# Practically Sustainable Community Growth Through Urban Farming With Permaculture And Composting In Palm Springs.

**Prema S Walker**
**Prema's Permaculture & Composting**
**Grant awarded: $219,849.60**

## Overview:

Practically Sustainable LLC, DBA Prema's Permaculture & Composting, located in Palm Springs, California 92264, is embarking on an ambitious initiative to uplift a backyard urban farm with community composting operations in the City of Palm Springs, California. Our primary goal is to create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged communities by educating them on the significance of composting and regenerative agricultural practices. This project aims to foster environmental sustainability, enhance community well-being, and contribute to the local economy by establishing an urban farm that demonstrates a closed-loop system involving composting, urban farming, and fresh organic produce sales to the local community, creating a circular economy.

## Current Situation in Palm Springs:

**Lack of Land Zoned for Agriculture:**
Palm Springs faces significant challenges due to the need for land zoned for agriculture. This situation has made the community dependent on food from outside the area. The lack of local food production increases the carbon footprint associated with inbound food transportation and makes the community vulnerable to supply chain disruptions.

**Harsh Climate and Natural Disasters:**
Palm Springs is known for its harsh climate, extreme temperatures, strong winds, and unanticipated flood events. These weather conditions can isolate the community, particularly during natural disasters, challenging receiving food and other essential supplies. Implementing permaculture practices, which focus on building resilient ecosystems, will help mitigate these challenges. By designing urban farms that can withstand extreme weather and incorporating water conservation techniques, such as greywater systems, rainwater harvesting, etc., we can create sustainable food sources that are less affected by the local climate.

**Tourism and Waste Generation:**

As a popular tourist destination, Palm Springs generates disproportionate waste. The influx of tourists, especially during peak seasons, puts severe pressure on the city's waste management systems. Composting offers a viable solution to this problem by converting organic waste into valuable soil amendments. Our project will promote composting practices among residents and businesses by reducing waste sent to landfills, thus contributing to a healthier environment.

## Founder's story:

Prema Walker, founder and CEO, is a minority, underserved, BIPOC first-generation female immigrant from India. Growing up as a child and watching her grandparents dedicate their lives to agriculture, their appreciation of the land, livestock, and regenerative practices established firm roots in Prema to have a passion for the environment and agriculture. With a graduate degree in Mechanical Engineering, her love for food security and social justice caused her to gravitate towards these social entrepreneurship ventures.

## Impact of organization:

From 2021 to date, Prema's Permaculture & Composting has trained **300+ local volunteers (2500+ volunteer hours)** on community composting and diverted **373,772+ lbs of material**, mainly food waste and yard waste, from landfills by collaborating with local organizations at **9 locations** in the Inland Empire region.

## Project Objectives:

1. **Hire and Train Disadvantaged Community Members**: Recruit individuals from marginalized groups and provide comprehensive training in composting and regenerative farming practices.
2. **Establish an Urban Farm**: Develop a productive urban farm where compost is used to grow high-quality, organic produce for sale to residents. The current location for the Urban Farm is equipped with some fruit trees and three raised beds, installed in May 2024. The ultimate goal is replicating this prototypical urban farm in other community locations.
3. **Source Composting Materials Locally**: Collaborate with local arborists, tree trimming companies, farmers' markets, restaurants, and other food waste-generating businesses to collect organic waste for composting.
4. **Promote Environmental Sustainability**: Reduce waste sent to landfills, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and improve soil health through effective composting.

5. **Training on Finance and Entrepreneurship:** Provide entrepreneurial training in personal and business finance; this knowledge is a prerequisite to successful entrepreneurial ventures.

## Alignment with SB 1383:

The project aligns closely with California's Senate Bill 1383 (SB 1383), which mandates a 75% reduction in organic waste disposal by 2025. SB 1383 also requires local governments to provide organic waste collection services and implement programs to achieve this reduction.
Our project supports Palm Springs in complying with SB 1383 by:

- **Reducing Organic Waste**: Diverting significant amounts of organic waste from landfills to our backyard composting operations.
- **Enhancing Compliance**: Assisting the city in meeting its mandated organic waste diversion targets.
- **Engaging Community**: Educating the community on the importance of composting and organic waste reduction, fostering widespread participation in compliance efforts.

## Community and Environmental Impact:

1. **Employment and Skill Development**: By providing both learning and earning opportunities to the members of disadvantaged communities, we provide meaningful employment/entrepreneurial opportunities and valuable skill development in green industries. This enhances individual livelihoods and promotes social equity and community empowerment.
2. **Urban Farming and Food Security**: Our urban farm will produce fresh, nutritious food, contributing to local food security and reducing the carbon footprint of transporting produce from distant locations.
3. **Environmental Benefits**: Composting organic waste improves soil health, enhances water retention, and eliminates harmful chemical fertilizers. Best practices contribute to a healthier ecosystem and a more resilient urban environment.
4. **Economic Benefits**: Selling locally-grown produce supports the local economy, fosters entrepreneurship, and encourages the development of additional green businesses in the community.

## Implementation Plan:

1. **Urban Farm setup:** This backyard urban farm currently composts approximately 500 lbs per week, collected from the local farmers market. The farm is being set up with raised beds, fruit trees, shade structures, an irrigation system, and composting systems. From March 2024 onwards, this farm has diverted 18,754 lbs. from landfills, including 4000 lbs. in food waste generated by farmer's market merchants.
2. **Recruitment and Training**: Partner with local organizations to recruit individuals from disadvantaged communities. Provide comprehensive training in the science of composting, regenerative agriculture, personal finance, and business skills.
3. **Composting Operations**: Establish efficient composting operations, sourcing materials from local arborists, tree trimming companies, farmers' markets, and restaurants. Implement best practices to ensure high-quality compost production.
4. **Urban Farming**: Develop the urban farm using compost produced onsite. Employ sustainable farming techniques to grow various organic crops using Permaculture principles.
5. **Community Outreach and Education**: Conduct workshops, seminars, and outreach programs to educate the community on the benefits of composting and sustainable agriculture. Engage organizations, schools, businesses, and residents in composting initiatives.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track project progress, measure impact, and identify areas for improvement. Use data to refine operations and enhance project outcomes.

