

Multi-Unit Organics: Options and Analysis

ISSUE

In February 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services received an information report on the results of the multi-unit residential organics pilot project. The pilot study explored the feasibility of certain approaches to multi-unit organics diversion, and guiding principles were introduced to help design and assess city-wide program options.

The purpose of this decision report is to present city-wide multi-unit organics program options that could meet the specific needs of Saskatoon, with analysis and a recommendation. Direction from this decision report can then be utilized by Administration to develop a detailed implementation plan that includes timelines, a funding strategy, deployment plan, bylaw amendments, and communications activities.

BACKGROUND

History

City Council, at its meeting held on May 23, 2017, received the Waste Diversion Opportunities report identifying various tools and approaches to improving waste diversion in Saskatoon, including organics diversion for the multi-unit sector.

On February 13, 2018, an overview of [Multi-Unit Residential Waste Diversion Opportunities](#) was brought to City Council with a recommendation that Administration explore opportunities for the diversion of organic waste from multi-unit residential buildings and proceed with engagement with citizens and stakeholders.

Engagement with stakeholders was carried out and a report with findings were presented to City Council on September 10, 2018: [Multi-Unit Residential Proposed Changes to Waste Management – Engagement Results](#).

The Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services, at its meeting held on February 4, 2025, received a report titled: [Multi-Unit Organics – Pilot Findings and Next Steps](#). The report summarized the findings from a pilot study for multi-unit organics that started in 2024, and provided organics disposal service to 16 properties in Lawson Heights, River Heights, and Silverwood Heights. The pilot study explored the feasibility of certain approaches to multi-unit organics diversion.

Current Status

Guided by the [Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan](#), the City of Saskatoon (City) is addressing organics waste diversion through an approach which targets the largest waste generating sectors first. In 2023, the City launched the green cart program to collect organics from curbside residential households. Regulations requiring that businesses and organizations that generate food or yard waste as part of their operations to divert these materials also began in 2023, with enforcement beginning in

the fall of 2024. Programs for multi-unit residential and public space/event organics diversion are in development.

Public Engagement

Initial engagement with stakeholders was carried out in 2018 as part of Saskatoon Talks Trash: Multi-Unit engagement campaign. Engagement showed that the majority of residents were excited about a multi-unit organic program while property manager support for introduction of organics collection was more mixed. Properly addressing pests and odours, dealing with space limitations, and program cost were the top concerns identified during engagement.

Targeted engagement was completed with residents, tenants, and property managers participating in the Multi-Unit Organics Pilot. Residents and tenants were invited to complete a survey eight months into the pilot in August 2024. 81% of survey respondents stated that they supported the City implementing a city-wide multi-unit organics program, and 11% said they “somewhat support” a city-wide program. A representative from each property provided feedback through an informal interview that collected thoughts on organic service approaches, waste funding methods, collection frequency, container type and location, multi-unit garbage and recycling, and education. The survey and interviews provided useful information on education approaches and tools for increasing participation in organics diversion.

City of Saskatoon’s Current Approach

The City does not have an organics diversion program for the multi-unit residential sector.

Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

In the last decade, many multi-unit residential waste diversion programs in other jurisdictions have been launched using regulations, bylaws, or ordinances. While organics programs are becoming more common, diversion for the multi-unit residential sector still struggles compared to the curbside residential and commercial sector. Communal waste areas lead to less ownership and responsibility as tenants are often removed from financial and management decisions for solid waste services.

Recently, some municipalities have looked at increasing waste service oversight for the multi-unit sector to help improve diversion performance to that of the curbside sector. City of Lethbridge rolled out a City-provided multi-unit organics collection in 2023/2024. City of Victoria is introducing a new City-provided service for organics and recycling for multi-family properties. Education and waste area design guidance are two other areas that municipalities are looking at becoming more involved in to improve performance for all waste streams. A jurisdiction scan with specific details is outlined in Appendix 1.

