



Memorandum

TO: Finance Committee

FROM: Michael Peters, Sustainability Coordinator

CC: Mayor David E. Weiss
Matt Carroll, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 17, 2026

RE: **Request for Approval of Citywide Food Waste Collection (Composting) Program**

Background

The City began collecting food waste (that is subsequently composted into soil) in 2019 through various programs, including a public drop off site and an initial pilot at Fire Station 1. This has grown to today's programs that include:

- six public collection points (the five elementary schools and the Main Library),
- a separate program that collects food waste from the majority of the City Schools,
- an additional three paid drop off sites in the City (The Dealership, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, and The Nature Center), and ,
- a paid opt-in residential pick up program for residents.

This has resulted in total collected food waste of over 600,000 pounds per year since 2022.

The current citywide program originated in a pilot in the Lomond neighborhood, which collected over 30,000 pounds and led to the Sustainability Committee recommending a citywide program starting in 2025. An allocation of \$75,000 was included in the 2025 City Operating Budget for this purpose in addition to a small allocation in the Sustainability budget for collection in City buildings.

The citywide program, which began on April 22, 2025, collected 138,517 pounds from 1,155 participating households. The first month saw nearly 800 households sign up and we continue to have new participants joining each month. This food waste is estimated to create 307 cubic yards of finished soil.

There are no known vendors offering food waste collection services in our region aside from Rust Belt Riders and therefore competitive bidding is requested to be waived. The City has had a very positive working relationship with Rust Belt Riders since 2019.

CITY OF SHAKER HEIGHTS

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shakeronline.com www.shaker.life

Recommendation

The Finance Committee is requested to recommend entering into a new 1-year contract with Rust Belt Riders for the food waste collection program in an amount not to exceed \$125,000. This amount has been identified in the 2026 Operating Budget.

At the February 12th meeting of the Sustainability Committee, a motion was made to recommend that City Council approve the contract. The Committee noted the success to date of the program including the amount of food waste collected and the number of households engaged and active in the program. The motion carried unanimously.

Upon recommendation, this request will be sent to City Council for final approval.

Please also see the attached year-end report from Rust Belt Riders for additional program results.

Shaker Heights City-Wide Composting Program 2025 Year-End Report



Mayor Weiss adding the first food scraps to the new bins at the Shaker Library

First Year Statistics

Shaker Heights' full, city-wide municipal composting program with Rust Belt Riders **opened on Earth Day, April 22nd, 2025**. It includes 5 elementary school sites and the main library branch. Prior to this, the program began as a pilot site at Lomond Elementary, where enrollment was limited to the immediate neighborhood.

In only 8 months of the free Shaker Composting Program being open, we saw

- **1155 households** participating
 - Many new to the practice of composting
- **138,517 lbs. (69.26 tons) of material collected** in the municipal program to date
 - This equals **307 cubic yards of soil** created
 - This equals **60.65 tons of carbon emissions** offset

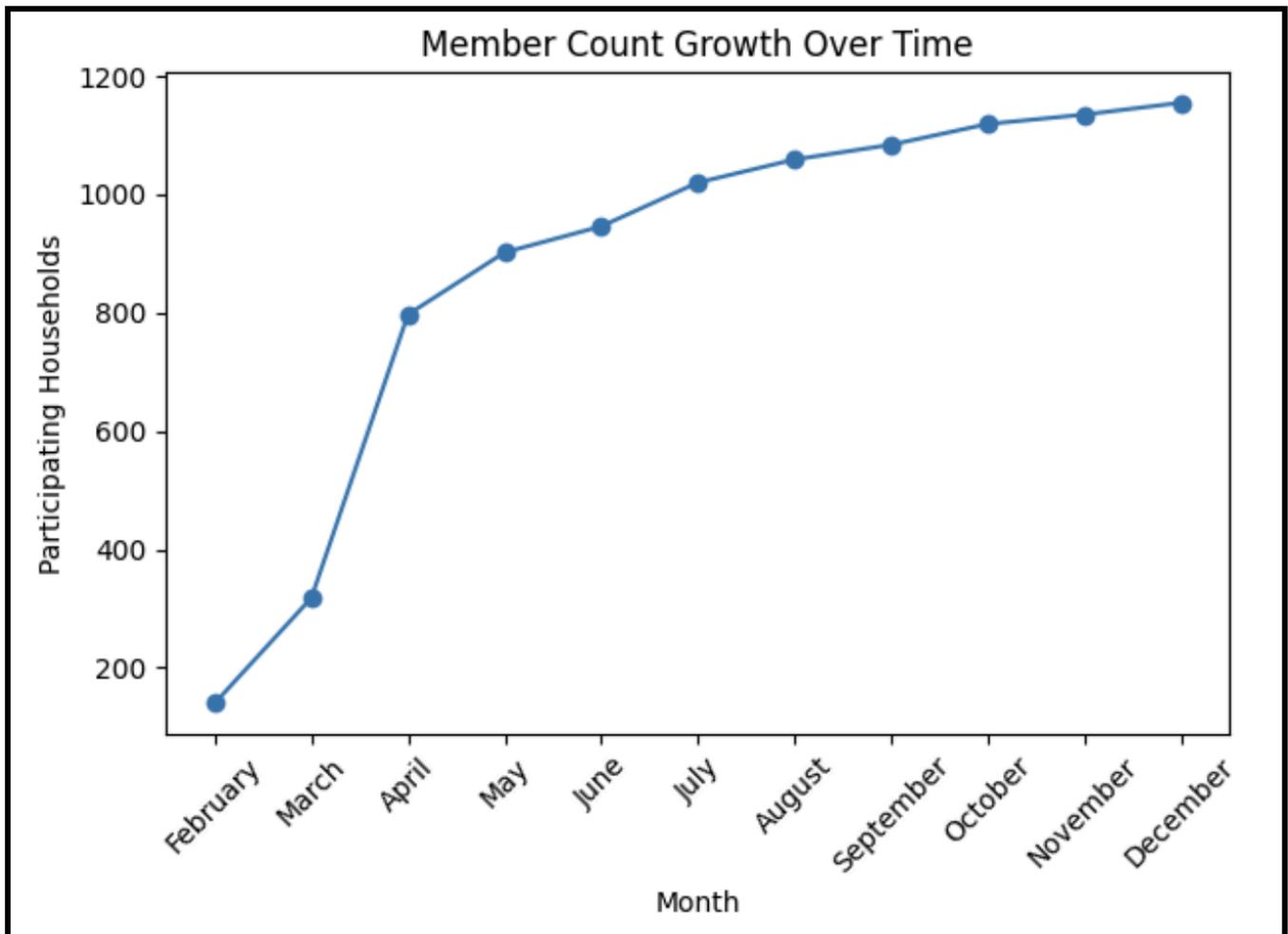
- Average of **over 17,000 lbs. collected monthly!**



