



MULTI-UNIT ORGANICS PILOT

Engagement Report

December 2, 2024



CONTENTS

- Contents 2
- List of Figures..... 3
- List of Tables 3
- Engagement Summary..... 4
- Engagement Report..... 9
 - 1 Background..... 9
 - 1.1 Strategic Goals..... 9
 - 1.2 Summary of Engagement Strategy..... 10
 - 1.3 Participants..... 10
 - 2 Engagement Activities 11
 - 2.1 Launch Survey 11
 - 2.2 Interviews and Site Visits 13
 - 2.3 Closing Survey 14
 - 3 Evaluation of Engagement 19
 - 3.1 Evaluations..... 19
 - 3.2 Data Limitations..... 20
 - 3.3 Opportunities for Improvement 20
 - 4 Next Steps 21



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Importance of waste diversion 12
Figure 2: Knowledge of organics and what can be composted..... 12
Figure 3: Usefulness of organic waste diversion..... 15
Figure 4: How often participants used the organics supplies 16
Figure 5: How participants enjoyed using the organics supplies 16
Figure 6: Concerns for grossness and cleanliness 17
Figure 7: Support for the program 18
Figure 8: Survey evaluation 19

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of engagement goals 10
Table 2: Summary of engagement activities 10



ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In 2024 the City of Saskatoon (City) engaged select residents, tenants and property managers in the Multi-Unit Organics Pilot Study to help shape a future multi-unit organics program for Saskatoon.

We explored the following:



- **Support** for a multi-unit organics service
- The **opportunities and barriers** associated with a multi-unit organics service
- **Education and awareness materials** that were effective and useful
- The importance of **kitchen pails and BPI bags** for organics collection
- **Specific considerations** for a multi-unit organics program

Why Are We Doing This Work?

The City of Saskatoon (City) is developing a multi-unit residential organics program that will explore opportunities to divert organic waste from multi-unit buildings. There are many reasons for the City to divert organic waste away from the landfill, including:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Improved environmental health
- Delaying the need for a new landfill

The program aligns with the [City of Saskatoon 2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#); in particular, the outcome to maximize solid waste diversion and to implement actions in the [Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan](#) within proposed timeframes to achieve 70% diversion from the Saskatoon Landfill.

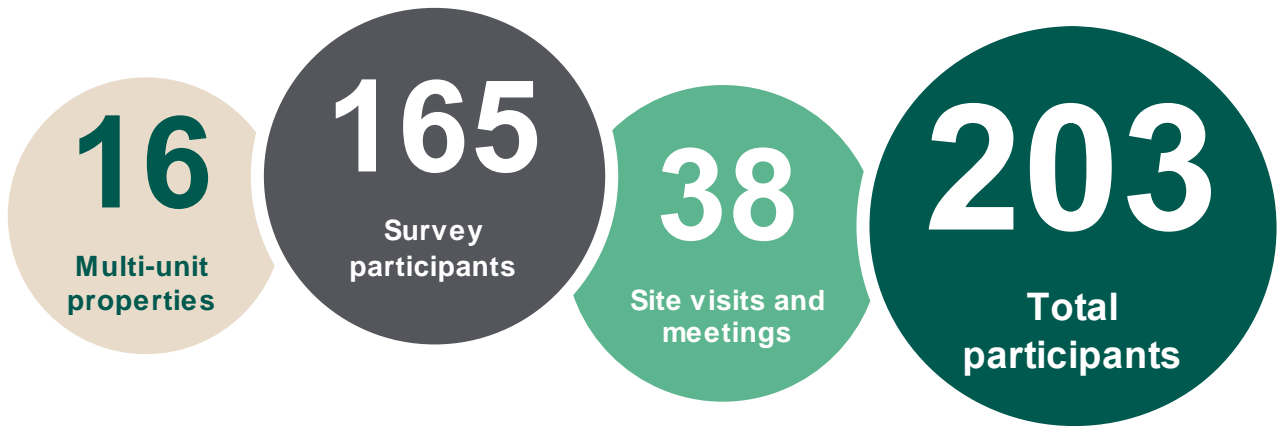
Using What We Learned

Based on feedback from participants, in addition to best practices from other cities and internal considerations, City Administration is developing a recommendation for a Multi-Unit Organics Program, which will be presented to City Council in 2025.

This condensed report outlines the feedback from all activities that informed the engagement goals for the project. For more information and detailed results please see the Engagement Report.

We thank all participants who provided their feedback for this and other City of Saskatoon projects.

WHAT WE DID



The City engaged with a mix of different types of multi-unit properties within the Lawson Heights, River Heights and Silverwood Heights neighbourhoods. By focusing on one area for the pilot, the City could more easily monitor the pilot and collect direct feedback from participants.

