



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

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CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Date: September 16, 2025

Subject

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Cupertino and other local public agencies in Santa Clara County to fund the Composting Education Program in the amount of \$9,186.90 (January 2026 – June 30, 2027, with an option for a two-year extension).

Recommended Action

Authorize the City Manager to execute an MOU between the City of Cupertino and other local public agencies in Santa Clara County to fund the Composting Education Program and allocate \$9,186.90 from Resource Recovery Fund 520 for Cupertino's share of program costs for the term January 2026 – June 30, 2027, with no impact to the General Fund.

Executive Summary

The Composting Education Program (CEP) has been operating in Santa Clara County in collaboration with the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) staff since 2014 and was supported by the County Solid Waste Planning Fee (SWPF). Due to declining SWPF revenue, interested jurisdictions propose to continue the program and fund the activity through an MOU. The term of the MOU is January 2026 – June 30, 2027, with an option to extend for two years with execution of a written amendment by all participating parties. Cupertino's contribution will be a total of \$9,186.90 for the initial term. This MOU will allow continued access to workshops, technical support, community engagement, and master composter training. The activities will be funded by the City through Resource Recovery Fund 520, with no impact to the General Fund. This program supports the requirements of SB1383 (California's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy), Climate Action Plan 2.0 action W-2 to reduce overall waste, and action 11 of the City's Zero Waste Policy to "continue to provide incentives and public training to support proper and effective backyard composting."

Background

The CEP supports waste reduction goals of both Cupertino and the County by engaging the community in sustainable waste management practices. Residents attend in-person classes where they are educated about home composting and are encouraged to turn food and yard

waste into a nutrient-rich soil amendment that benefits their gardens and landscapes. In 2024, the CEP conducted 37 compost workshops, 21 events, and worked at 24 schools across Santa Clara County, including two events hosted in Cupertino. Fifty-two Cupertino residents attended workshops in 2024, up from 41 in 2023. The CEP also presented to a McClellan Ranch summer camp, regularly staffs a table at the Cupertino Earth & Arbor Day festival, and presents to students in Cupertino Union School District, most recently at Eaton Elementary School in early 2025.

The Composting Education Program has historically been funded by the Solid Waste Planning Fee (SWPF) which is assessed on each ton of waste disposed of in a landfill in Santa Clara County. In 2016, California Senate Bill 1383 (SB 1383) was adopted, setting goals to reduce the disposal of organic waste in landfills in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The successful implementation of SB 1383 organics diversion programs has significantly reduced landfill disposal tonnage countywide, causing SWPF revenue to decrease. At the same time, the costs of the programs have been increasing.

With reduced SWPF revenues and rising costs, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the Santa Clara County Recycling and Waste Reduction Commission (RWRC) needed to find alternative funding avenues to continue providing access to this program. The SWPF revenues alone will not be sufficient to support the future of the CEP.

The cities of Cupertino, Gilroy, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, and the County of Santa Clara expressed interest in continuing to provide composting education services to residents by jointly funding the cost of the CEP through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The CEP MOU was reviewed and accepted by the RWRC on August 27, 2025.

Reasons for Recommendation and Available Options

The MOU will ensure the ongoing operation of the CEP for participating jurisdictions that provide their respective share of costs to fund the program. The MOU's funding will support 0.5 FTE for a program coordinator. The program coordinator will collaborate with UCCE staff to develop curriculum and training materials for master composter volunteers who deliver the training to the public.

The term of the MOU is January 2026 – June 30, 2027, with an option to extend for two years with execution of a written amendment by all participating parties. The MOU will be administered by Countywide Solid Waste Services, which currently provides contract and administrative services for the TAC to the Santa Clara County RWRC.

Below is a summary of services that will be provided under the scope of the MOU.

- Educational Outreach and Workshops
 - Workshop delivery – at least 25 workshops across the County, including 3-6 workshops specifically in the Central area of the county.
 - Community engagement – participation in 15 community events across the County, including some in Cupertino, such as Earth and Arbor Day Festival.

- School composting education and support – support at least ten K-12 schools, 1500 students, and installation of compost systems in up to five K-12 schools (countywide).
- Technical Support and Services
 - Direct assistance – referrals, online requests.
 - Resource distribution – inform participants about access to free compost bins for Cupertino residents who complete trainings.
- Program Development and Expansion
 - Regulatory compliance outreach – develop and expand outreach on SB1383 requirements, organic waste recycling, food waste reduction, and curbside collection.
 - Demonstration site operation and enhancement
 - Master composter volunteer training

Cost Sharing

The CEP costs are based on population. The total amount for the term of the MOU is \$233,785.54 (\$116,892.77 in FY 2025/26 and \$116,892.77 in FY 2026/27). The City of Cupertino's portion of the MOU is a total of \$9,187 for the initial term of the MOU. Contributions are roughly based on the percentage of county population in each jurisdiction applied to an original program cost that assumed participation from all jurisdictions. The City of Cupertino share is 3.93% of the program after adjustments to remove non-participating jurisdictions.

Based on the findings outlined above, staff recommends that City Council authorize the City Manager to execute the MOU to fund the CEP, which provides workshops and education about home composting provided by the UCCE that directly supports the City's waste reduction goals by engaging the community in sustainable waste management practices.

Sustainability Impact

Composting education supports:

- The City's Climate Action Plan 2.0 action W-2 to reduce overall waste disposed to garbage, recycling, and compost.
- Compliance with SB1383, California's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy by providing resources and training to keep food scraps and other organics out of the landfill.
- Action 11 of the City's Zero Waste Policy to "continue to provide incentives and public training to support proper and effective backyard composting."

Fiscal Impact

The City of Cupertino's portion of the MOU is a total of \$9,187 for the initial term of the MOU. These funds will come from Resource Recovery Fund 520 using G/L 520-81-801 700-702 with no impact to the General Fund. If approved, staff will bring a budget adjustment in Q1 or as needed.

City Work Program (CWP) Item/Description

None

Council Goal:

Composting education supports the City Council goal of Environmental Sustainability.

California Environmental Quality Act

No California Environmental Quality Act impact.

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Reviewed by: Chad Mosley, Director of Public Works

Floy Andrews, Interim City Attorney

Approved for Submission by: Tina Kapoor, Interim City Manager

Attachments:

A – FY 25-27 Draft MOU