OPTIONS

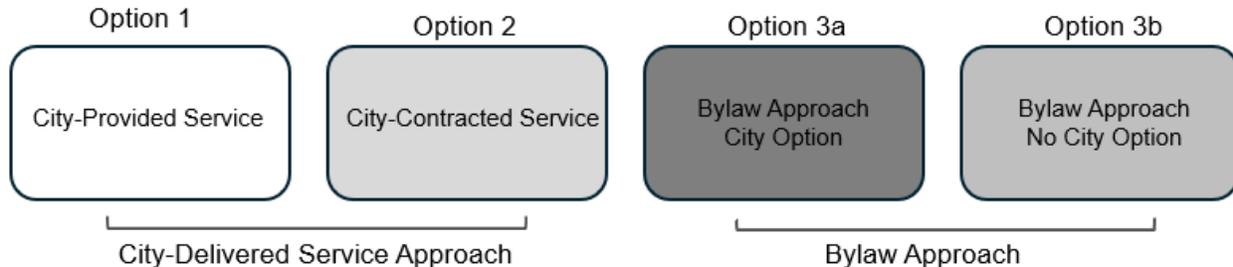
Determining service approach is the main decision required to progress the future program design. A variety of options were looked at in the preliminary options analysis. The four most viable options are categorized as either a City-delivered service approach or a bylaw approach. A City-delivered service approach means that the City leads

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delivery of the program through a municipal service or management of a service agreement, like garbage collections, recycling collections and curbside green cart. The City is responsible for delivering the service. A bylaw approach uses regulations to ensure all multi-unit properties meet certain requirements, like how the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional sector is currently required to divert recycling and organics. The property is responsible for ensuring a suitable service is in place to meet requirements set out in the bylaw.

Other components of the program design, such as education and enforcement, have been identified as required by all options and will be finalized during creation of the implementation plan. There are also separate decision items, such as exemptions, eligibility, design guidelines, and yard waste approach, that will be addressed once the service approach is determined. These decisions along with a deployment plan will be made during creation of the implementation plan.

Figure 1 – Short-listed Options



The four options and a summary of advantages and disadvantages are described below, with additional information available in Appendix 2.

Option 1 – City-Provided Service

Description:	The City delivers a city-wide multi-unit organics service to all properties and uses a utility funding model.
Collection:	Weekly, valet (cart is moved and returned to a location as part of collection)
Container:	240L or 360L green carts (1 per 30 units)
Funding Model:	User fee
Processing:	City of Saskatoon (future processing facility)
City Service:	This option is a City service.

Advantages:

- Most preferred option based on feedback from engagement during the pilot study with condo boards and property managers.
- Lowest cost option when compared to current market.
- More likely to achieve higher waste diversion.

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- Organic tonnage from the multi-unit sector goes to the City processing facility. This material supports the business plan for City processing operations.

Disadvantages:

- Highest level of effort for the City, which will require administrative and operational planning.
- Not as flexible as bylaw option as it may be difficult to quickly adjust service offerings, and the City may be limited in offering premium services.

Option 2 (City-Contracted Service)

Description:	The City determines a service level, conducts procurement, and negotiates a multi-year service agreement with one service provider for a city-wide collection service.
Collection:	Weekly, valet (cart is moved and returned to a location as part of collection)
Container:	240L or 360L green carts (1 per 30 units)
Funding Model:	User fee
Processing:	City of Saskatoon (future processing facility)
City Service:	Not Applicable

Advantages:

- Second most preferred option based on feedback from engagement during the pilot study with condo boards and property managers.
- Lower cost option.
- City has ability to work closely with service provider to achieve moderate waste diversion.
- Organic tonnage from the multi-unit sector goes to the City processing facility. This material supports the business plan for City processing operations.

Disadvantages:

- High level of effort for the City which will require administrative planning, procurement, and contract management.
- Not as flexible as bylaw option as it may be difficult to quickly adjust service offerings, and the City may be limited by a long-term contract.

Option 3a (Bylaw Approach - City Option)

Description:	This option relies on a bylaw requirement for all multi-unit residential properties to divert organic waste. Each property can choose the service provider of their choice. The City would offer service along with other private service providers. City pricing would be dependent on cost recovery and an industry scan of pricing.
Collection:	Dependent on service agreement

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Container:	Dependent on service agreement (carts are likely based on market scan)
Funding Model:	Monthly service pricing. Education/enforcement will require a funding source. All other costs are part of private service contract.
Processing:	The service provider determines which composting facility material goes to.
City Service:	City service available as an option. The City acts as a service provider for those that choose to use.

Advantages:

- High flexibility by ability to choose service provider of choice.
- City participates as a service provider and can help control cost.