Who We Engaged With:

- ⊕ Condo Boards
- ⊕ Multi-unit housing providers
- ⊕ Property managers
- ⊕ Residents
- ⊕ Tenants

How We Gathered Input:

- ⊕ Meetings with property managers and condo boards
- ⊕ Pop-ups at individual properties
- ⊕ Surveys for participants

Questions we asked participants:

- **What did they think** of the pilot program?
- **What information** did they need to use the green bin?
- **What considerations** are needed for a future program?
- **How can the City help** make organics collection clean, safe and accessible?



WHAT WE HEARD

Thoughts On Organic Waste Diversion

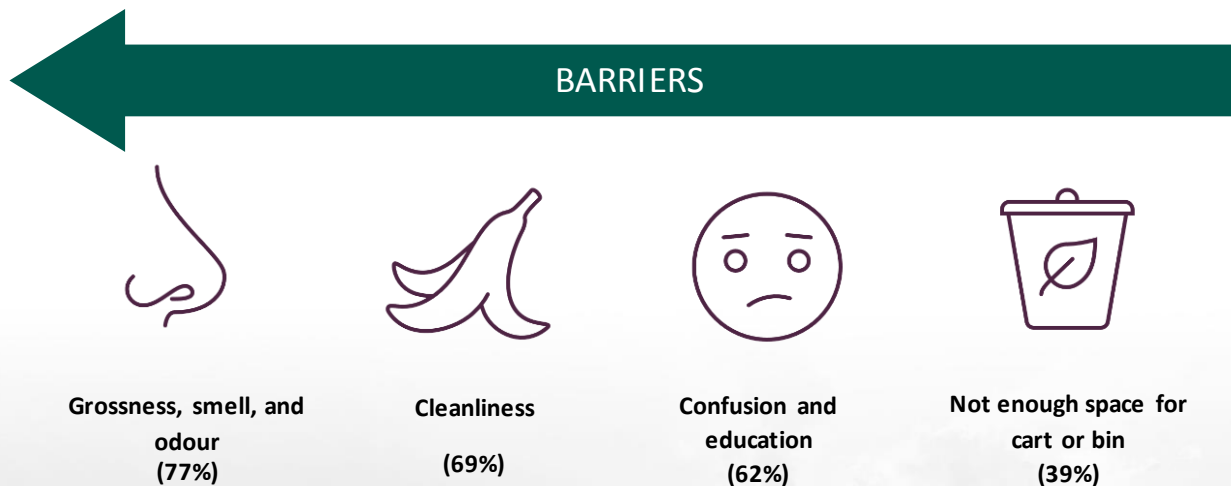
- Waste diversion and having a positive impact on the environment is important to most participants.
- Most of the participants (62% of participants) felt that 25% or less of their household waste consisted of food waste.
- Participants favoured receiving education through pamphlets and handouts (93%), condo boards/property managers (85%) and the City's website (62%).

HOW IMPORTANT IS WASTE DIVERSION TO YOU?



Barriers to Multi-Unit Organics

Participants prioritized the following barriers to multi-unit organics collection as being the most important:



Other barriers provided by participants included:

- **Frequency** of emptying the containers
- **Illegal dumping and/or misuse** of green containers
- Regularly emptying collection containers in property **common areas**
- **Safety considerations** for transporting waste by those who are lacking in mobility.

Support the Pilot Study

Participants felt that diverting their food and garden waste was “very useful”. The majority of participants enjoyed and “always used” their green carts (80%), kitchen pails (81%) and BPI bags (83%). Other findings included:

- Most participants felt that **BPI bags were very important** (66%) for their participation, since they reduce the smell and improved the cleanliness of organic waste collection.
- On average participants felt that their **concerns about the grossness and cleanliness of carts were the same** as those prior to the pilot study.
- Most participants (85%) **understood the importance of keeping organic waste out of the landfill**.

HOW USEFUL WAS IT TO DIVERT YOUR FOOD AND GARDEN WASTE?



Education Materials

Most participants were very satisfied (81%) with the signage and education materials. From the educational materials provided during the pilot study, participants provided the following ranking based on their helpfulness:



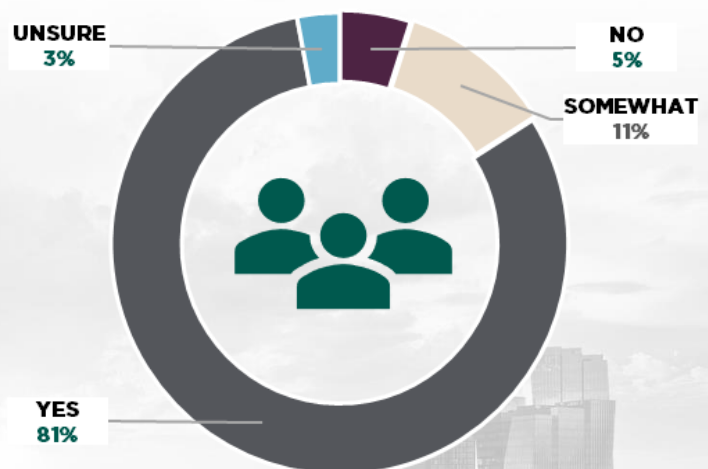
1. Kitchen pail and postcard (71%)
2. Kitchen magnet “What Goes In” (57%)
3. Posters in the building (33%)
4. Signage on bins (30%)
5. Email from property manager/condo board (29%)
6. Website (7%)

Support for the Program

When asked whether they supported the City in implementing the Multi-Unit Organics Program across Saskatoon, most participants stated “yes” (81%).

