

History of The City of Saskatoon Recycling Depots

This document provides a summary of the history of Saskatoon’s recycling depots, their current operations, characterizes the waste collected and provides insight into the level of use. It also provides an overview of the work completed by the Water and Waste Operations and Sustainability Departments to analyze the immediate issue of safety at the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot, document the measures that have been attempted to address safety issues and summarize the feasibility of alternative options which were considered.

History

Prior to the launch of the Multi-Unit Residential Recycling (MURR) Program in late 2014, the City of Saskatoon (City) collected paper and cardboard from 55 depots across the community. The MURR Agreement was finalized in 2015 and addressed the recycling depots transitioning from accepting paper and cardboard to accepting single-stream recycling like the Curbside and MURR Program.

At its August 21, 2014 meeting, City Council approved “That the changes to the network of drop-off recycling depots as outlined in the report of the General Manager, Corporate Performance Department be approved and begin to take effect on October 31, 2014”. The report outlined maintaining recycling depots at the following locations for the benefit of residents wishing to drop-off recyclable materials that may not fit in carts provided to them:

- Primrose Drive (west of Lawson Heights Civic Centre on Primrose Drive)
- University Heights (Lowe Road and Attridge Drive)
- Lakewood Civic Centre (1635 McKercher Drive)
- Meadowgreen Recycling Centre (22nd Street West and Witney Avenue)
- Saskatoon Landfill (Dundonald Avenue)

At the August 21, 2014 meeting, City Council also requested “That the Administration report back on the maintenance, security/enforcement and viability of the five recycling depots.”

At a City Council Preliminary Business Plan and Budget meeting held on November 30 and December 1, 2015, City Council resolved “that Administration report back to the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services with information on a strategy to phase out civic-owned recycling depots partially or in full.”

In May of 2017, Administration outlined a strategy for depots in the report “Recovery Park Update – May 2017”. The report outlined the approach of 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 same time as Recovery Park due to its proximity.

In December 2019, City Council approved Option 3 for Recovery Park's construction. Appendix 6 included a material prioritization that included single-stream mixed recycling in an at-grade bin for all options. The final materials acceptance list will be part of the Recovery Park operating plan work that is underway.

In January 2020, City Council approved the regulatory approach for Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sector recycling and organics. The ICI Waste Diversion Strategy includes a deliverable to assess City services for the ICI sector, including addressing the ICI sectors use of residential recycling depots.

In September 2020, City Council agreed to amend the City's contract with Cosmo to begin paying for the processing of materials delivered from recycling depots. City Council also requested "That the Administration update the previously presented report on security cameras used as a tool, to mitigate illegal dumping, and contamination of recyclables, at the City of Saskatoon operated recycling depots. This report should be presented at the same time as the report on Recovery Park is presented, prior to 2022 budget deliberations. The report should also include reference to how the cameras would help reduce criminal activity at the depots. The report should also be updated with costs based on the current technology of the day and how the installation of cameras would be scaled to the decision, by City Council on how many depots are to remain operational, moving forward."

In January 2021, City Council received the Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan which outlines several actions to consider the long-term need of Recycling Depots as a part of Saskatoons integrated waste management system. These actions include the previously mentioned City service review in 2021, Recycling Depot Program review to begin in 2023 (after Recovery Park opens) and Waste Management Service and Sustainability Plan in 2024/2025, which will assess waste infrastructure needs in consideration of projected city growth and waste diversion.

In April 2021, City Council approved the closure of the Meadowgreen recycling depot due to illegal dumping, scavenging, nuisance and criminal behaviour at the site. The intended use of the Depot was a residential recycling facility; however, due to the inappropriate use, too many resources were required to keep the site clean and safe, and adjacent property owners were negatively impacted, resulting in the depot's closure.

