





## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**Through:** Susana Carbajal, Assistant City Manager 

**From:** Richard McHale, Director, Austin Resource Recovery 

**Date:** May 12, 2026

**Subject:** **Austin Resource Recovery Multifamily Compost Update**

---

The purpose of the memorandum is to provide an update on the implementation of the Universal Recycling Ordinance's compost requirements for multifamily properties.

### Background

There are more than 2,100 multifamily properties in Austin, where an estimated half-million Austinites (more than half of the city's population) now live. As the City strives to reach zero waste, multifamily resident participation is a crucial piece of the success of the composting collection requirement. This change ensures residents in multifamily communities and single-family homes have similar access to composting services.

In October 2019, Austin City Council passed [Resolution No. 20191017-028](#), starting the process of amending the Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO) to include organic waste collection at multifamily properties. Austin Resource Recovery staff conducted a pilot to test composting at eight multifamily properties between March 2021 and February 2022. Residents who participated in the pilot program reported using it often and said the educational materials provided were useful. Property managers did express concerns about cost, and staff found that costs averaged between \$0.80 and \$2.95 per unit per month.

In Fall 2023, City Council passed [Ordinance 20230921-004](#) requiring composting collection at multifamily communities. These requirements went into effect on October 1, 2024.

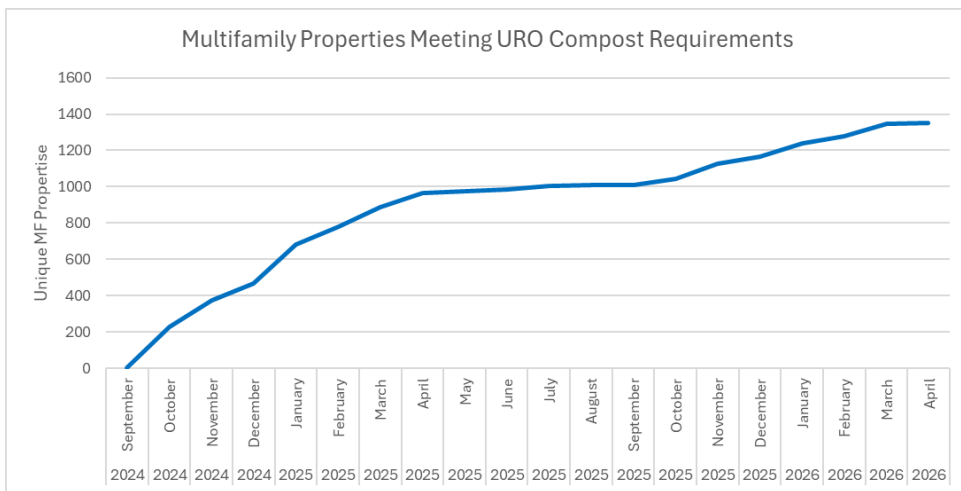
### Outreach and Compliance

All multifamily properties received notices in July 2024 about new compost requirements. Austin Resource Recovery continues to provide annual outreach to remind properties to add compost service and submit their annual [online recycling plans](#) to demonstrate compliance and provide usage data. A property that has compost on-site but does not complete the online report is considered non-compliant. While it is common for staff to visit a multifamily property due to lack of an online report, staff confirms compliance by observing on-site composting.

**Date:** May 12, 2026  
**Subject:** Austin Resource Recovery Multifamily Compost Update

Over the past two years, approximately 65% of Austin’s multifamily properties have reported meeting the minimum requirement of at least one gallon of compost service per unit per week. Growth is expected in the coming years, as the program matures, to align with the recycling service compliance rate of 74%. Anecdotal evidence from City staff indicates that high turnover in multifamily property managers from year to year can lead to inconsistent reporting each year, despite service level remaining intact.

Austin Resource Recovery has a team of six staff members that support ordinance implementation and education. This team works directly with non-compliant properties that are identified through self-reporting, public complaint, or by staff. This team responds to an average of over 4,000 phone calls and emails from property managers each year. To date, staff have worked directly with 185 multifamily properties that reported not meeting compost requirements, focusing on providing education and seeking voluntary resolution with the property manager to reach compliance.



As part of ordinance requirements, property managers must educate their residents and employees about composting. Austin Resource Recovery’s Public Information and Marketing Division offers several educational resources in multiple languages to help properties meet this requirement by providing flyers, posters, videos, and email templates. The department maintains dedicated webpages to keep [property owners/managers](#) and their [residents](#) informed. In Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026, Austin Resource Recovery implemented strategic campaigns to inform and equip properties, encourage resident participation, and collaborate with the Austin Apartment Association. See Attachment 1.