Growth! Before and After

After the program became **free for residents through city funding**, we saw a **huge increases in participation and diversion**.

Participation went **from 129 households in the Lomond pilot to over 800 households in the first month** that city-wide service opened. After 9 months, we are up to **1155 households (see graph below)**:



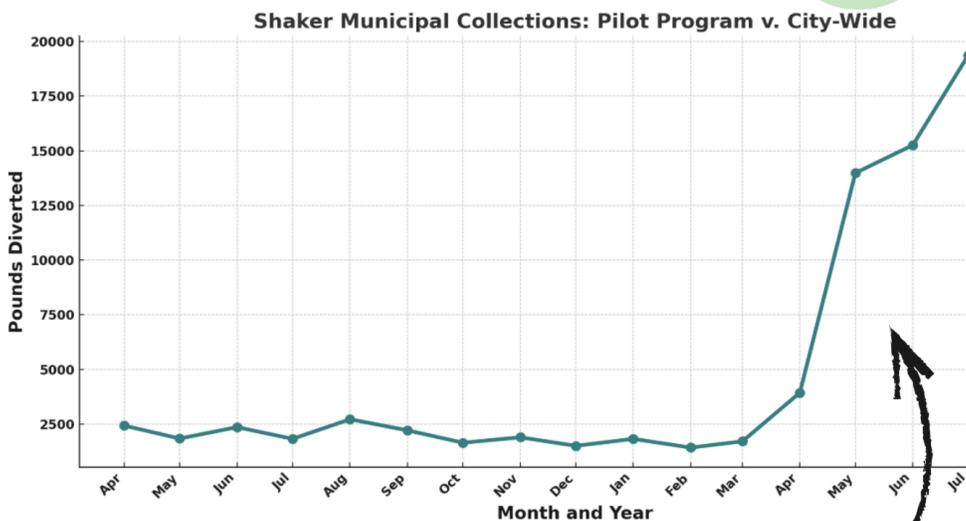
Material collection increased more than 7x.

The increase in participation has been matched with an even greater increase in diversion. Shaker went from collecting **an average of 1,950 lbs. of food scraps per month to 16,600 lbs. per month** (see graph below):



Shaker is City-Wide!

Free access at 6 new sites resulted in a huge increase in material diverted.



BEFORE

Pilot program averaged 1,950 lbs./month

AFTER

City-wide averaging 16,600 lbs./month

City-wide service increased collections 7x!

Monthly collection statistics continue to climb!

April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	TOTAL
797	902	946	1,020	1059	1084	1119	1135	1155	1155
38	81	88	95	106	93	99	86	134	820
3,935	13,985	15,259	19,375	17,765	15,400	16,027	15,521	21,250	138,517

Testimonials

The residents of Shaker Heights LOVE this program! Here is some feedback:

We love this new free program! We had always supported composting in theory but had never done it at home or participated in a program. But we signed up as soon as we heard about the free program in Shaker, and have been using it easily ever since. We just use an old lidded bucket to collect at home, and then carry it over to the collection location when full - so convenient! –Emily

I'm so happy that the City of Shaker Heights is collaborating with Rust Belt Riders to bring the composting program to our community. My trash is nearly half of what it was prior to using the service. Any small thing we can each do to help the planet does make a difference. –Jane

I was thrilled to see Shaker was offering free composting services. We were already paying for drop off service, but the new locations are much closer to home. No more 15 minute walks in freezing weather just to drop off compost! It's a no-brainer way to reduce emissions and I'm proud to live in a community that is focused on sustainability and the future. –Janelle



New accessible bins at the library



Ribbon-cutting for the Shaker Library Site



Rust Belt Riders extends our sincere thanks to the City of Shaker Heights for its leadership and commitment to sustainability. In just eight months, the free Shaker Composting Program engaged 1,155 households, many composting for the first time, and diverted 138,517 pounds (69.26 tons) of food scraps from landfill. That material is being transformed into an estimated 307 cubic yards of finished soil, avoiding over 60 tons of carbon emissions.

These early results demonstrate the power of municipal partnership and community participation to deliver meaningful environmental impact. We are excited to continue this wonderful program in 2026.

Thank you!

Natalie Senturk, Robert Kurtz, and the entire Rust Belt Riders Team