Current Approach

Saskatoon residents can use the City's three recycling depots for the same clean, unsorted materials accepted in the blue cart and blue bin residential recycling programs. Materials from the depots are collected regularly and taken to Cosmopolitan Industries for sorting. The sorted material is then bailed and shipped to local or world markets where it is transformed into a usable product. Additionally, local charities collect gently used clothing in bins at the three depot locations.

Locations

1. Lawson Heights – Primrose Drive by the Lawson Civic Centre
2. University Heights – Lowe Road behind Fire Station #9
3. Lakewood – McKercher Drive by the Lakewood Civic Centre

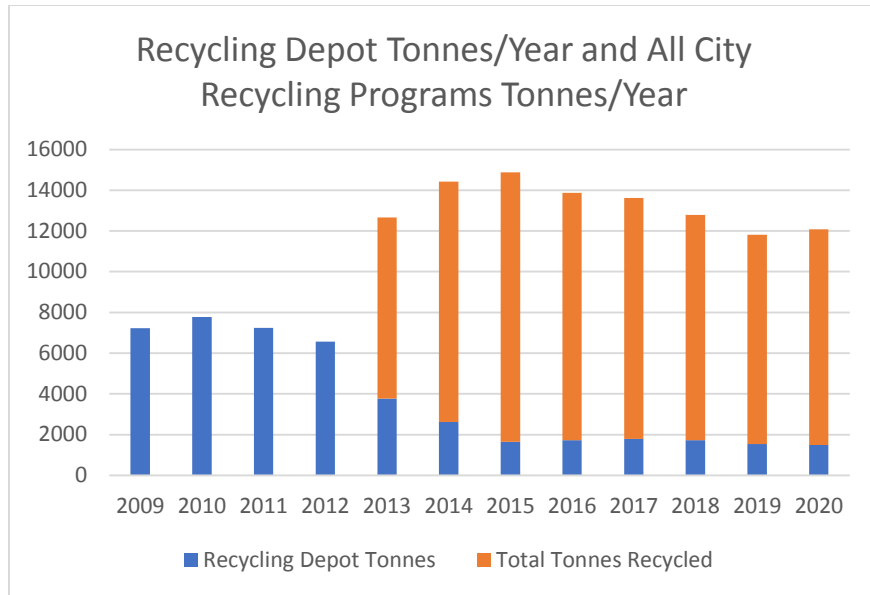
Partner Locations

1. Cosmopolitan Industries - 1300 Block Ontario Avenue
2. Loraas Recycle - 1902 1st Avenue North

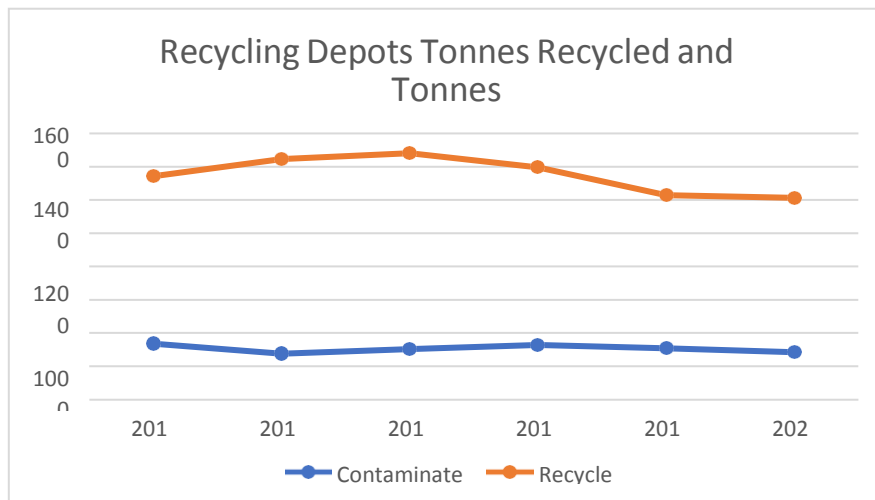
Recycling depots consist of unstaffed, single-stream recycling bins, which are free to use for City residents. City staff use a fork truck to collect recyclables from the depots (stored in metal bins) and rear loader vehicles to collect illegally dumped waste. Illegal dumping and contamination are often problems since the depots are unstaffed and as such, workers spend time to clean up the sites. Collected recyclables are hauled to Cosmopolitan Industries for processing who receive the revenue for the marketed recyclables. The City is under contract with Cosmopolitan Industries until 2023 (rolled into the MURR collection and processing contract).

