



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

September 3, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As Houston grows, so do the needs of our residents and neighborhoods. Our Solid Waste Management Department (SWMD) is applying for a USDA Composting and Food Waste Reduction Grant 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 has four main objectives:

- 1) Reduce the amount of food waste generated by residents and businesses through public outreach and public education.
- 2) Enhance the productivity of city facility community gardens serving disadvantaged communities by delivering compost produced from food waste.
- 3) Lessen the amount of residential food waste entering landfills by providing convenient drop-off location throughout the city.
- 4) Reduce the amount of food waste deposited in landfills by other organizations.

In 2021, I joined with private and non-profit entities to launch the city's first composting drop-off pilot program at three Houston locations. 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 it was their first time to compost, 82 percent agreed the pilot impacted their thoughts about food waste, and 95 percent planned to continue composting.

Additionally, SWMD joined with my team to hold a pumpkin drop-off from November 1, 2022, to November 4, 2022, at the City of Houston Reuse Warehouse. During that four-day period, we diverted nearly 10,000 pounds of pumpkins from the landfill. We repeated the pumpkin program in 2023 for an extended period and collected 14,000 pounds.

Earlier in 2024, we partnered with SWMD and a local composting company to host a six-week food waste drop-off program. Between January 22 and February 29, residents had the opportunity to drop off food scraps at four different city facilities. Through this initiative, 262 residents participated and over 9,800 pounds of food waste was diverted from the landfill.



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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 reduce food waste by expanding 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. Let's compost for a greener tomorrow!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sallie Alcorn".

Sallie Alcorn