

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
**INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE**

DATE: February 8, 2021

TO: Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, Chair  
Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Councilmember Paul Koretz  
Councilmember Kevin de Leon  
Councilmember Paul Krekorian  
Energy, Climate Change, Environmental Justice, and River Committee

FROM: Enrique C. Zaldivar, Director and General Manager  
LA Sanitation & Environment

SUBJECT: **RESPONSE TO THE SEPTEMBER 23, 2020 CITY COUNCIL MOTION  
20-1225, RELATIVE TO THE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE HEALTHY SOILS  
IN THE CITY**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Instruct LASAN to continue to lead the Healthy Soils Advisory Panel and to create a Healthy Soils Interdepartmental Team to finalize a healthy soil strategy for the City.
2. Instruct LASAN to report back annually on progress on healthy soils initiatives and pilot projects.

DISCUSSION:

Healthy soils are vitally important to life on earth and provide a variety of ecosystem services. About 95% of our global food supply comes from soils. Soils store and filter water, improving food security and mitigating floods and droughts. Soils host about 25% of our planet's biodiversity. Soils store more carbon than the atmosphere and terrestrial vegetation combined. Composting and small scale urban agriculture can also benefit public health, enabling local food production and increasing food security in vulnerable communities. While soil contamination can pose public health challenges within cities, soil amendments, soil exchange and composting programs, and community engagement in remediation practices represent promising solutions.

LA Sanitation & Environment and Healthy Soils

LA Sanitation & Environment (LASAN) is responsible for the collection of residential waste from 750,000 single-family households and small apartment complexes. The current green-bin program collects approximately 1,600 tons per day of green waste, yard trimming waste, and incidental amounts of fruits and vegetables from residents' gardens.

LASAN is invested in diverting organic waste and green waste from landfills and converting them into mulch and compost, both of which have many beneficial re-uses. Examples include:

- Composting/Mulching:

- Griffith Park: Griffith Park green waste--grass, leaves and clippings are blended and composted with zoo doo and biosolids at the Griffith Park Composting Facility. The final compost product is then used in Griffith Park.
- Lopez Canyon: Lopez Canyon collects green waste and grinds it into mulch for reuse onsite. LASAN hosts composting and gardening workshops at Lopez Canyon that teach residents how to create nutrient-rich compost at home.
- Harbor Yard Trimmings Facility: This site is used for mulching.
- Free Mulch: LASAN is "closing the loop" by providing free quality mulch to residents at locations across the City.
- Organics:
  - LASAN has piloted two residential programs for the management of food waste, the In-Sink Disposal pilot and the Curb Your Food Waste LA pilot programs.
    - The In-Sink Disposal pilot program was launched in 2017 to study the effects of utilizing household in-sink disposal units for managing food waste through the wastewater system. The In-Sink Disposal was offered to 522 homes in the West LA neighborhood of Westchester.
    - The Curb Your Food Waste LA pilot program was launched in 2018 and provided participants with a 2-gallon kitchen countertop pail for collecting their food waste throughout the week and instructed to place the material in their residential green-bin, commingled with their yard trimming waste. The pilot program was offered to 18,000 residential homes throughout 25 neighborhoods across the City.

LASAN has been interested in healthy soils for years and has been innovative in the beneficial reuse of biosolids/anaerobic digested cake (e.g., Green Acres Farm). In addition, LASAN pursues projects that promote soil health, infiltration, and soil biodiversity via the Watershed Protection Division and Biodiversity Program. These programs aim to integrate brown, blue, and green infrastructure to create cleaner soils, air, and water for the people, plants, and animals in Los Angeles.

#### Healthy Soils Advisory Panel:

In July 2020, LASAN convened a group of 40 experts and advisors from local universities, government agencies, and nonprofits to solicit input/share their expertise on the topic of healthy soils. The Healthy Soils Advisory Panel is advising the City on best practices, how to better integrate soils management into our practices, and much more. The group has contributed heavily to the draft Healthy Soils Strategy Document and has proposed innovative pilot project concepts (more below).

#### Healthy Soils Strategy:

LA Sanitation & Environment is working on a Healthy Soil Strategy Document for the City to support urban agriculture, address carbon sequestration, and increase water capture. As planned, the document will go into detail on ecosystem services; composting; contamination and pollution; urban agriculture; biodiversity; testing metrics & reporting; community education & outreach, and economic benefits and specify actions that can be taken to promote healthy soils and regenerative agriculture. LA Sanitation & Environment is poised to connect with relevant City departments to further develop and refine the healthy soil strategy for the City once directed to by the City Council.

#### Other Healthy Soils Work:

LA Sanitation & Environment is also working hard to amplify community education campaigns on the benefits of healthy soils, biodiversity, and regenerative agriculture. A flyer has been developed that lists simple actions City residents can take to protect biodiversity and promote healthy soils. LASAN is also working to create a webpage that will serve as a hub to distribute information to the community on healthy soil practices.

LA Sanitation & Environment hopes to partner with other departments and members of the Healthy Soils Advisory Panel to pilot at least two innovative healthy soil projects. As an example, Kiss the Ground, LA Compost, LA Recreation & Parks, and LASAN are planning to partner on an initiative to expand composting infrastructure across the City of LA. The project will create two new platinum composting sites at Griffith Park and Lake Balboa Park. The project also intends to:

- Provide training to Recreation & Parks staff on composting
- Launch a public awareness campaign
- Perform monitoring and data collection
- Establish demonstration sites
- Install pollinator/native plant gardens

LA Sanitation & Environment has created a database to track grant opportunities and incentives that could be pursued to help the City expand its healthy soils efforts. This database includes incentives for regenerative practices and water conservation.

#### New Healthy Soils Interdepartmental Team:

As the City's environmental leader, LA Sanitation & Environment is eager to work with other City Departments to promote healthy soils, regenerative agriculture, water conservation and more. In order to do so, LASAN is ready to create a new Healthy Soils Interdepartmental Team to assist with tasks at hand, like the Healthy Soils Strategy Document, as well as the other items outlined in the Motion. Involved departments may include the Department of Transportation, the Department of Recreation and Parks, StreetsLA, the Library Department, General Services Department, the Office of Climate Emergency Mobilization, and other proprietaries, like the Department of Water and Power. Together, LASAN and relevant members of the Healthy Soils Interdepartmental Team will likely focus on the following:

- Researching opportunities for unpaving underutilized spaces and using them for composting/mulching operations and/or to create healthy soil or spaces for urban agriculture.
- Exploring opportunities to develop small- and mid-scale compost operations on public lands;
- Reducing chemical and water use in parks through compost and mulch use and other regenerative land and tree management in public green spaces.
- Using excess mulch from City forestry and landscaping operations across all departments, including proprietaries, and green-bin collection to support healthy soil.
- Researching the availability of anaerobic digested "cake" that can be used to support healthy soil.
- Increasing soil carbon and risk mitigation (flooding/drought) by increased water infiltration/holding capacity.
- Educating staff on soil health, regenerative land management and integrated pest management.

- Working with local trade schools, like Los Angeles Trade Tech, or job development organizations, like LA Conservation Corps, to report back on opportunities for the creation of local, 'green' employment opportunities linked to healthy soil and compost.
- Opportunities for public-awareness efforts on the importance of healthy soil and regenerative land management for LA communities.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

This is a Citywide program and while LASAN can fund some of the work that is directly related to the impact of LASAN operations on healthy soils, other funding sources are required for other aspects of the work.

MB:EZ

C: Dr. Mas Dojiri  
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