## Partnerships and Collaborations:

To ensure the success of this project, we will collaborate with a range of local organizations and stakeholders, including:

- **City of Palm Springs**: Serve as a commissioner on the city's sustainability commission and work closely with city officials to align our project with local waste management policies, SB 1383 compliance effort, and climate action plan.
- **Urban Conservation Corps (UCC):** A program of The Southern California Mountains Foundation (CVMC), UCC provides a one-year program for local underserved youth with employment opportunities, training in urban conservation initiatives, and education through various projects. UCC will be providing two interns from the Palm Springs underserved community for one year to work at the urban farm.
- **Certified Farmers Market:** Currently, four farmer's market merchants donate their food waste weekly (approximately 500 - 700 lbs ) to the urban farm composting project. We seek to expand this closed-loop system with other partners.

- **Caravanserai Project**: A local non-profit assisting budding entrepreneurs through free intensive mentorship.
- **Local Businesses**: Partner with arborists, tree trimming companies, and restaurants to source organic waste for composting.
- **Educational Institutions**: Engage with schools and colleges to provide educational opportunities and involve students in composting and farming activities.
- **Non-Profit Organizations**: Collaborate with non-profits focused on environmental sustainability, social equity, and community development to amplify our impact and reach.

## Budget and Funding:

To achieve our objectives, we seek funding from the Thrive Inland Empire grant to cover the following expenses:

- **Site Setup and Equipment**: The costs associated with site development, including setting up composting infrastructure and acquiring farming equipment.
- **Training and Employment**: Expenses related to recruiting and training community members, including stipends, training materials, and certifications.
- **Operational Costs**: Ongoing composting operations, farming activities, and maintenance expenses.
- **Community Outreach and Education**: The costs of conducting workshops, seminars, and outreach programs to engage and educate the community.

## Conclusion:

Prema's Permaculture and Composting is dedicated to creating a sustainable future for Palm Springs by addressing critical environmental and social challenges. Our project not only aligns with SB 1383 and supports the city's climate resilience master plan efforts but also promotes economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. We aim to foster a resilient, inclusive, and vibrant community in the Inland Empire by empowering disadvantaged communities through employment and education.

With the support of the Thrive Inland Empire grant, we can realize our vision of a thriving prototypical composting facility and urban farm that benefits the entire community. We look forward to collaborating with local stakeholders and positively impacting Palm Springs and the broader Inland Empire region.

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**PRACTICALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GROWTH THROUGH BACKYARD URBAN FARMING WITH PERMACULTURE AND COMPOSTING IN PALM SPRINGS.**

**PROJECT BUDGET FOR 2024-2025**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **A.** | **PPC** | $85,000.00 |
| | 1. Trainer's pay | |
| | 2. Fringe benefits | |
| | 3. Travel expenses | |
| | 4. 1000 hrs per one year for tasks 1-3 | |
| | Subtotal | **$85,000.00** |
| **B.** | **UCC** | $55,421.87 |
| | 1. Includes 2 interns pay | |
| | 2. Fringe benefits | |
| | 3. Travel expenses | |
| | 4. Indirect costs | |
| | Subtotal | **$55,421.87** |
| **C.** | **Urban Farm expenses** | $30,000.00 |
| | 1. 15 Raised beds (price + taxes) | $6,000.00 |
| | 2. Irrigation system | $4,000.00 |
| | 3. 20 fruit trees (price + taxes) | $3,000.00 |
| | 4. Composting infrastructure - 20 geobins (price + taxes) | $1,000.00 |
| | 5. Shade structure | $2,500.00 |
| | 6. Seeds and other supplies | $5,000.00 |
| | 7. Raised beds accessories (fence posts, shade cloth, cattle panel, garden stakes, hardware cloth) | $1,500.00 |
| | 8. Composting tools (pitchforks, shovels, rakes, gloves, face masks, first aid kit, integrated pest management supplies, etc.) | $1,000.00 |
| | 9. Greywater system | $2,500.00 |
| | 10. Rainwater harvesting system | $3,500.00 |
| | Subtotal | **$30,000.00** |
| **D.** | **Community outreach & engagement** | $10,000.00 |
| | 1. Workshop development and distribution, including supplies and materials | $3,000.00 |
| | 2. Social media content creation and management | $5,000.00 |
| | 3. Website development and maintenance | $2,000.00 |
| | Subtotal | **$10,000.00** |
| **E.** | **Operational costs** | $15,000.00 |
| | 1. Licenses, compliance, insurances | $2,500.00 |
| | 2. Office supplies (chairs, board, tables, print equipment, books, etc. ) | $3,000.00 |
| | 3. Utilities (Water, electricity, internet) | $1,500.00 |
| | 4. Professional services (bookkeeper, accountants, legal, etc.) | $5,000.00 |
| | 5. Professional development | $3,000.00 |
| | Subtotal | **$15,000.00** |
| | **Total direct costs (A+B+C+D+E)** | **$195,421.87** |
| | **Indirect costs rate at 12.5%** | |
| | All administrative work involved with grant administration for all parties | **$24,427.73** |
| | **Grant grand total** | **$219,849.60** |