



SHAKER HEIGHTS

Memorandum

TO: City Council

FROM: Michael Peters, Sustainability Coordinator

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

DATE: February 23, 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 roughly 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.

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

CITY OF SHAKER HEIGHTS

3400 Lee Road Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120 P 216.491.1400 F 216.491.1465 Ohio Relay Service 711
shakeronline.com www.shaker.life

Request

The Sustainability Committee expressed strong support for the program and pointed to the success of both the households engaged and the amount of food waste collected. It unanimously recommended approval by City Council.

The Finance Committee likewise shared unanimous support for continuing the program, with Citizen Member Martin Kolb recounting how several of his neighbors had expressed their appreciation for the program.

City Council is requested to authorize an appropriation of \$125,000 from the General Operating Fund for the contract with Rust Belt Riders for the 2026 Citywide Composting Program.

This action is requested to be approved on first reading and as an emergency to allow for signature by the Mayor of the contract as Rust Belt Riders has continued to operate the program since the last contract expired on December 31, 2025.

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 city-wide, 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

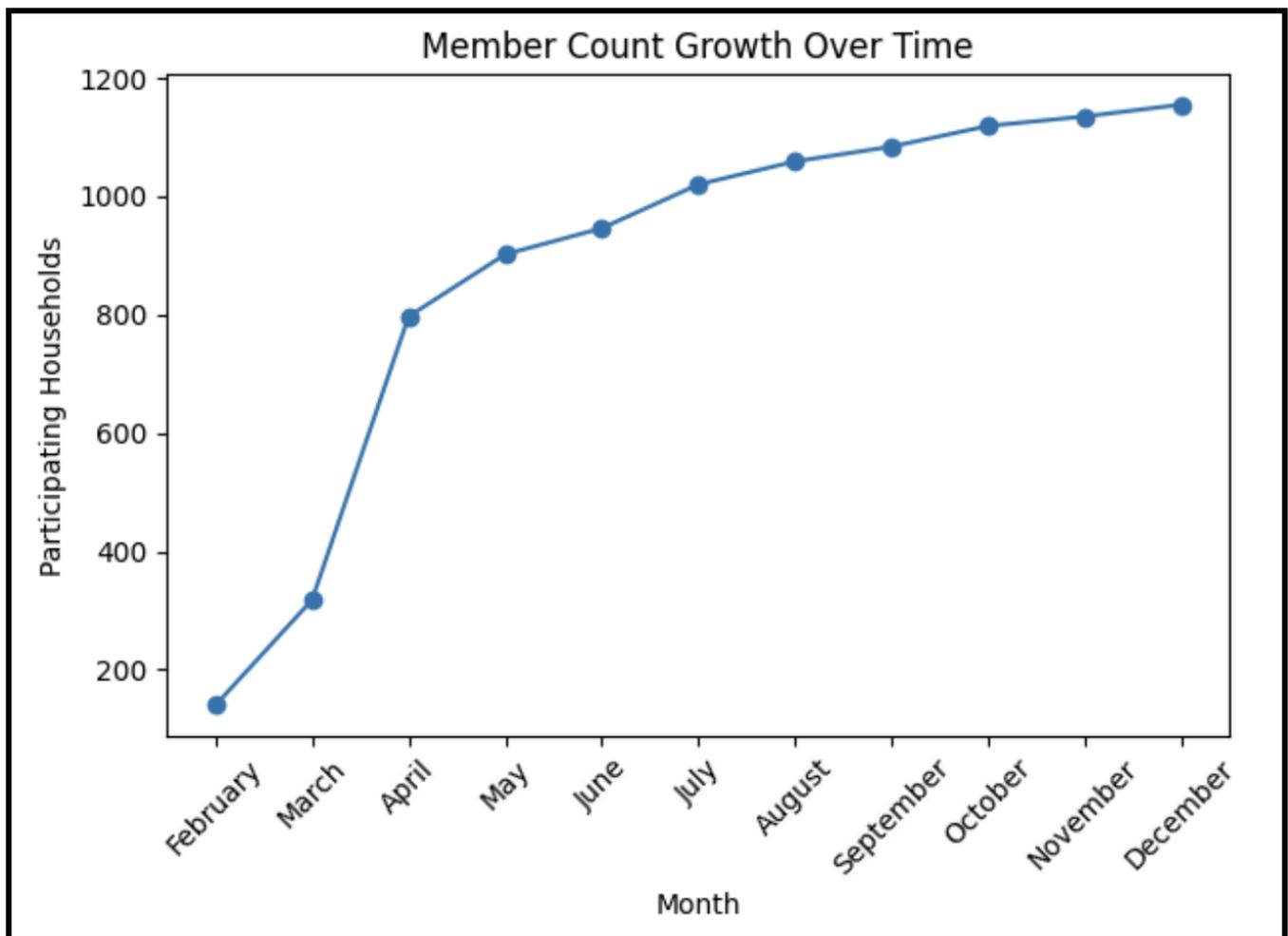
- Average of **over 17,000 lbs. collected monthly!**