Waste Diversion and Contamination

Since the start of the curbside residential recycling program in 2013, and the multi-unit residential recycling program in 2014, the City has seen a drop in overall tonnages from recycling depots. At the same time, the overall tonnes from all programs combined have increased, as shown in the table below with the increase the result of the new collection programs. Since 2015, the materials collected from depots has been consistently between 11 and 13% of the total materials recycled. Approximately 10% of recycling depot tonnes reported below are materials from City of Saskatoon facilities. This is because the City's trucks collect from both recycling depots and City facilities on the same routes for efficiency.



Contamination has been a significant issue at recycling depots. Since 2015, the contamination for materials collected at all City-run depots has been between 16 - 20%. The graph below shows the total amount of materials collected from depots, which were contaminated compared to the total amount were successfully recycled.



In 2020, the recycling depots contributed 1.2% to the City's overall diversion rate. Meadowgreen Recycling Depot is estimated to contribute 0.25% to the City's overall diversion rate.

Starting in 2018, the EPOs began work flagging bins at the Meadowgreen Recycling Depot which were deemed excessively contaminated. This has helped Cosmopolitan

Industries deal with less contamination at their MRF. Information for 2019 (partial year) and 2020 is listed in the charts below. The data illustrates depot tonnage has decreased the last couple years, in reality, more containers have been sent to landfill as contaminated. Tonnage is estimated at 1700 tonnes of total material received each year.

<u>Recycling Depot Location</u>					
2019 Month	Lakewood	Lawson	Lowe Rd	Meadowgreen	Total Number of Bins Emptied (Contaminated)
May	8	0	3	15	26
June	2	0	5	9	16
July	10	3	2	1	16
August	6	0	4	5	15
September	5	0	0	4	9
October	2	1	0	7	10
November	1	1	0	3	5
December	1	0	0	4	5
Year Total	35	5	14	48	102

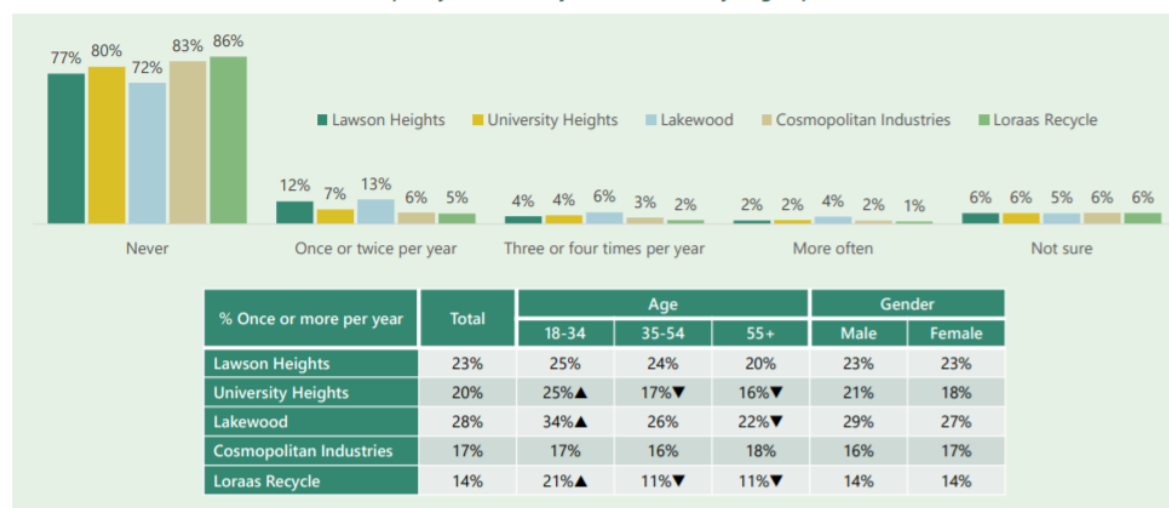
<u>Recycling Depot Location</u>					
2020 Month	Lakewood	Lawson	Lowe Rd	Meadowgreen	Total Number of Bins Emptied (Contaminated)
January	0	0	0	0	0
February	1	0	0	0	1
March	1	0	0	3	4
April	5	0	0	10	15
May	14	0	4	16	34
June	3	0	0	8	11

