



Old L.A. News

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LEARNING HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN COMPOST L.A. Compost is at the Old L.A. Farmer's Market every Tuesday



Article & Photos by Christopher Nyerges

L.A. Compost appears every Tuesday at the Old L.A. Farmers Market on Marmion Way, where residents can drop off their kitchen scraps. "The processed compost is given away to community members to use, and much of it stays at the community hubs for them to decide how to use it," says founder Michael Martinez. "Success is figuring out how different departments in the city and different community groups can work together to provide more sustainable solutions for Angelenos," he said. "Our goal is to keep building that human network of composters across Los Angeles."

"The compost that is dropped off at the Old L.A. market goes to Regional Compost Hubs, located at parks and urban farms," explains Martinez. Most of the Highland Park compost is processed at the Griffith Park Regional Compost Hub. LA Compost offers bilingual resources and composting materials on their website www.lacompost.org

LA Compost

Cooperatively with a diverse network of partners within LA County, co-create spaces for local compost access.

You can stay up to date on upcoming events via their instagram @lacompost. "Our goal," explains Martinez, "is education, to restore our lost connections to the soil and one another. How do we re-engage our reverence for the soil, and to our neighbors? That's what we're about." Since Senate Bill 1383 is now asking that all of us begin to deal with our own kitchen and yard compost rather than sending it to the local landfills, it seems that Michael Martinez is a man who's in

the right place at the right time.

When Michael Martinez was studying Youth Ministry at Azusa Pacific University 2006-2010 with plans to be a youth pastor, he had no idea he would eventually become the composting evangelist of Los Angeles County.

But as the founder and Executive Director of L.A. Compost, a composting collective, that is precisely what he is today, spreading the word on how decaying food scraps are essential to healthy soil. His path to founding L.A. Compost actually began in Miami, where he moved after graduating from college in 2010 to teach 5th grade as part of Teach for America.

"One day I was giving a lesson about seeds and trees and one of my students was eating Flaming Hot Cheetos," said Mr. Martinez. "He asked 'so, where do these come from?' That's basically how this all got started."

Rather than lecture on fresh versus processed food, Mr. Martinez decided to show his students where real food comes from. With nine of the fifth graders and a few shovels, he formed a gardening club and undeterred by the fact that none of

the children had any gardening experience, built the school's first community garden. After a few weeks, the club grew to 40-plus students in addition to people from the neighborhood.

"Everyone really enjoyed being part of something bigger than themselves," said Mr. Martinez. "They had a real sense of appreciation for what they grew."

For Mr. Martinez, the experience cultivated twin passions. One is teaching. When he returned to L.A., he enrolled in graduate school at USC, earning his Master's degree in Education in 2013. The other passion is composting. Mr. Martinez saw that food scraps went to waste in landfills and garbage disposals, even as soils everywhere were depleted for lack of nourishment that the food scraps could provide. He wanted to stop the waste, to make composting a daily and widespread practice, and to reconnect people to the food cycle that is central to healthy living.

As soon as he graduated from USC, he and his brother, David, launched L.A. Compost as an all-volunteer (read: family and friends) enterprise. Focusing on Covina, West Covina, Whittier and Baldwin Park, the volunteers rode bikes equipped with trailer carts to coffee shops, collect-



Security

2022	
Patrol calls for service	134
Patrol BID contacts	5,042
Public contacts	3,117
Vehicle patrol hours	5,841
Bike patrol hours	0



Maintenance

2022	
Trash Bags (removed)	10,097
Trash weight lbs	227,891
Graffiti tags removed:	1,586
Bulky items:	1,011
Pressure Washing hrs	96



ing scraps, turning them into compost in their backyards and then giving the compost away at local farmers markets.

The effort was – and remains — deeply meaningful to Mr. Martinez. “What we preach when we talk about the compost is how all of the scraps and ingredients in the pile are a reflection of the community,” he said. “What compost does is it takes something that is imperfect and incomplete, just as all of us are, and all the scraps come together to make something that is whole. Wholeness is only achieved when we work together toward a common goal. A common good. That’s

really what this is all about.”

The message has resonated with supporters, allowing L.A. Compost to grow. In late 2013, shortly after L.A. Compost completed the process to become a non-profit organization, it received its first grant — \$10,000 from Fellowship Monrovia Church. It used the money to develop its first community compost hub at Monrovia High School, where residents could drop

off their food waste for composting in professional-grade bins; the compost was then used to enrich the soil in 10 raised garden beds that were built at the school and tended by students.

With various grants to support the work, the non-profit now has 8 full time employees, and 12 part-time all over L.A., with 30 composting hubs throughout Los Angeles.



photos courtesy of L.A. Compost

NFA Goals

- Provide Educational, Cultural, Artistic, Charitable, Social Service and public improvements.
- Increase economic well being for property owners, employees and businesses.
- Provide improvements and activities to assist in economic and commercial revitalization.
- Provide clean, safe and beautification programs to improve economic prosperity for property owners, businesses and the community.
- Bring about investment of public and private capital within the Business Improvement District and surrounding area for public benefit and charitable purposes.

Mission Statement

North Figueroa Association is the management organization for the Highland Park Business Improvement District and is an advocate for the North Figueroa Property owners by empowering and aiding in the stimulation of growth, development, revitalization and maintaining the historic value of the North Figueroa Corridor.

The North Figueroa Assoc. will support an environment in which stakeholders can conduct commerce, live and play.

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Contact: 323-255-5030

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Annual Budget 2022

Public Right of Way	\$376,854.64	(65%)
Corporate Identity & Organization	\$110,000.00	(35%)
Total Annual Budget	\$486,854.64	(100%)

How You Can Help

You can help keep the district clean, safe and pedestrian friendly by:

- Making sure your businesses do not place their trash in the sidewalk receptacles. These receptacles are for pedestrians only.
- Keep windows & awnings clean
- Take down any old, torn or faded signs or banners.
- Sweep your store front. While the crews sweep the streets, they do not sweep private property
- Post store hours in windows.
- Call security with concerns. The number is: 800-350-1944. Report to LAPD, as well.