One effective way Austin Resource Recovery engages communities to increase resident awareness and participation in composting is through the [Zero Waste Block Leaders](#) program. Zero Waste Block Leaders are voluntary community members who share information with their neighbors about recycling, composting, repurposing, and repairing. As Zero Waste Block Leaders, they have direct access to Austin Resource Recovery staff and informational materials to teach, encourage, and empower their neighbors.

**Enhanced Enforcement**

In October 2025, the Commercial Compliance Unit transitioned from Austin Resource Recovery to Austin Development Services Code Compliance. To support enforcement operations, Code Compliance expanded staffing with a new supervisor and an additional Code Officer. Additionally,

**Date:** May 12, 2026  
**Subject:** Austin Resource Recovery Multifamily Compost Update

over the past six months, Code Compliance has established and operationalized a structured URO enforcement program, including dedicated staffing, standardized case tracking, and coordinated workflows with Austin Resource Recovery.

In Fiscal Year 26, Austin Resource Recovery transferred 130 multifamily properties to Code Compliance for non-compliance. To date, 29 of those properties have achieved compliant compost service, while the remaining cases are actively progressing through the enforcement pipeline. Code Compliance has shifted from an education-first model to a more proactive enforcement approach, including direct engagement with property management, issuance of Notices of Violation, and progression toward legal escalation, if necessary.

Prior to transferring noncompliant properties to Code Compliance, Austin Resource Recovery staff works with property owners or managers to achieve compliance or provide a waiver if warranted by their circumstances. Properties that refuse to come into compliance or do not communicate in a timely manner are transferred to Code Compliance for enforcement. This transition represents a significant step toward consistent and equitable enforcement of URO requirements across multifamily properties.

### **Looking Forward**

Austin Resource Recovery, in coordination with Austin Development Services Code Compliance, will continue working with noncompliant properties with a dual focus on education and enforcement. While initiatives such as the Zero Waste Block Leaders program will support resident awareness and access to composting services, enforcement efforts will prioritize timely case progression and accountability.

To improve efficiency, Code Compliance is evaluating opportunities to streamline enforcement processes, reduce the number of required notices, and accelerate cases towards resolution. Properties that fail to achieve voluntary compliance will be prioritized for enforcement and resolution with staff support, ensuring consistent application of the ordinance and improved compliance outcomes.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Gena McKinley, Deputy Director of Austin Resource Recovery at [gena.mckinley@austintexas.gov](mailto:gena.mckinley@austintexas.gov) or (512) 974-1915.

Attachment 1: Multifamily Composting Marketing Tactics

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Erika Brady, City Clerk  
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor  
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk  
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court  
CMO Executive Team  
Department Directors

# Multifamily Composting: Marketing Tactics



PAID	OWNED	EARNED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Billboards</li><li>• Public bus ads</li><li>• Signs in grocery stores</li><li>• Radio spots</li><li>• Targeted email blasts</li><li>• Digital display ads<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Standard</li><li>◦ Geofenced</li></ul></li><li>• Industry publication</li><li>• Newspaper ad</li><li>• TV live appearances</li><li>• Social media ads</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Austin Recycles e-news</li><li>• Department blogs (Road to Zero Waste)</li><li>• Enhanced webpages and digital resources</li><li>• Organic social media</li><li>• Routine emails to management</li><li>• Targeted emails to property managers near Resource Fairs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Host summer series of Zero Waste Resource Fairs in key locations</li><li>• Collaborate with multifamily resident volunteers (Zero Waste Block Leaders)</li><li>• Co-host industry webinars with the Austin Apartment Association</li><li>• News media outreach</li><li>• Guest on ATXN City podcast</li><li>• Content in other City departments' public newsletters</li><li>• Content in City internal newsletters</li></ul>

1



Paid Marketing: CapMetro bus ads (Summer 2025)



Paid Marketing: Sign in grocery store near multifamily properties (Winter 2026)

**Date:** May 12, 2026  
**Attachment 1:** Multifamily Composting Marketing Tactics



Paid Marketing: Billboard campaign (Spring 2026)



Earned Marketing: Zero Waste Resource Fair South Austin Recreation Center (Summer 2025)



Earned Marketing: Zero Waste Resource Fair Dittmar Recreation Center (Summer 2025)