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May 28, 2009

John Avalos  
Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Supervisor Avalos:

**I am writing to express SPUR's support for the Mandatory Recycling and Composting Ordinance** being considered in the Government Audit and Oversight Committee today. Passing this ordinance will make a significant and cost-effective contribution to reducing the city's global warming emissions. We strongly urge the Board to pass this well-vetted and readily implementable piece of legislation.

In SPUR's most recent policy paper, "Critical Cooling", we analyzed over 40 local policy options to reduce carbon emissions. We found that **a mandatory recycling rule is one of the most significant policies that the City can enact to reduce emissions**, reducing over 186,000 tons per year if we increase diversion just 5%. This can be accomplished with no additional impact on the City budget.

The reason that a small increase in recycling and composting makes such a huge difference in terms of global warming emissions is that food scraps emit a much stronger greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub> when put into a landfill. Those emissions are avoided if food scraps are broken down using typical composting processes.

This rule mandating citywide recycling and composting is expected to create a significant bump in San Francisco's rate of diverting waste from landfills, and it will help us meet our 75% diversion goal by 2010. More than half of the waste currently discarded in the city is readily recyclable or compostable. The ordinance will particularly improve composting, as multifamily buildings will be required to provide equally convenient bins and commercial property managers must annually educate residents about separating waste streams. Compostable food now makes up 40% of residential trash.

A second key policy goal that the ordinance helps achieve is to delay the need to seek a new landfill contract for San Francisco's waste. Our current contract in Altamont is reaching capacity, and the longer we can delay contracting for new landfill space, the longer we can maintain favorable trash collection rates for San Francisco residents.

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We strongly urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Laura Tam  
Sustainable Development Policy Director

Cc: Board of Supervisors