Throughout the meetings, interviews and surveys, participants expressed their support for the process and for the City in improving waste diversion in Saskatoon.

DO YOU SUPPORT THE PROGRAM?



Other Considerations

From the various comments provided throughout the engagement activities, the following topics were emphasized by participants:

Accessibility: some participants had difficulty carrying their bags/kitchen pails to the green cart and lifting the green cart lids; accessibility considerations need further exploration

Adapt: a few participants called on the City to be flexible in how the program is implemented and adapt to the individual needs of specific properties, such as working with the property manager to increase the number or change the distribution of green bins on the property

Bin liners: participants found that the liners used for the green carts would often fall down, leading to the need for more regular cleaning and maintenance of the green carts; participants asked for the City to find a solution to secure the bags to the green carts

Pickup frequency: some participants found that collections every two-week was not frequent enough and instead preferred weekly collection schedules

Support: many participants supported the program and supported the City for their efforts, stating it was easy to do and that more residents should get involved

NEXT STEPS

What learnt from participants, in addition to best practices from other cities and internal considerations, will be used to shape a future multi-unit organics program for the entire City. Findings on this engagement and a recommendation for a Multi-Unit Organics Program will be presented to City Council in 2025.

We thank all participants who provided their feedback for this and other City of Saskatoon projects.



ENGAGEMENT REPORT

1 BACKGROUND

The City of Saskatoon (City) is developing a multi-unit residential organics program that will explore opportunities to divert multi-unit organic waste. There are many reasons for the City to divert organic waste away from the landfill, including:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Improved environmental health
- Delaying the need for a new landfill
- Building on previous [engagement results](#) from [Saskatoon Talks Trash: Multi-Unit \(2018\)](#), which showed that 80% of residents and 53% of property managers supported an organics program.

To continue this work, the City conducted a pilot study for organics diversion at multi-unit residential properties. From January to September 2024, the City is engaged select property managers, owners and tenants from 15 different multi-unit properties in the development of the program. Selected properties were provided with green collector bins for their building, as well as kitchen pails and BPI (Biodegradable Products Institute) bags for use during the pilot study. Numerous communications and marketing tactics were used to promote participation in the pilot study, including educational signage and pop-ups.

Throughout the pilot study participants were asked:

- What did they think of the pilot study?
- What future improvements can be made to the program?
- How can the City help make organics collection clean, safe and accessible?

What we learned from participants, in addition to best practices from other cities and internal considerations, will be used to shape a future multi-unit organics program for the entire city. A recommendation for a Multi-Unit Organics Program will be presented to City Council in 2025.

1.1 Strategic Goals

The program aligns with the [City of Saskatoon 2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#); in particular, the outcome to maximize solid waste diversion and to implement actions in the [Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan](#) within the proposed timeframes, to achieve 70% diversion from the landfill.

It also ties into the [Official Community Plan](#) (4.2 - Recycling and Diversion) and the objective to promote recycling and diversion to keep recyclable, organic, and other recoverable materials from entering the landfill and policies to facilitate city-wide waste diversion initiatives throughout all sectors, including policy, collection, and educational programs.

Other City goals and/or initiatives the program supports include:

- [Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan](#), which identifies mandatory residential multi-unit organics as an action.

- [Low Emissions Community Plan](#) identifies Action 24: Improve and expand waste management programs and services to increase reduction and diversion. By 2050, achieve reduction and diversion rates of 90% for organics, 95% for plastics and 90% for paper.

1.2 Summary of Engagement Strategy

A summary of the participants, level of influence, engagement objectives and activities completed are provided below.

Table 1: Summary of engagement goals

Phase	Participants	Level of Influence	Objective	Engagement Activities
1	Property Managers Owners/Tenants	Consult	Launching: Understand interest and considerations for the pilot program	*Correspondence Survey
2	Property Managers Owners/Tenants	Consult	Learning: Determine support and improvements for program	*Correspondence Interviews Survey

* Correspondence refers to emails, phone calls, and virtual meetings with participants.

A summary of engagement activities, dates, and number of participants engaged is provided in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of engagement activities

Participants	Activity	Timeframe	Participants
All	Launch Survey	Q1, 2024	21
All	Interviews and Site Visits	Q3, 2024	38
All	Closing Survey	Q3, 2024	144
Total Participants:			203

1.3 Participants

A total of 15 multi-unit residential properties were selected within the Lawson Heights, River Heights, and Silverwood Heights neighbourhoods. Properties contained a mix of demographics and building types. Properties contained up to four buildings with 20 to 200 units. Property managers and condo boards were also engaged throughout the pilot, whenever possible.

