



Implementing Multifamily Composting: Challenges and Opportunities

John Forde

Resource Manager/Essex Property Trust



California Senate Bill 1383

Multifamily Dwelling Generator Requirements:

- Starting September 2020, commercial businesses and multifamily dwelling of 6 or more units generates over 2 cubic yards of municipal solid waste per week, they must recycle their organic waste.
- Due to the pandemic, the state has not been enforcing the regulation, but plan to start in early 2022.
- Essex has 186 multifamily properties in CA and are working to meet SB1383 requirements



Multifamily Building Types

Garden-style communities:

- Trash/recycling enclosures too small: buildings-built pre-2000
- Distance to enclosures
- Rodent issues
- Mid-rise/Hi-rise communities:
 - Single chutes
 - Chute termination rooms too small for compost bins
 - Odor problems: Compost smells if located inside buildings



Resident Acceptance

- **Resident turnover:**
 - Educating new and existing residents
- **Resident cost increases:**
 - Costs are allocated across all residents
- **Lack of infrastructure**
 - Again, compost bin access locations
- **Multiple language barriers:**
 - Material in several languages
- **Residents currently challenged to place the right materials in the container**
 - trash/recycling/cardboard bins



Maintenance Staff

Staffing Issues:

- High maintenance staff turnover:
 - Maintaining awareness of regulations
- Coordination with municipalities and haulers
 - Adequate number/size and location of compost containers
- Sufficient labels and colors: resident awareness
- Regulation compliance/recordkeeping:
 - Tracking service levels/results
- Work related injuries



Property Ownership Issues

Adding compost increases operating costs:

- Hauler fees increase 3-6%/yr.
- Potential loss of parking stalls
- Enlarging trash enclosures to accommodate compost

On-site team management:

- Additional time to manage compost along with other responsibilities

Resident communication:

- Create materials to place in trash areas



Marketing

Marketing materials:

- Haulers/state develop materials with consistent messaging
- Property owners can access and post in compost locations
- Information provided to residents consistently (RentCafe)

Municipalities/Haulers:

- Dedicated staff to assist multifamily owners to implement services



Multifamily Compost Benefits

Corporate Social Responsibility:

- Include compost management in annual reports
- Messaging to residents and staff that we “do the right thing”
- Education to residents: will accept composting when they move to other apartments or home ownership
- If done right, we can reduce costs (maintenance labor, optimized services, etc.)
- Zero Waste Facilitators assistance:
 - Fees involved but they are the experts and can assist



The Bottom Line

Work with property owners during the development of regulations to make it easier for them to incorporate composting along with other trash/recycling services