Growth! Before and After

After the program became **free for residents through city funding**, we saw a **huge increase 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)**:



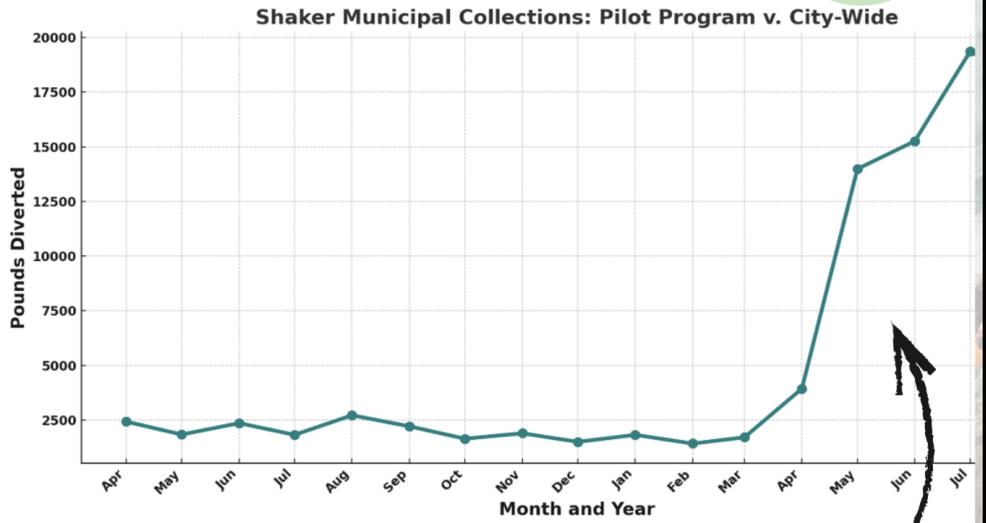
Material collection increased more than 7x.

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!

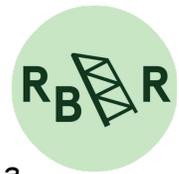
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	TOTAL
# of Households	797	902	946	1,020	1059	1084	1119	1135	1155	1155
# of 64-Gal. Bins Serviced	38	81	88	95	106	93	99	86	134	820
Material Collected (lbs.)	3,935	13,985	15,259	19,375	17,765	15,400	16,027	15,521	21,250	138,517

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

ORDINANCE NO.

BY:

Accepting a proposal and authorizing a personal services agreement with Rust Belt Riders, without competitive bidding, in an amount not-to-exceed \$125,000 for a one-year period, for the Citywide Food Waste Collection and Composting Program, and declaring an emergency.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ordinance 25-13, enacted on January 24, 2025, the City entered into a Contract with Rust Belt Riders effective January 1, 2025, and expiring on December 31, 2025, to provide a City-wide food waste collection and composting program with drop off sites at the five elementary schools and the Main Library (the "Program"); and

WHEREAS, the City received a proposal from Rust Belt Riders to continue the Program, and due to the Program's success, the Sustainability Coordinator recommends the continuation of the Program; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 141.03 of the Codified Ordinances, this Council has determined that the City should enter into a personal services agreement without competitive bidding with Rust Belt Riders at the rates set forth in its proposal, for an amount not-to-exceed ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$125,000) for a one-year period from January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026, for the Citywide Food Waste Collection and Composting Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Shaker Heights, State of Ohio:

Section 1. This Council hereby accepts the proposal of Rust Belt Riders, at the rates set forth in its proposal, for an amount not-to-exceed ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$125,000), for a one-year period for the Citywide Food Waste Collection and Composting Program.

Section 2. The Mayor is hereby authorized to enter into a personal services contract with Rust Belt Riders, without competitive bidding, in an amount not-to-exceed ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$125,000) for a one-year period for the Citywide Food Waste Collection and Composting Program. Said agreement shall be in the form as approved by the Director of Law.

Section 3. This ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety and welfare for the reason that it is necessary in the current operation of the City and, further, so that this important program can continue without interruption and, therefore, this ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its enactment and approval by the Mayor.

Enacted

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2026.

DAVID E. WEISS, Mayor

Attest:

MATTHEW P. CARROLL
Clerk of Council
coun26/0223rustbeltriders