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San José is top performer for recycling at apartments, condos

San José just doubled its performance with the July 1st launch of a new program to sort through garbage from all multi-family complexes in San José and extract everything that can be recycled or composted. Literally overnight, the diversion rate from multi-family complexes went from 35 percent to 75 percent -- making San José's the best performing multi-family recycling program in the nation.

Waste from apartments, condos and other multi-family complexes will be delivered by GreenTeam of San Jose to a new state-of-the-art, 300-kilowatt solar-powered waste processing facility operated by GreenWaste Recovery in central San José. Paper, bottles, and cans are removed for recycling using a combination of hand sorting and an automated processing system. The remaining organic waste, including food, will be composted at the Z-Best composting facility in Gilroy.

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“We want to create a sustainable community in San José, and we can accomplish that by using innovative technologies and involving our community in new and creative approaches,” said John Stufflebean, Director of the City’s Environmental Services Department.

This innovative program, created in partnership with the California Apartment Association, strikes a balance between environmental and business concerns. It allows the City to recover more recyclable and compostable materials without resorting to recycling mandates.

“This is a win-win approach. Rather than imposing mandates on local housing providers and residents, it taps ingenuity for a cleaner and greener solution.” said Joshua Howard, California Apartment Association Tri-County Division Executive Director. “Of course, we will continue to work with rental property owners, managers, and their residents to encourage residential recycling so that it simply becomes part of the San José lifestyle.”

The goal of the new program is to increase recycling and residents are a key component for success. The best way to achieve high recycling rates is to have residents from apartments and condos use the separate recycling bins for glass, cans and paper. Collection of source-separated recyclables provides a cleaner stream of materials and is the preferred method of diverting valuable resources from landfills.

For more than a decade, San José has had one of the best recycling rates in the nation, with an overall landfill diversion rate of 62%. While residents generate 25% of the waste in San José, they also divert over 250,000 tons of that waste from landfills every year by diligently separating recyclables and yard trimmings from the trash.

Multi-family complexes traditionally have lower recycling rates than single-family homes, where residents pay for trash pick-up and recycle for free. This new program is one of many designed to achieve the City’s Green Vision goal of becoming a Zero Waste city by

diverting 100% of its waste from landfills by 2022. In May, the City launched a similar program to sort through waste from garbage cans at all public facilities including libraries, community centers, and parks.

About San Jose's Green Vision

San Jose's Green Vision is a comprehensive strategy that addresses how environmental responsibility makes financial sense and stimulates economic opportunity. This vision includes 10 bold goals that will serve as a roadmap to reduce the carbon footprint of the 10th largest city in the nation by more than half. For more information, please visit, <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/greenvision/>.

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