July	5	0	1	0	6
August	0	0	2	0	2
September	0	0	1	1	2
October	2	0	0	2	4
November	0	0	1	0	1
December	0	0	0	4	4
Year Total	31	0	9	44	84

Behaviour and Use

The 2021 residential Waste and Recycled Survey, which is representative of the City of Saskatoon’s residents. It was determined that most residents never or seldom use the public recycling depots, however 38% strongly oppose to closing them once Recovery Park is operational in 2023. Half of residents are satisfied with the depots. Below are additional findings on residential use of recycling depots:

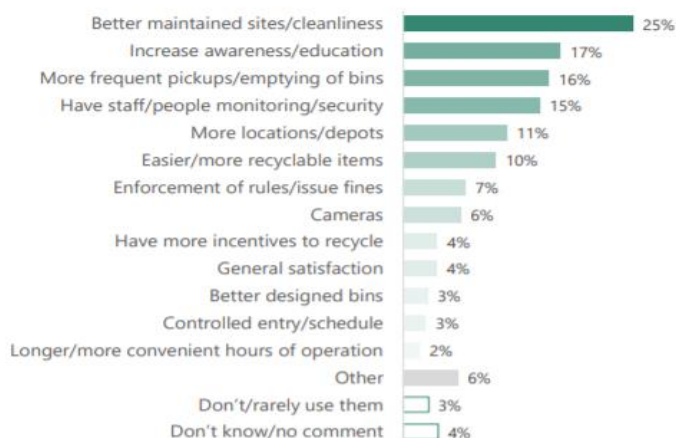
Frequency of Use of City of Saskatoon Recycling Depots



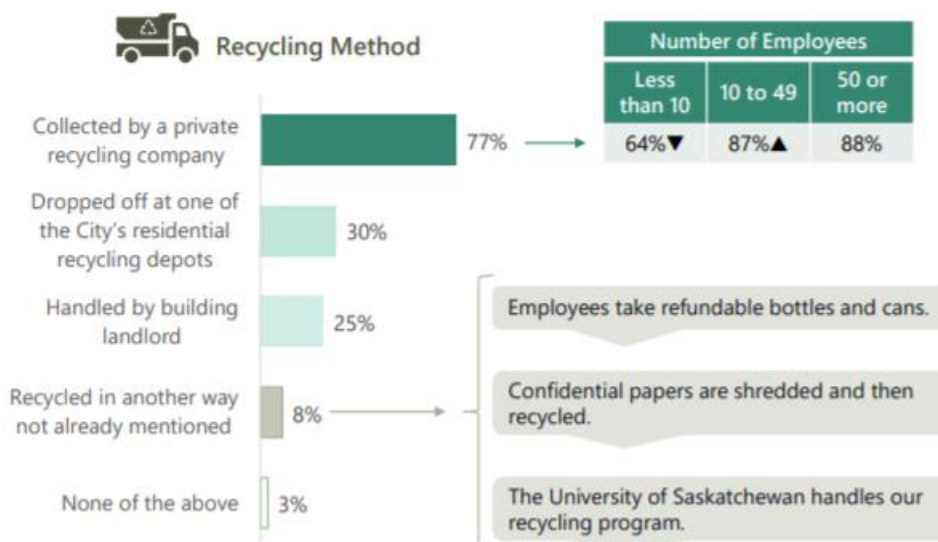
Q23. How often does someone from your household drop items off at each of the following City of Saskatoon recycle depots or private waste collectors? Base: all respondents, n=998.

