

Meadowgreen Recycling Depot Closure

ISSUE

The Meadowgreen Recycling Depot (Depot) has been experiencing ongoing public safety concerns due to illegal dumping, scavenging, nuisance and criminal behaviour at the site. The intended use of the Depot is a residential recycling facility, however due to the inappropriate use, resources to keep the site clean and safe are growing and adjacent property owners are being negatively impacted.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. that immediately, the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot be permanently closed; and
2. that Administration proceed with closing and remediating the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot as outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

The Meadowgreen Local Area Plan (LAP) was approved by City Council in June 2017 and included 25 recommendations as a result of input from over 90 residents, stakeholders and 50 members of City Administration. Through the LAP process, residents identified the north back lane of the 2700, 2800 and 2900 blocks of 21st Street West as an area which experienced nuisance conditions and criminal activity. This area is adjacent to the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot and many of the nuisance conditions and criminal activity have direct links to the Depot (see Appendix 1 for Location Map). To further review the area of concern and address the residents' concerns with feeling unsafe, the following Neighbourhood Safety recommendation was included in the Meadowgreen LAP:

Recommendation 7.1 – North Back Lane (2700, 2800, and 2900 Blocks):

“That the Community Services Department, Planning & Development Division work with the Community Services Department, Parks Division and the Transportation & Utilities Department, Construction & Design Division to improve the 21st Street West back lane of the 2700, 2800, and 2900 blocks; help increase residents' feelings of safety; and, educate residents on their responsibility of keeping back lanes neat and tidy.”

At the [May 8, 2017 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services](#), Administration provided an update to the Recovery Park project. The strategy recommended maintaining the network of community recycling depots until the impacts of Recovery Park could be observed for six months, except for Meadowgreen Recycling Depot, which could be closed at the time Recovery Park opens, due to its proximity.

In January 2021, the Solid Waste Reduction & Diversion Plan was received by City Council and outlined a two-part approach for recycling depots:

1. The in-progress action is immediate safety and contamination improvements; and
2. The short-term action is to complete a comprehensive recycling depot review after new programs have been implemented.

Following a significant event at the Depot, effective March 26, 2021, the site began operating under reduced hours, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily, with gates locked after hours to prevent entry. The Depot is now under security surveillance at all times.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Meadowgreen Recycling Depot

There are four recycling depot locations operated by the City of Saskatoon (City) and two partner locations operated by Cosmopolitan Industries and Loraas Recycle. The Meadowgreen Recycling Depot is located at Whitney Avenue South and 22nd Street West. Recycling depots are unstaffed and consist of single-stream recycling bins which are free to use for Saskatoon residents for the same clean, unsorted materials accepted in the blue cart and blue bin residential recycling programs.

See Appendix 2 – “City of Saskatoon Recycling History” for a summary of recycling depots’ history in Saskatoon, relevant City Council approvals, the current operations of all depots, waste characterization and the level of use.

Meadowgreen Local Area Plan – Neighbourhood Safety Implementation

Since the LAP was approved, Neighbourhood Safety has maintained communications with adjacent residents to share information related to the LAP recommendation and Depot operations. Throughout the Meadowgreen LAP implementation work it became increasingly clear that the Depot was a catalyst, or at least a contributor, for many complaints and inappropriate criminal behavior in the area. The following observations were identified:

1. There were increasing numbers of actual and perceived incidents of crime and nuisance behaviour in back lanes immediately north and west of the Meadowgreen neighbourhood;
2. The east-west back lane is a highly used pedestrian route on the north end of the Meadowgreen neighbourhood which connects to the 22nd Street pedestrian overpass;
3. The Depot appears to be connected to issues of encampments, scavenging, loitering, general poor image and maintenance in the immediate area; and
4. The amount of resources, both personnel and financial, have been increasing to address illegal dumping, scavenging, nuisance and criminal behaviour at the Depot and keep the surrounding area neat and tidy.

Meadowgreen Recycling Depot Closure

Please refer to Appendix 3 for a list of safety issues observed at the Depot, including the frequency in which the issues have been observed.

To help address safety and nuisance issues, Administration implemented the following initiatives:

- a) Educational signage and bin decals;
- b) Onsite, direct education of users by the Environmental Protection Officers (EPOs);
- c) Elevated site visits by staff to reduce illegal dumping and scavenging;
- d) Security surveillance to monitor activity; and
- e) Temporary closure for clean up.

