

# Inquiry – Councillor B. Dubois - Waste Collection Location Review Process

## ISSUE

The following inquiry was made by Councillor B. Dubois at the meeting of City Council held on June 26, 2024:

"That the Administration report back on the review process (including community engagement plan) and resources needed to undertake a pilot project for the conversion of the Eastview neighbourhood from rear lane to front street solid waste, recycling and organics cart collection. This pilot project would create an opportunity to evaluate the process in advance of the planned comprehensive review of the remaining rear lane collection locations throughout the city in 2025."

## BACKGROUND

On June 2, 2000, City Council approved, in principle, the Solid Waste Management Master Plan 2000-2020. The plan included a garbage collection strategy related specifically to front street conversion: "The rear lane larger container collection system will be converted to a front street single unit collection system wherever a majority of the residents in a neighbourhood are supportive of the change."

The justification for the conversion from large communal bin (300-gallon containers) back lane collection to front street (100-gallon containers) collection were as follows:

- The large bins do not support waste minimization efforts.
- The large bins encourage disposal of unacceptable wastes.
- Rear lane pick-up results in damage to collection trucks.
- The collection trucks damage rear lanes.
- Rear lane containers are a target for fires, graffiti and other vandalism.
- Rear lane containers are a source of litter and strewn waste.

In 2002, the City of Saskatoon (City) began converting neighbourhoods from communal back lane collections to individual roll-out cart front street collections. This process included a robust engagement process that allowed the neighbourhood an opportunity to choose what service style they wanted. This process was time consuming and did not promptly achieve the expected benefits of individual front street collections.

On August 13, 2007, City Council approved a program of accelerated conversion of communal back lane garbage collection to individual container garbage collection in the front street for all remaining residences serviced by the large communal bins. With this program, the engagement process was removed and replaced with education initiatives.

When the accelerated conversion program commenced in the fall of 2008, there was negative feedback from predominantly older neighbourhoods. Concerns with the accelerated conversion, typically, originated from homeowners with no front driveways, homes on narrow lots, and areas with boulevards. Areas with front garages and front driveways were, typically, accepting of the conversion to front street collection.

On June 1, 2009, City Council resolved that all future neighbourhoods converted to individual roll out containers have the containers picked up in the rear lane. This resolution also included that a process be developed to allow neighbourhoods that previously converted to front street collection following the accelerated conversion decision, to convert in whole or in part back-to-back lane collection.

In June 2009, the following process was developed to determine where the waste collections for some of these neighbourhoods would be:

- Reviewing comments and correspondence from residents in that neighbourhood.
- Consulting with the Councillor for that neighbourhood.
- If a clear preference was determined from these activities, then a decision would be made.
- If it was unclear, then a telephone survey would be conducted, and results would be compiled and reviewed, and a decision would be made.

The remaining neighbourhoods were converted from communal collections to individual roll-out carts over the following years.

There have been no large-scale collection location changes made since the conversion project was completed.

When the Blue Cart program was introduced, it mirrored the collection location of Black Carts. The subscription green cart program was front street collection regardless of where other carts were placed. However, with the introduction of City-wide Green Carts, collection locations were harmonized to match Black and Blue cart collection locations.

Administration has committed to completing a comprehensive review of where curbside waste collection is made (front street vs back lane) for the remaining back lane collections. This review, which is planned to take place and be reported on in 2025, would look at the benefits and drawbacks of each option.

## **CURRENT STATUS**

Approximately 25% of the nearly 76,000 curbside residences in Saskatoon receive waste collections in the back lane. A map of the city is included in Appendix 1, which shows where back lane and front street collections are made. All new developments have curbside collections made on the front street.

There currently is no formal process within the City for changing the waste collection location for full neighbourhoods. This report provides some insight on what a new process for a full neighbourhood collection location change in Eastview could look like. This process would also aid in the comprehensive waste collection location review that is planned for 2025.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

To properly assess the Eastview residents' opinions about a change in the location of the waste collection, the following engagement activities are proposed:

- 1) A mail out (paper or electronic) flyer outlining the proposed changes, and dates for engagement activities.
- 2) Creation of an engagement page on the City of Saskatoon website – portal for information, a link to the survey, and how to get in contact with the project manager.
  - a. A virtual question and answer session with subject matter experts from the City, with the goal of answering questions and listening to feedback. This would give residents an opportunity to ask questions in real time.
- 3) Five question survey to gather data on preferences, concerns, and comments. This survey would run from the time the flyer is delivered to two weeks after the virtual event.

In total, the engagement phase of the project would take four weeks. The goal of the engagement would be to provide City staff insight into preferences and highlight any unintended consequences of the proposed change. The estimated cost for these activities is approximately \$8,000 and includes all staff time.

Operationally moving the Eastview neighbourhood to front street collections would be straightforward. There may be additional requirements to reconfigure collections routes, but this planning work could be completed within the current operating budget.

Eastview is one of the newer neighbourhoods in Saskatoon that still has back lane collections. The lots have relatively large frontages, and many homes have driveways, which reduces the expected front street collection concerns in other neighbourhoods with narrow lots and no driveways.

If the results of the engagement activities indicate that there is a clear preference for the Eastview neighbourhood to convert to front street collections, then the decision would be made to do so in consultation with the Ward Councillor. A communications and education plan would be developed and initiated, at an estimated cost of about \$5,000. Data on the process and outcomes of the conversion will also be compiled and included in the comprehensive waste collection location review that is planned for 2025. This work can be carried out within the current operations budget.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The engagement process is expected to cost \$8,000. If the decision is made to convert, an additional \$5,000 is expected to be spent on education for the neighbourhood residents. These costs can be funded through the curbside garbage and organics utilities.

There may be operational savings from converting the Eastview neighborhood from back lane to front street collections. Any impacts to existing budgets is expected to be minimal and would be confirmed and included in the 2026/2027 Business Plan and Budget submissions.

**OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

This process would help inform the comprehensive collection location review that is planned for 2025.

**NEXT STEPS**

If direction is provided to proceed with the engagement in Eastview, the Administration would undertake the work in the spring of 2025.

**APPENDICES**

1. Collections Map Whole City 2024

Report Approval

Written by: Brock Storey, Environmental Operations Manager  
Reviewed by: Brendan Lemke, Director of Water and Waste Operations  
Approved by: Angela Gardiner, General Manager, Utilities and Environment