



SALLIE ALCORN
Houston City Council Member
At-Large, Position 5

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The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

As the City of Houston continues to grow, so do the needs of our residents and neighborhoods. The Solid Waste Management Department (SWMD) is applying for the USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction Pilot Program to help bolster Houston's goals of reducing the environmental impacts of solid waste disposal by improving the diversion rate of food waste generated through the solid waste program.

Specifically, our proposed program will have three main objectives: 1) engage with communities through online and broadcast media, printed messages, and education on food waste and composting; 2) expand municipal food waste drop-off facilities in collaboration with the Houston Independent School District, non-profit urban food production organizations, and for-profit food waste composting organizations; and 3) provide home composting kits free of charge to residents upon completion of applicable training.

In 2021, I joined with private and non-profit entities to launch the city's first composting drop-off pilot program at three locations throughout Houston. The six-week program diverted nearly 14,500 pounds from the landfill. Pre- and post-pilot, we gathered data through a digital survey. Of the participants surveyed, 77 percent responded this was their first time composting, 82 percent agreed the pilot impacted what and how they thought about food waste, and 95 percent planned to continue composting. To continue educating Houstonians about composting, in 2022, we held a pumpkin drop-off from November 1 to November 4. During that four-day period, another 10,000 pounds of pumpkins were diverted.

Houston residents, businesses and institutions generate approximately 6.2 million tons of municipal solid waste per year. Municipal solid waste landfills are the third-largest source of human-related methane emissions in the United States. This grant will help expand composting education and opportunities while reducing the emission of greenhouse gases in Houston, aligning with the city's Climate Action Plan, Resilient Houston, and SWMD's long-range plan.

Thank you for considering the city's grant application and supporting our vision for a sustainable future. Together, we can transform Houston into a thriving eco-friendly city that sets an example for others to follow. Let's compost for a greener tomorrow!

Warm regards,

Sallie Alcorn