Engagement with all participants aimed to be inclusive in terms of age, gender, culture, citizenship, income, and other demographics.

2 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Participants provided their feedback through surveys, interviews or by contacting the project team directly. All engagement activities are described below.

2.1 Launch Survey

The City conducted an online survey from January to March 2024 to determine the interest in participating in the pilot study and considerations for the program. The survey included 12 (owners/tenants) to 16 (property managers) closed- and open-ended questions. Respondents were able to write-in an “other” preference for numerous questions and provide explanations for their answers.

2.1.1 Intended Audience

The survey was intended for property managers, owners and tenants from the 15 multi-unit properties participating in the pilot study.

2.1.2 Marketing Techniques

The following techniques were used to reach the intended audiences.

1. Print Materials
 - a. Posters and postcards were developed to explain the program and provide education on green cart usage. These were displayed around the participating buildings and distributed to every household.
2. Starter Kit
 - a. A starter kit was provided to each participant which included a hot stamped kitchen catcher, a sampling of BPI-certified compostable bags as well as the informational postcard.
3. City Website
 - a. Updates to the City’s website were made to encourage participation in the online survey.
4. Email
 - a. Personalized emails were sent to property managers and/or condo boards asking for their participation and to share the information with their tenants.
5. Signage
 - a. Custom signs were developed based on the property layouts to aide residents in using their green carts. Some signs were informational and identified the different types of waste bins outside their property. In other cases, directional signage was installed to help guide residents to their green cart for easier disposal.

2.1.3 Analysis

Mixed methods were used to analyze the data. Qualitative methods included thematic analysis and open coding of responses. The results were analyzed for the following indicators:

- Most popular opportunities and barriers (count)
- Level of support (count) for various program elements
- Thematic analysis of considerations related to the pilot study and/or different program options.

2.1.4 What We Heard

A total of 21 community members participated in the survey, with roughly 55% being owners, 11% being renters and 29% being property managers/condo board representatives.

Thoughts On Waste Diversion and the Pilot Program

Property managers were somewhat happy (average 3.5 out of 5) with their current waste collection servicing. Concerns with their current waste collection services included not having enough room for waste bins, missed pickups and lack of communications with the service provider.

Waste diversion and having a positive impact on the environment, was important to participants (Figure 1). Most participants (85%) stated that they were planning on participating in the pilot study.

HOW IMPORTANT IS WASTE DIVERSION TO YOU?



Figure 1: Importance of waste diversion

Understanding of Organics

When asked to speculate on what percentage of their household waste was food waste, most responded with 25% or lower (62% of participants), followed by 25-50% (23% of participants). Participants had a good understanding of what could go into their green bins and kitchen pails (Figure 2).

WHAT CAN PUT IN YOUR GREEN BIN AND KITCHEN PAIL?

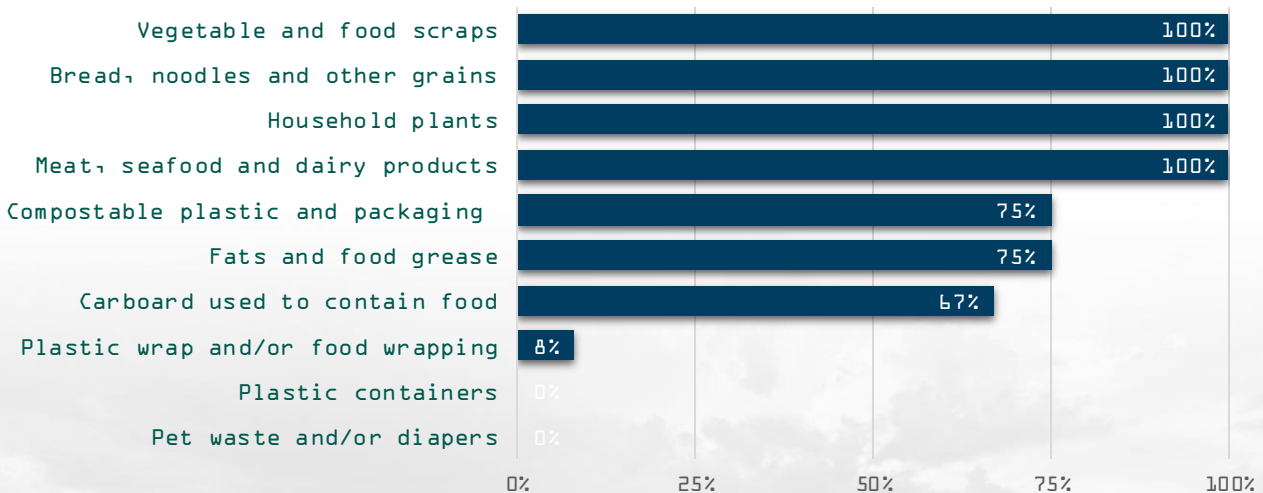


Figure 2: Knowledge of organics and what can be composted

From the proposed education methods for the future pilot program, participants provided the following ranking:



