First of all thanks for your interest in this topic!

Katrina Spade (BA in anthropology; MA in architecture) is the designer/visionary behind the revolutionary use of this method for the disposition of human remains. Though the redesign for human purposes is new, the basic process has been used for over 20 years in cases of livestock mortality, disposal of road kill, etc. Katrina has taken a well-tested, standard practice and retooled it for what is variously referred to as:

- Natural Organic Reduction;
- Contained, Accelerated Conversion of Human Remains To Soil;
- Human Composting; and
- Recomposition™

The Recompose™ website’s FAQs page¹ has a lot of detail. Katrina recently gave a talk at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, the “home town” of Recompose. Her talk, and the Q&A that followed, have been turned into a podcast available through the local NPR station². I’m including these links in case you want to delve into a detailed understanding of this technology. If a lengthy presentation includes more content than you would be interested in wading through, here are some points related to the “Is It Kosher?” question:

- Each body is placed in an individual container, in which it will be “housed” for the duration of the process. No comingling of remains occurs.
- Each body is lain on a bed of wood chips, alfalfa and straw, and then completely covered with more of the same. Nothing else is introduced, such as enzymes.
- A ducted aeration system maintains environmental controls of temperature and moisture, which are optimized to support the body’s natural ability to decompose.
- Naturally-occurring thermophilic microbes that thrive on the high temperatures neutralize a high percentage of pathogens; pharmaceuticals are reduced by ~95% and presence of heavy metals such as mercury, lead and copper are significantly below EPA standards.
- Several days after the initial “laying in” the vessel begins to rotate periodically, slowly and gently, like a cradle that rocks in only one direction. Two weeks into the month-long process, “a blending device” is used to promote the complete integration of remains, including bone fragments, with the wood chips, alfalfa and straw bedding.

¹ https://www.recompose.life/faq
² https://kuow.org/stories/we-really-get-to-return-to-nature-and-i-think-that-s-pretty-cool
• The entire process takes 30 days, renders 1 cubic meter of pure compost process takes place on a molecular level (no longer human remains on a DNA level).
• A calculated metric ton of carbon is saved per person.

This process is now legal in the State of Washington; Colorado, Vermont and Hawai‘i are all on their way to legalization. The Washington State Regulatory Agency is in the process of designing appropriate standards, and the first Recompose™ facility is scheduled to open in early 2021. Here in California we are already in a move towards legalization, with the intention that, by the time the State of California is ready with legalization and regulatory standards, we will have also mobilized the knowledge base and expertise to begin developing sites in California. Our vision includes Natural Organic Reduction facilities partnered with Natural/Green Burial Grounds, to make it possible for full-body natural burial and use of recomposed soil in rebuilding ecosystems.

If you have any additional questions, or would like to set up a meeting to discuss the possibilities in person, please ask!

Artist’s rendering of facility (from the Recompose website)

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