Proposed Closure of the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot

To date, efforts by multiple civic departments to resolve nuisance and safety impacts on adjacent residential properties have not had the desired effect and residents are increasingly frustrated with activities in the area. In February 2021, a Risk and Feasibility Study was completed by Sustainability and Water and Waste Operations to consider options for the Depot (refer to Appendix 4 for a summary of the results from this Study). The Study assessed options for the Depot but recommended the most feasible option was closure of the Depot.

It is expected that negative impacts experienced by surrounding property owners would decrease and potentially stop if the Depot was closed. A recent fire at the Depot marked an escalation in unsafe conditions at the site.

Process to Close the Facility and Manage the Site

The process to close the facility would involve:

- 1) Removal of all bins by Cosmopolitan Industries;
- 2) Clean up spillage on the asphalt;
- 3) Removal of wooden fencing;
- 4) Permanent closure of vehicular access using jersey barriers;
- 5) Onsite security for two weeks after closure; and
- 6) Signage indicating closure and a map to the nearest recycling depot.

Once remediated, the site will be cleaned and cleared to ground level; the asphalt base will remain as there may be a future use for the area. Appropriate signage and fencing should help prevent future dumping and direct users to an alternative site. Alternative solutions will be considered if illegal dumping continues.

The Meadowgreen LAP recognized the potential closure and noted:

“If the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot is approved for closure in the future, the Planning & Development Division will work with other civic

departments to engage the community in discussing potential options for the redevelopment of the site.”

If the Depot is closed, Administration will work with Meadowgreen residents and stakeholders to discuss interim use options and long-term solutions for the site.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of closing and partially remediating the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot is estimated at \$8,000. Funding has been identified from existing Operating and Capital Budgets and will not have an impact on the mill rate.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications

There would be positive social implications to the residential properties in the area if the Depot was closed. Currently, the perception of safety by residents is low, tied to real and perceived activity in the area and specifically the Depot. Although there is no direct cause and effect, the Depot is the repository for various materials which are pulled out and used for encampments or illegally dumped material is sorted onsite and sold. Every time a resident is victimized or hears of a neighbour who has been victimized, it heightens their stress level and fear of crime. Eventually, anyone walking in the back lane is viewed as a criminal and levels of fear rise.

Many residents have been victimized and are afraid to access the back of their properties or use the back lane. Closing the Depot is expected to have a positive impact on feelings of safety by residents and a general reduction in crime. Incidents may persist for a time, but overall, there should be less inappropriate use in the area resulting in less fear.

Environmental Implications

The impact of closing this Depot is anticipated to have a minimal effect on the 70% waste diversion goal, as this Depot represents approximately 0.25% of the overall diversion rate. Contamination rates have been observed to be highest at this Depot and in 2020, 44 contaminated bins were sent to the landfill. Used motor oil, cooking oil and large furniture have all been observed to be illegally dumped at this location.

There is a risk that illegal dumping will continue at the site after closure of the Depot. This risk will be mitigated through onsite signage indicating alternative drop off locations, integration of the closure into recycling education, communication campaigns and site monitoring. If illegal dumping at the site remains an issue, alternative options to provide recycling, or bulky waste collection will be brought to City Council for consideration.

NEXT STEPS

If approved, Administration will proceed immediately with site remediation at the Depot. Site signage will be placed to ensure users are given notice of the closure and a map showing the nearest recycling depot will be included.

Following remediation of the site, Neighbourhood Safety will work with other civic departments to engage Meadowgreen residents and stakeholders to discuss potential options for the redevelopment of the site.

A review is underway to address other immediate safety and contamination issues at the remaining three City-run recycling depots, including responding to the City Council inquiry on cameras at recycling depots. The Solid Waste Reduction & Diversion Plan also has the short-term action plan to complete a comprehensive recycling depot review after new programs have been implemented, including Recovery Park and the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional sector recycling regulation. The Comprehensive Recycling Depot Review will factor in the approach taken by the Province of Saskatchewan in their review of the Household Packaging and Paper Regulations and associated programs.

APPENDICES

1. Location Map
2. City of Saskatoon Recycling History
3. Identified Safety Issues at Meadowgreen Recycling Depot
4. Risk and Feasibility Study for the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot

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SP/2021/PD/PDCS/Admin Report - Meadowgreen Recycling Depot Closure.mh