1. Pamphlets and handouts (93%)
2. Through condo boards/property managers (85%)
3. Website information (62%)
4. Videos, radio and multimedia (46%)
5. Social media (39%)
6. Door to door information (23%)

Suggestions for other educational methods provided by participants included holding pop-up events at malls and involving those who already participated in the program to showcase the benefits. One participant stressed the need for in-person education, stating that information sent via mail could be viewed as being “junk mail” by many residents/tenants and that direct approaches were more preferred.

Barriers to Multi-Unit Organics

When asked to identify the most important barriers to participating in a multi-unit organics program, respondents provided the following ranking:



1. Grossness, including smell and odour (77%)
2. Cleanliness of the organics container and surrounding area (69%)
3. Confusion and not enough education, such as not knowing what goes in (62%)
4. Not enough space for the organics container or cart (39%)
5. Pests (31%)
6. Limited update and/or misuse of the containers (23%)
6. Not convenient (23%)
7. Do not generate enough material to make it worth the effort (8%)

Other suggested barriers included the frequency of emptying the containers, enforcement for those who illegally use/misuse the bins, ensuring there are containers in common areas that are regularly emptied, and transporting the kitchen pails for those who are lacking in mobility.

2.2 Interviews and Site Visits

A total of 14 interviews and site visits were held at pilot properties throughout August 2024, during the second phase of engagement.

2.2.1 Intended Audience

Interviews and site visits were used to collect feedback from those directly involved with management/oversight of the pilot property or were direct contacts during the pilot study. Interviewees included members of condo boards and property managers. Many of the interviewees were residents at a pilot property.

2.2.2 Marketing Techniques

No marketing techniques were employed for these activities.

2.2.3 Analysis

Qualitative methods were used to analyze the data, including the thematic analysis and open coding of responses. The results were analyzed for the level of support for the various program elements and considerations.

2.2.4 What We Heard

Servicing and Logistics

The majority of interviewees supported the City providing the organics waste collection service for their multi-unit properties, as long as the City met the needs of their building and provided the lowest cost for the service.

At the start of the pilot study most buildings preferred biweekly collections; however, throughout the pilot study many buildings changed to weekly collections. This was primarily due to the cleanliness and smell of the carts, especially during the summer months.

The location for the organics waste containers depended on the space available and access to the location. Some interviewees expressed their concerns for cross contamination due to their proximity to other waste containers (i.e., garbage and recycling) and the impacts on parking.

Education

The majority of interviewees liked the educational materials that were provided during the pilot study. One participant noted that they were confused as to whether garden waste was considered organic waste, while other participants suggested having a larger container for seasonal yard waste (i.e., spring and fall).

Interviewees enjoyed using the kitchen pails and the City providing BPI bags for individual use. A few interviewees suggested having BPI bag dispensers in an accessible location on the property would be of benefit. Another interviewee noted that common eating areas create unique challenges, since this requires regular emptying of a shared waste container.

2.3 Closing Survey

The City conducted an online survey in August 2024 to gain feedback on the pilot study and additional considerations for the program. The survey consisted of fourteen closed- and open-ended questions, with some additional questions for property managers. Respondents were able to write-in an “other” preference for numerous questions and provide explanations for their answers.

2.3.1 Intended Audience

The survey was intended for property managers, owners and tenants from the 15 multi-unit properties participating in the pilot study.

2.3.2 Marketing Techniques

The following techniques were used to reach the intended audiences.

1. City Website
 - a. Updates to the City’s website were made to encourage participation in the online survey.

2. Email
 - a. Personalized emails were sent to property managers and condo boards asking for the survey link and information to be shared with residents and tenants of each property.
3. Signage
 - a. Posters for the closing survey were put in as many buildings as possible with a QR code to the survey

2.3.3 Analysis

Mixed methods were used to analyze the data. Qualitative methods included the thematic analysis and open coding of responses. The results were analyzed for the following indicators:

- Level of support (count) for various program elements and considerations
- Thematic analysis of considerations related to the pilot study and/or different program options.

2.3.4 What We Learned

A total of 144 property managers, representatives, residents and participated in the survey, with 96% of them stating that they used the organics service offered during the pilot study. Participants were from all but three pilot properties.

Feedback on the Pilot Study

Most participants felt that their building's green cart was easy to locate (96%) and access (94%). One participant suggested that residents will have to work with their property managers to ensure the distribution of green bins aligns with their usage, since some bins were used more than others. Many participants felt that their property managers do a good job with keeping in touch with them on waste issues (72%).

