



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Sara Spaulding, APR
Communications & Engagement Director
970-244-1507
saras@gjcity.org

CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION RECEIVES GRANT TO INCREASE COMPOSTING WHILE DECREASING FOOD WASTE

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. January 5, 2024 – The City of Grand Junction received a two-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for a Composting and Food Waste Reduction Pilot Project. Goals for the grant include demonstrating the need for food waste composting facility upgrades at the Mesa County Compost Facility, supporting circular economies through improved resource management and compost utilization, and enhancing the regions soil health and water holding capacity of the land. The total amount of the grant is \$126,506.00 which includes an allocation from the USDA of \$89,600 and another \$36,906 from the city and Mesa County in matching funds for this collaborative program designed to increase the composting of food waste.

“We are thrilled to have received this grant which allows us to demonstrate the need for increasing food waste composting,” stated Jay Valentine General Services director. “Through our recent pilot study, we realized the benefits of using compost to conserve water while repurposing this valuable, natural resource. This two-year grant will allow for an expansion of our efforts.”

“By increasing the amount we are able to compost for use on our gardens and for our orchards and farms, we conserve valuable space in the landfill and increase our capacity for collection on a local level,” continued Valentine.

The City of Grand Junction has identified recycling, reuse, and waste reduction as strongly held goals in their 2020 comprehensive plan as well as in the Strategic Plan outlined by City Council in 2023. According to the Western Colorado Waste Diversion Study, conducted by Souder Miller and Associates in 2018, about 13 percent of Mesa County’s waste is comprised of food. This is equivalent to 21,420 metric tons of organic material that goes into the landfill annually because food waste is not currently accepted at the local Mesa County Compost Facility. As compost is more effectively used by the community for gardens and agriculture, additional space will be made available to accept food waste for composting.

One aspect of the grant program will demonstrate the need for food waste processing at the local compost facility. The City of Grand Junction is actively implementing a food waste collection program in their efforts to support sustainable development and demonstrate demand for local processing. By establishing an organic waste collection route with a temporary composting outlet that is within 100 miles of the county, the program will create the density and demand needed to show the economic benefits of accepting more organic waste at the local facility. This grant will help make organic waste diversion possible for participants of all income levels and socio-economic classes. By partnering with schools, hospitals, and hunger relief organizations, this project addresses food waste reduction by feeding people first and then composting what’s left. This grant also makes entry level participation in the program economically viable, so participants can take the time needed to

implement sorting habits necessary to impact trash collection fees that will offset future composting fees and attract even more participants as the program grows.

Another aspect of the program focuses on marketing, education, and distribution of finished compost in order to create more space for incorporating food waste into local operations. Through partnerships with Mesa County and the Colorado State University's (CSU) Western Colorado Research Center, and with the assistance of this grant, a compost utilization program will be implemented to promote compost use and demonstrate the benefits for water conservation and soil health.

Benefits of compost utilization and recommendations for application rates will be highlighted through the programs partnership with the CSU's Orchard Mesa Research Station which began in 2023, the first year of the grant. On-farm trials will demonstrate how compost can be applied to various crops including peach tree, vegetables, and ornamental plants. Data collected, such as water holding capacity and organic matter content will help agricultural producers connect with state and local incentives to utilize compost in their practices to enhance soil health. Compost will also be donated to other community outreach and demonstration sites, such as community gardens and schools.

To learn more about the Composting and Food Waste Reduction Pilot Project and Grand Junction's green waste program, contact Recycling/Waste Reduction Supervisor Kym Beck at recycling@gjcity.org or 970-256-4136.

###