





# Memorandum

**TO:** Kevin J. Jackson, Village Manager 

**FROM:** Lindsey Roland Nieratka, Chief Sustainability Officer 

**FOR:** Village President and Board of Trustees

**DATE:** October 3, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Environment and Energy Commission recommendations regarding the Village of Oak Park's composting program.

---

## Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to advise the board of recommendations made by the Energy and Environment Commission at the September 3, 2024 meeting to expand drop-off locations for the Village of Oak Park's compost program.

## Background

The Energy and Environment Commission's (EEC) 2024 work plan includes the project "Community Waste Reduction Program" which included the proposed outcome of recommending a policy to the Board of Trustees to achieve universal composting. At the September 3, 2024 meeting, the EEC reviewed and voted to approve a memorandum with Commission recommendations related to the existing CompostAble program. The EEC's memorandum is included as an attachment and summarized below.

## History of the CompostAble Program

The Village's CompostAble program is available to single-family through five-flat households and has more than a 25% participation rate. For residents in properties with six or more units, the property management company may provide composting services through their existing waste hauler or, if unavailable, through the Village's refuse hauler at a Village negotiated rate. Residents in a building without composting services may compost using one of five Village provided compost drop-off locations. A map of locations is provided in Attachment 2. The Village promotes the CompostAble

program through social media, OP/FYI, and direct community engagement such as tabling at events.

Staff have previously explored opportunities of switching the CompostAble program from an opt-in program to an opt-out program or a universal program during the 2021 waste hauling contract bidding process. At that time, the Village did not identify a contractor who would be willing to provide opt-out services. Pricing for universal composting programs was gathered as an alternate option to the current opt-in model. At the time, the EEC recommended and the Village Board determined to keep the existing opt-in model for the Village's composting program option as a universal program would require additional conversation with the community because of the added cost and impact to the customers who had not previously opted-in to the program. The current refuse hauler's contract expires in 2027 and the Village will request pricing for universal composting along with pricing for continuing the current opt-in program when seeking bids for a new contract.

### **EEC Recommendations**

The attached EEC memorandum includes the following recommendations:

- Expand the number of compost drop-off sites from five to ten, prioritizing locations which are not near current locations.
- When selecting locations, pursue partnerships with grocery stores, faith institutions, parks, and libraries.
- Increase awareness of the program by partnering with the school districts or local art institutions to have youth and artists paint the bins.
- Install signage at key locations around the community with information about the program and drop-off locations.

The Commission's recommendations align with the Climate Ready Oak Park actions:

- ZW03. Promote strategies to reduce waste and increase awareness of Village composting and recycling services to residents, schools, and other institutions.
- ZW04. Conduct an outreach and educational campaign to increase knowledge and access to affordable waste reduction options for youth, lower-income residents, and underrepresented populations.
- OW04. Add community food scrap collection and compost pickup sites in lower-income areas.

### **Next Steps:**

The EEC will continue to review options for waste reduction in the Village as proposed in the Commission's annual work plan.

For questions, contact Lindsey Roland Nieratka, Chief Sustainability Officer, via email at [lnieratka@oak-park.us](mailto:lnieratka@oak-park.us) or by phone 708-358-5785.

**Attachments:**

1. EEC Memorandum August 20, 2024
2. Oak Park Compost Drop-Off Sites

**cc:** Lisa Shelley, Deputy Village Manager  
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager  
Christina M. Waters, Village Clerk  
All Department Directors

## Memorandum

To: Oak Park Village Board of Trustees

From: Environment & Energy Commission

Date: August 20, 2024

Subject: Composting Program

---

Dear Board of Trustees:

There has been growing interest and urgency in the Oak Park community in expanding our composting program from the current opt-in model to a universal model. When food waste decomposes in landfills, it's a significant source of methane, an extremely potent greenhouse gas. A [report from May 2024](#) conducted by the nonprofit, Industrious Labs, reveals that methane emissions from landfills is vastly underestimated. The nonprofit, [Project Drawdown](#), has identified reducing food waste as one of the most impactful actions individuals can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Oak Park's composting program has been quite successful relative to many other municipalities in the state, but we can do better. Only about one third of eligible households currently participate in the program. Additionally, Climate Ready Oak Park has identified composting as an important part of the village's overall plan to reduce emissions and become more sustainable.

While the current contract with Lakeshore Recycling Systems doesn't expire until 2027, we have options in the short term to respond to community calls for a more robust composting program. The EEC proposes launching a pilot program to significantly increase public food scrap drop-off sites. The village currently only has five public drop-off sites, primarily concentrated in north Oak Park, meaning we have significant gaps in the locations served by this program. Additionally, there's a lack of awareness within the community of the public food scrap drop-off program, and the bins can be difficult to find even when people have arrived at the locations.

The EEC recommends using funds available through the environmental services department to double the number of drop-off sites, expanding to 10 locations across Oak Park, prioritizing underserved areas. With respect to the selection of locations, we recommend pursuing potential partnerships with grocery stores, churches and other faith institutions, and looking into possible locations at parks and libraries. The locations must be accessible to cars and LRS trucks.

We believe there is an opportunity to build awareness and community engagement by partnering with D97 and D200, or local arts institutions, to have local artists and youth paint the compost bins. Not only will this make the bins more aesthetically pleasing, but they will also be

more clearly identifiable for residents using the program, so they can quickly find the correct bins. Incorporating a public art project into the rollout of the expanded drop-off program gives the village an opportunity to make it an educational outreach event. Additionally, to drive more awareness and easier access to information about the drop-off sites and the CompostAble program, we recommend the village install signing at key locations around the community (parks, libraries, schools, etc.) with a QR code that directs people to the map of the drop-off locations on the Village of Oak Park website.

It's clear that Oak Park can do more to reduce food waste and encourage residents to compost. And research shows food waste has a greater climate impact that we previously thought. As we move closer to 2030 and the goals set forth in Climate Ready Oak Park, we urge the Board to consider moving forward with programs that will help us continue to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The EEC recommends launching a pilot program to expand our public food-scrap drop-off sites as a first step, as we move toward a universal composting program.

Thank you,  
Environment and Energy Commission



# Oak Park Compost Drop-Off Sites



**YARD WASTE/COMPOST**

**Look for the gray carts and food-scrap compost drop off sign at all five locations**

- 1010 N. Ridgeland Ave.** North Water Pump Station near the corner of Ridgeland and Berkshire
- 1125 Ontario St.** Holley Court Parking Garage at the Marion Street entrance/exit near the bicycle racks
- 720 North Blvd.** Avenue Parking garage near the main entrance
- 102 N. Lombard Ave.** Adjacent to the Central Water Pump Station
- 207 Garfield St.** Adjacent to the South Water Pump Station

**Kitchen compost pails** are now available for purchase at the Village Hall cashier's window for \$10