When asked how useful it was to divert their food and garden waste, participants on average stated it was "very useful" (Figure 3). Most participants indicated that they "always" used the green carts, kitchen pails and BPI bags (Figure 4).

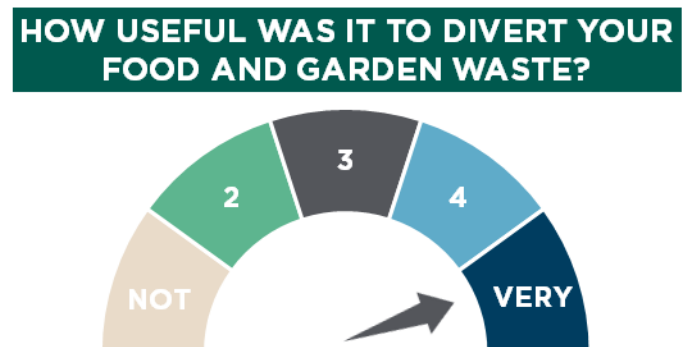


Figure 3: Usefulness of organic waste diversion

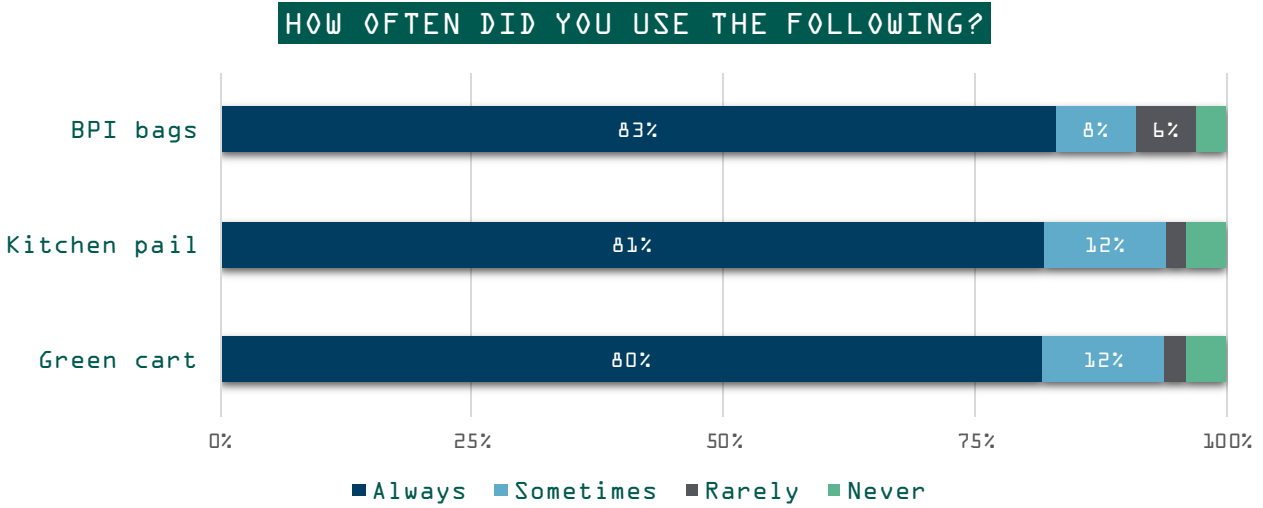


Figure 4: How often participants used the organics supplies

Results were similar when participants were asked whether they enjoyed using their green carts, kitchen pails and BPI bags (Figure 5).

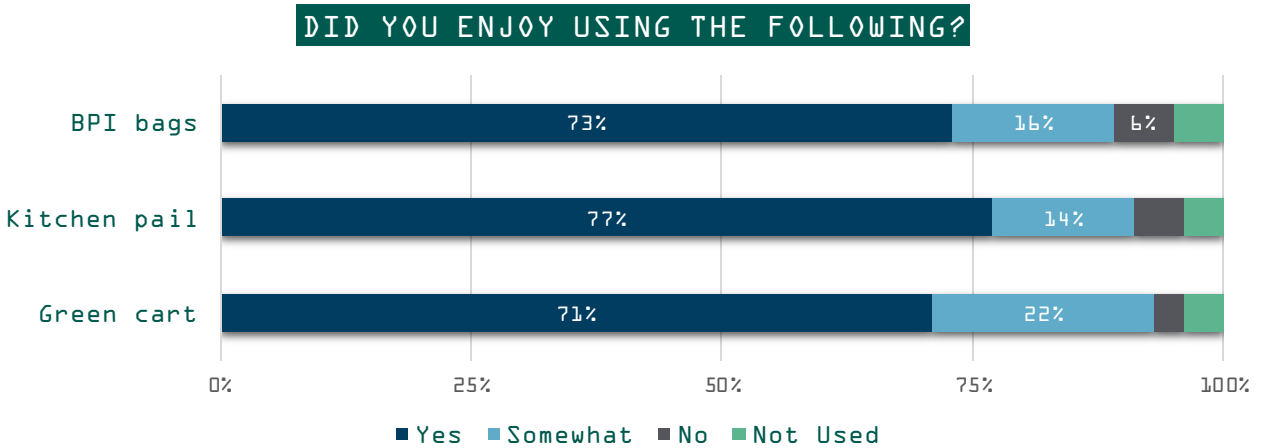


Figure 5: How participants enjoyed using the organics supplies

Most participants felt that BPI bags were “very important” (66%) for their participation in the pilot study, with some indicating they were “somewhat important” (14%) or “not important” (12%). Participants expressed that the BPI bags made the process cleaner, were easy to use, were strong enough for their purpose, contained unwanted smells and held a good amount of waste. Others felt that the bags were too small, would not remain in place and were prone to leaking.