The majority of respondents indicated not using the recycling depots and of those that did most used one at least once or twice per year. Overall, residents are satisfied with the sites, but 25% indicated that better maintenance and site cleanliness is required and 16% indicated that they would like more frequent collections of the bins. Respondents who lived in neighborhoods without a depot were more likely to indicate never using them, which indicates proximity to a depot impacts usage. Residents who have a large communal bin for recycling (multi-unit) were also less likely to use the depots.

Suggestions to Improve Public Recycling Depots



The 2021 ICI Waste and Recycling Survey had the following findings on ICI sector use of recycling depots, presented within the context of all City provided waste services they used. In the ICI sector survey, 30% of respondents reported using residential recycling depots. Of the businesses which reported using the depots, 64% were small (less than 10 employees).



The City does not monitor ICI sector use of the residential recycling depots to verify the survey information.

In 2018, the City conducted and reported on extensive public engagement on waste services for both the curbside and multi-unit sectors. The results of the curbside residential engagement were reported to EU&CS in June 2018, and the multi-unit

residential engagement results reported to EU&CS in September 2018. The curbside engagement saw residents frequently requesting recycling depots be kept or expanded and desire to see issues like illegal dumping addressed. There was little mention of recycling depots by multi-unit residents, these findings were supported in the residential Waste & Recycling survey which found multi-unit residents do not typically use depots.

Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

A research survey was completed in November 2020, comparing public recycling depots across Canada with the City of Saskatoon (“the City” or “Saskatoon”). Survey results were conducted through volunteer phone discussions with municipality representatives or collected from official city websites with public statics published from 2016 to 2020. Comparisons were made to 16 Canadian cities with populations of <100,000 to >350,000, who offer additional recycling options for residents aside from offering single-dwelling blue cart/bag/bin programs and/or multi-unit dwelling recycling bin programs.

The City’s current waste diversion rate is 26% (City of Saskatoon, 2020), in comparison to the average waste diversion rate of 45%, in the surveyed Canadian cities. Of note, 75% (12 of 16) of these cities offered special or bulk collections or implemented city-wide ICI collection programs and those who did not, had lower waste diversion rates. Currently, Saskatoon operates three public recycling depots, which are available 24/7 to the public year-round. These depots are non-staffed, do not have restricted hours, are not gated, and are regulated by an environmental protection officer supervision, a minimum of once daily, excluding weekends or statutory holidays.

Of the 16 cities compared, only two with similar populations to our City, the City of Regina, and the City of Lethbridge, operated similar to Saskatoon and three with a population of over 500,000, the City of Calgary, the City of Edmonton, and the City of Winnipeg. During verbal conversations with representatives from these cities, it was noted this type of depot had high levels of contamination, illegal dumping, vandalism, transient and scavenging issues, as well as high levels of health and safety hazards to the public and recycling staff (e.g. syringes) and was not aiding in increased waste diversion goals. Of the depot types, non-staffed, 24/7 operating sites were at 12.5% cities and a large majority of other cities surveyed were opposed to this type of depot and/or have switched to staffed, gated, restricted-hours, Eco-Centres, or Transfer Stations to mitigate or decrease the above issues.

The City is currently in the process of constructing Recovery Park. This style of depot aligns with many of the cities surveyed and 81.3% (13 of 16) have successfully converted to similar Eco-Centres or Transfer Stations. This option was chosen to reduce the above issues and offer the residents safe and efficient options for recyclables not covered under curbside collections, provide public education, and help to divert waste from landfill. Of the three cities remaining, the City of Red Deer has public recycling depots that are unstaffed but have restricted hours and the City of Coquitlam and the City of Richmond are staffed, with restricted hours.