration, staff and Member Agency department staff will utilize existing agency or departmental media resources (social media, newsletters, etc.) to announce upcoming changes to infrastructure and methods in public

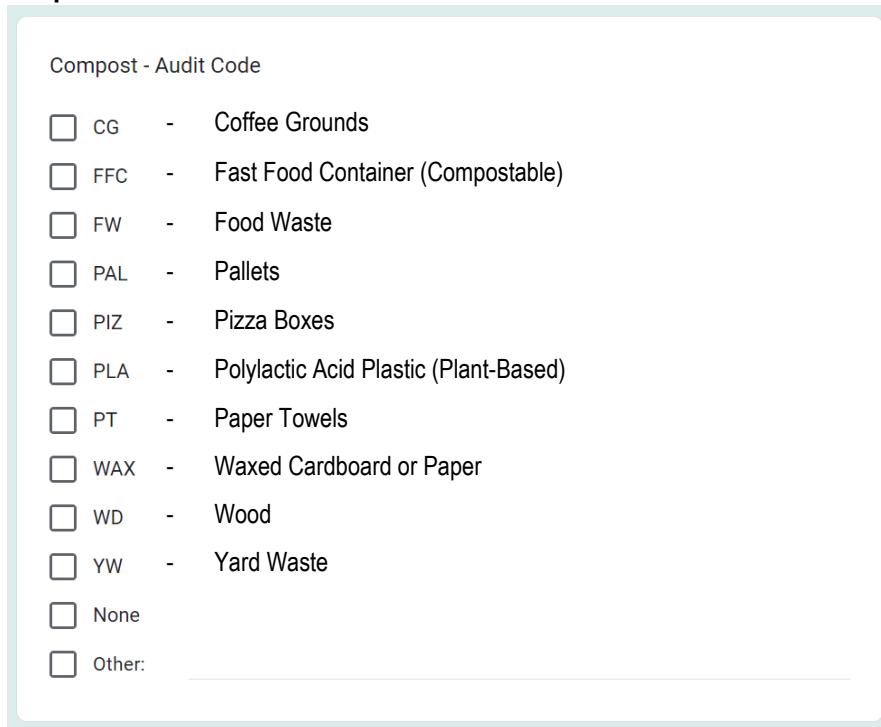
spaces prior to the launch of a pilot. Concurrent with the pilot launch, staff, with facilitative assistance from Member Agency departments, will launch a proper sorting campaign localized to the pilot area. Pre-designed/approved outreach materials are available for Member Agency use and may include:

- Agency and City newsletter articles or op-eds
- Posters/Banners
- Ads (local stations, movie theaters, etc.)
- Onboarding of local businesses, downtown associations, and other relevant groups
- Event assistance
- Social media

### 3. Monitoring progress of the program

The success of the Public Spaces Diversion Program will be based off the amount of recyclable and compostable material diverted from the landfill. This will be measured through waste audit data, which will include weight and content metrics. **Graphic 2** shows a section of the RethinkWaste waste audit form, which requires the identification of a list of codified items in a certain waste stream. This waste audit process was taught by the Recology Waste Zero Team to staff. A pre-pilot waste audit will be performed to establish baseline metrics for a public space. At outreach milestone dates, waste audits will be repeated to assess the success of components of the outreach campaign coinciding with the pilot project. All collected data will be analyzed and shared with collaborating Member Agencies via status reports.

#### Graphic 2:



Compost - Audit Code

- CG - Coffee Grounds
- FFC - Fast Food Container (Compostable)
- FW - Food Waste
- PAL - Pallets
- PIZ - Pizza Boxes
- PLA - Polylactic Acid Plastic (Plant-Based)
- PT - Paper Towels
- WAX - Waxed Cardboard or Paper
- WD - Wood
- YW - Yard Waste
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Background

In line with RethinkWaste's 2021-2024 Long Range Plan, the Public Spaces Diversion Program focuses on increasing diversion in public spaces such as parks and downtown corridors, reducing litter, expanding opportunities to engage the public, and reinforces proper sorting messaging.

In 2017, staff met with TAC members and related departments to discuss each of their initiatives and processes of their public spaces. Staff also met with Recology and local organizations to build foundational program knowledge before launching the pilot. After identifying common issues, offering pilot options to Member Agency staff, and gathering feedback through a survey, staff launched the Public Spaces Pilot in Redwood City and San Carlos with the focus on receptacles and signage, as they were voted highest among all issues by Member Agency staff.

From 2018 to 2019, the pilot installed compost and recycling receptacles in four parks and tested four types of signage: simple, comprehensive, images only, and text only (refer to Graphic 3 below). After staff conducted pre- and post-implementation waste audits and gathered feedback from parkgoers, the data concluded that Comprehensive signage with images, text, and colors provided the best motivator and education for parkgoers to sort properly.

**Graphic 3:**



The Public Spaces Pilot expanded into a full program with the approval of the FY 19/20 budget. Staff engaged with more Member Agency staff to gauge interest of standardized signage and continued to track the progress of the receptacles and signage implemented for the pilot. Following the approval of the program, staff went on to collaborate with the cities of Belmont, Burlingame, East Palo Alto, Foster City, and San Mateo by providing standardized signage, collecting data through waste audits, and conducting presentations about the Public Spaces Diversion Program and proper sorting.

This program addresses policy needs to meet the state requirements of State Bill (SB) 1383 and Assembly Bill (AB) 341 with their mandatory compost and recycling goals.

**Fiscal Impact**

The Agency has allocated \$30,000 in the adopted CY 2024 budget for Public Spaces Diversion-related projects and materials.