Many supported the City in providing the BPI bags, since it simplified the process and reduced the costs for participants. One participant felt that biodegradable bags were difficult to find in local retail stores, while another participant felt they were cheap and easy to find online. A few participants suggested that the City provide more information on where replacement bags can be regularly bought locally.

On average participants felt that their concerns about the grossness and cleanliness of carts were the same as those prior to the pilot study (Figure 6). Some participants expressed their disappointment towards others who did not use the BPI bags, thereby increasing grossness and cleanliness concerns. A few participants found the smell to be overwhelming due to the low airflow within their buildings.

WERE YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT GROSSNESS AND CLEANLINESS AS YOU EXPECTED?



Figure 6: Concerns for grossness and cleanliness

Educational Materials

Most participants were “very satisfied” (81%) with the signage and education materials they received during the pilot study, followed by those who were “somewhat satisfied” (16%). From the education materials provided, participants provided the following ranking based on their helpfulness:



1. Kitchen pail and post card (71%)
2. Kitchen magnet “What Goes In” (57%)
3. Posters in the building (33%)
4. Signage on bins (30%)
5. Email from property manager/condo board (29%)
6. Website (7%)

Most participants felt they understood (85%) the importance of keeping organics out of the landfill, followed by those who felt they “somewhat” understood (10%). Suggested improvements for education materials included the following:

- Continue to provide BPI bags, especially at the onset of the program
- Describe how to best deal with kitchen grease in this process
- Describe what happens to the organic waste following pickup
- Give each property compost/dirt created from the process for their use and to show the benefits of their efforts
- Information on why composting is important
- Instructions on what not to put in the green bins, along with what to put in
- Post signs at garbage and recycling containers/shoots as reminders
- Provide information on how to use BPI bags, where to get them and that they dissolve over time
- Provide demonstrations and presentations at property meetings and encourage discussions to find common challenges/solutions
- Use both “yard/garden” and “food” terms on signs to avoid confusion
- Work directly with seniors and those with disabilities to understand their needs.

Support For the Program

When asked whether they supported the City in implementing the Multi-Unit Organics Program across Saskatoon, most participants stated “yes” (81%), followed by those who stated “somewhat” (11%) or “no” (5%). Final comments provided by respondents included the following main themes:

Accessibility: some participants had difficulty carrying their bags/kitchen pails to the green cart and lifting the green cart lids due to their low mobility; accessibility considerations need to be explored, such as having collection bins on each floor (i.e., near garbage disposals) or providing door-to-door collections services for those in need.

Adapt: a few participants called on the City to be flexible in how they roll out the program and adapt to the individual needs of specific properties, such as working with property managers to increase the number of bins or change their distribution on the property; it was suggested that the City may need to provide more green bins on a seasonal basis, such as in the fall when there is more indoor plant material

Bin liners: the second most popular theme; participants found that the bin liners within the green carts would often fall down and called on the City to find a solution to secure them to the green cart; some suggested that the green bins may need to be regularly cleaned and maintained

“But invariably it would collapse down into the bin. If you want to use the big bags then maybe find a way to secure them at the top of the bin.”

Bugs: some participants saw an increase in the number of insect pests during the pilot study, such as fruit flies and mites

Costs: one participant felt that the costs of the program outweighed the benefits, since their green bins were rarely used; another participant did not want to see the costs for the program included within their taxes and increase their costs of living; another participant was concerned about the impacts the additional waste trucks could have on their roadways and parking

Pickup frequency: the third most popular comment; some participants found that collections every two-week was not frequent enough and instead preferred weekly collection schedules

Support: the most popular theme; many participants supported the program and supported the City for their efforts, stating it was easy to do and that more residents should get involved

“I didn’t expect to like doing this so much, I can work on not being wasteful”

“I’m glad this program was made available to smaller multi-unit dwellings so we can all do our part in better waste management”

