



Blossom Hill Estates San Jose, California

50% and 65% Waste Reduction Rate



A California law requiring all cities to divert 50% of their solid waste by 2000 led the managers of Blossom Hill Estates to city hall to try to fight recycling. When they realized they could not, they decided to implement a strong model program. Now, working with the recycling program is one of the highlights of their job. Residents of the two complexes that comprise Blossom Hill Estates recycle over 50% of their solid waste. The first complex began recycling in 1993; the second began in April 1997. Since implementing recycling, Blossom Hill Estates I and II have reduced total disposal costs by 40% and 41% respectively.

Program Description

In San Jose, Green Team, a local company contracted by the city, provides multi-family dwellings with sets of three specially marked 96-gallon bins: one for newspaper; one for mixed paper; and one for other mixed recyclables. At Blossom Hill Estates, residents bring recyclables to bins kept next to the trash containers in outdoor trash corrals. Building maintenance staff bring both trash and recycling containers into the alley once a week on pick-up day.

Since 1980, CMS Properties, a local landscaping company, has taken care of all the landscape work at Blossom Hill Estates II. CMS brings yard trimmings to a commercial composting company and then buys back finished compost for its landscaping work. There is no landscaping at Blossom Hill Estates I.

When recycling began at Blossom Hill Estates II, the first of two complexes to recycle, building managers sent residents information about what and how to recycle. After two months, managers sent letters to every household that had not recycled properly. Letters explained that

residents should recycle, what they should recycle, and how and where to do it. Staff identified "violators" by going through trash bags and finding an item with the resident's name on it. Reaching a 50% diversion rate took a year.

When the program began at the second complex (Blossom Hill Estates I), whenever the trash container was full and recycling containers were not, management staff sent a letter to every resident in the complex as well as to the landlord explaining the recycling program and encouraging residents to recycle. After two months, managers began a new tactic. Now, if they find a lot of recyclables in

Materials Collected

Newspaper
Corrugated cardboard
Mixed paper (magazines, catalogs, paper bags, telephone books, paperboard, colored and white paper, envelopes, mail, paper egg cartons)
Glass containers
Cans
Juice and milk cartons
Plastic bottles and jugs
Polystyrene packaging
Scrap metals (including aluminum foil and pie pans, metal can lids, small metal appliances, hubcaps, metal pots)
Textiles
Yard trimmings

trash from a particular household, they send that resident and the landlord a letter. The letter contains notice of a \$30 fine for not recycling as well as an explanation that if a resident can recycle properly for 90 days, the resident does not have to pay the fine. Residents reached a 50% diversion rate within 90 days of program implementation.

Outreach Activities

At both complexes, building managers spend time with residents going through residents' trash, explaining what is recyclable, how to prepare it, and where to put it. In addition, building management staff send informational mailings to every household and the landlord three times per year.

Costs/Benefits

Start-up costs were minimal. Operating costs, including mailings to every resident three times per year, are also low. The city provides recycling collection containers, and does not charge extra for recycling services. The trash fees MFDs pay cover recycling services. Trash fees have been fairly consistent from 1993 to 1997. During the first year of program implementation at Blossom Hill Estates II, building management spent \$2,000 on stamps sending letters to all residents.

Total disposal and composting costs at Blossom Hill Estates II were \$77,500 per year before the recycling program; total trash and waste reduction costs dropped by 41% to only \$45,300 in 1997. Disposal costs at Blossom Hill Estates I were \$67,000 per year before the recycling program; trash and diversion cost \$40,000 in 1997, representing a 40% reduction in costs.

In total, Blossom Hill Estates avoids almost \$60,000 per year on disposal costs and diverts more than 50% of its waste at a cost of less than \$14,000.

Of the money that Blossom Hill Estates pays for landscape services, approximately \$1,100 per month is for composting services.

Tips for Replication

- Show owners that they can realize big savings through recycling.
- Educate people on what needs to be done and why. Explain that nobody is making more land for landfills. Recycling will help the environment.
- Help people learn. Show them how to prepare recyclables. Work with people.

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Program Summary

	Blossom Hill Estates II		Blossom Hill Estates I	
Start Date	1993		1997	
Type of Multi-Family Buildings	4 units per building, 86 buildings in complex		4 units per building, 98 buildings in complex	
Households Served	344		392	
	Before Recycling	1997	Before Recycling	1997
Total Waste Generated (Tons)	595	595	624	624
Disposed	520	208	624	312
Diverted*	75	387	0	312
Total Diverted (%)	13%	65%	0%	50%
Recycled*	0%	52%	0%	50%
Composted*	13%	13%	0%	0%
Average Generation (lbs./HH/day)	9.5	9.5	8.7	8.7
Disposed	8.3	3.3	8.7	4.4
Diverted	1.2	6.2	0.0	4.4
Fees per Year	\$77,472	\$45,336	\$67,200	\$40,133
Disposal	\$64,272	\$32,136	\$67,200	\$39,504
Diversion	\$13,200	\$13,200	\$0	\$629
Net Costs per HH per Year	\$225	\$138	\$171	\$102
Disposal services per HH	\$187	\$93	\$171	\$101
Diversion services per HH	\$38	\$45	\$0	\$2
Savings per HH		\$87		\$69

HH = household

Note: Numbers may not add to total due to rounding.

*ILSR estimated tons recycled and composted. Recycled tonnage was set equal to the reduction in trash disposal at Blossom Hill Estates during the period studied. ILSR converted volume of yard trimmings to weight using the following conversions: 1 cubic yard brush = 300 lbs.; 1 cubic yard of grass clippings = 702 lbs.