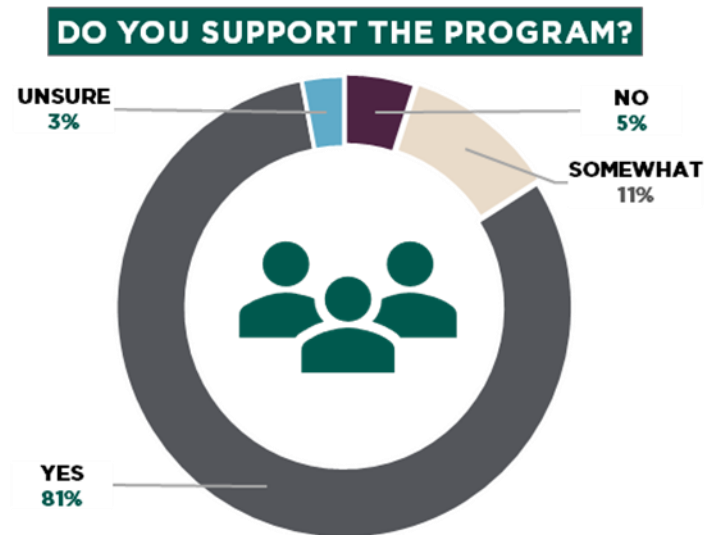


Figure 7: Support for the program

3 EVALUATION OF ENGAGEMENT

Evaluation is discussed in terms of feedback received during engagement activities and through informal comments, data limitations and opportunities for improvement.

3.1 Evaluations

Survey participants indicated support for both the level of engagement conducted and the opportunities provided. For the surveys, participants generally agreed or strongly agreed with the information that was provided being clear and understandable (97%), with feeling they were able to provide their opinions fully (98%), and in understanding how their input would be used (87%).

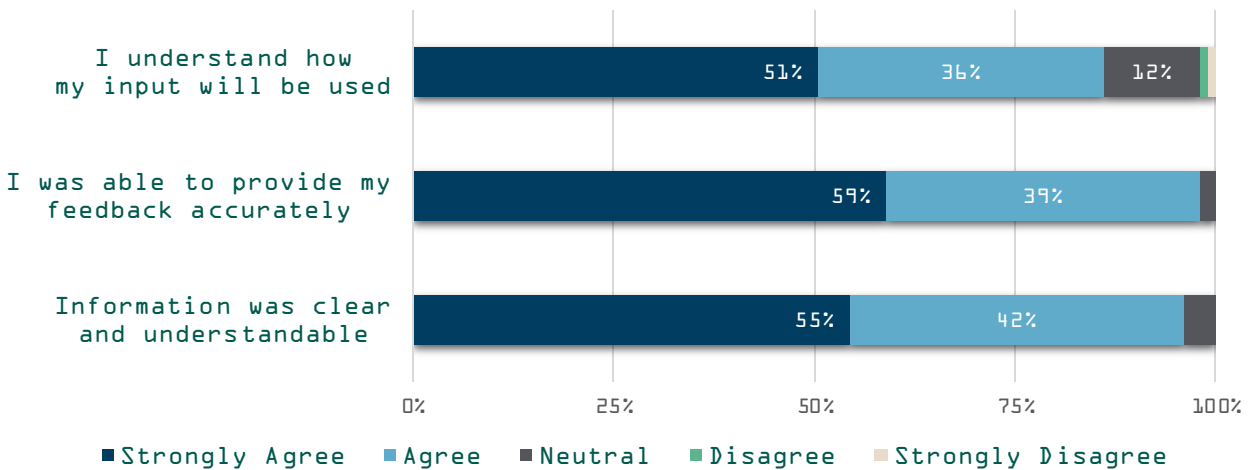


Figure 8: Survey evaluation

Throughout the meetings, interviews and surveys, participants expressed their support for the process:

“I appreciated the easy to answer multiple choice questions and the multiple opportunities to provide comments. Thank you.”

“Many surveys I fill out don't have "other" boxes that a person could add comments to. I'm glad you added them!”

One participant suggested receiving feedback on how residents can encourage their neighbours to get involved:

“Perhaps a question about ways in which people can encourage their neighbours to participate because some people I meet seem to be nonchalant about this program.”

A few participants were confused as to how their feedback would be used:

“I have no idea how my input will be used, but I sure hope, somebody will take the time to read my comments.”

3.2 Data Limitations

Numerous communications, marketing and engagement tactics were used throughout the pilot study to gain feedback from the diversity of residents, tenants and property managers within the selected properties; however, many either did not participate in any of our methods and/or the pilot study. The results are considered to provide the best available indication of how the participants perceived the program at the time of the pilot study.

3.3 Opportunities for Improvement

Based on participant feedback, the following opportunities for improvement will be considered for future engagement activities:

- Any written or verbal information should use plain language and easy-to-understand terms
- Providing in-person and door-to-door engagement is especially useful for seniors and persons with disabilities.

4 NEXT STEPS

What we learned from participants, in addition to best practices from other cities and internal considerations, will be used to shape a future multi-unit organics program for the entire city. This Multi-Unit Organics Program will be presented to City Council in 2025.

We thank all participants who provided their feedback for this and other City of Saskatoon projects.