Disadvantages:

- High level of effort for City.
- Not preferred option from engagement feedback from the pilot study with condo boards and property managers.
- May not be best option for maximizing waste diversion.
- Difficult to control contamination risk and avoid cost penalties for properties.
- City has less control over making program changes.
- Difficult for City to plan service model and develop a user-fee as it is unknown how many will choose City option.
- Cost may be higher than other options.

Option 3b (Bylaw Approach – No City Option)

Description:	This option relies on a bylaw requirement for all multi-unit residential properties to divert organic waste. Each property chooses the service provider of their choice. The City is not involved as a service provider and offers no organic service similar to the current regulations for businesses and organizations.
Collection:	Dependent on service agreement
Container:	Dependent on service agreement (carts are likely based on market scan)
Funding Model:	Monthly service pricing. Education/ enforcement will require a funding source. All other costs part of private service contract.
Processing:	The service provider determines which composting facility material goes to.
City Service:	No City service available.

Advantages:

- Low level of effort for City compared to other options.
- High flexibility through ability to choose service provider of choice.

Disadvantages:

- Not preferred option from engagement feedback from the pilot study with condo boards and property managers as it requires hiring a service provider and managing a service contract.
- May not be best option for maximizing waste diversion.
- Difficult to control contamination risk and avoid cost penalties for properties.
- City has less control over making program changes.
- Cost will likely be higher than other options.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Environment, Utilities, and Corporate Services Committee recommend to City Council that the Administration pursue Option 1 – City-provided Service for a city-wide multi-unit organics program.

RATIONALE

An options analysis has been used to identify, compare, and help select the best approach for organics diversion for Saskatoon’s multi-unit residential sector. A detailed overview of the option analysis is included in Appendix 2.

A list of guiding principles has been created to support the option analysis and a recommendation for a city-wide program. A detailed explanation of the guiding principles is included in Appendix 2. Evaluation criteria is broken up into service level, environmental, integrated waste, and costs.

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria

Service Level	Environmental	Integrated Waste	Cost
Level of Effort	Waste Diversion	Program Control	Cost
Property Preference	GHG Implications	Contamination Risk	Cost Per Unit
Flexibility	Processing	Customer Service	Cost Control

The table below is a summary of the analysis, which shows that Option 1 – City provided services is the most preferred based on feedback from the pilot project, will reach environmental performance goals, and is projected to have the lowest cost. Summary of scoring can be found in Table 2:

Table 2 – Option Analysis Scoring

	Option 1 City-Provided Service	Option 2 City-Contracted Service	Option 3a Bylaw Approach (City Option)	Option 3b Bylaw Approach (No City Option)
Service Level				
Level of Effort	Most ←————→ Least Effort			
Preference	●	◐	◑	◒
Flexibility	◒	◑	●	◐
Environmental				
Waste Diversion	●	◐	◑	◒
GHG	●	●	◐	◑
Processing	●	●	●	●
Integrated Waste				
Program Control	●	◐	◑	◒
Contamination Risk	●	◐	◑	◒
Customer Service	●	◐	◑	◒
Cost				
Average Monthly Cost Estimate (Per Household)	\$2.95	\$3.75	\$4.30	\$4.85
● = most preferred ○ = least preferred				

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/ CONSIDERATIONS

A detailed financial plan will be prepared for Q3 2025, which is expected to refine the 2026-2027 operational requirements as well as provide further information on the specifics of the program fee structure. Consideration will be given to how this can be coordinated with other *Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan* actions to maximize efficiency and reduce redundancy.

Through the *Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan 2026-2027* work plan, sufficient funds are available in the Waste Minimization Reserve to fund the implementation and development costs associated with this program. A request for capital funding will be brought forward through the 2026-2027 Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget process in November 2025 to allocate funds to this project.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Education and communication will be an important part of the development of the multi-unit organics program. Direction from this decision report can then be utilized by Administration to develop a detailed implementation plan, that includes timelines, a funding strategy, deployment plan, and communications. Program details will be

communicated with all multi-unit residential property managers and condo boards that will be impacted.

NEXT STEPS

Different deployment methods for the approved option will be evaluated that aim to have a city-wide program fully operational by the end of 2028. Deployment could start as early as 2027. All properties would be given a minimum of one-year advance notice. A report with implementation plan details will be brought forward in Q3 2025. The report will include details on timelines, a funding strategy, resource requirements, deployment plan, and communications activities.

APPENDICES

1. Jurisdiction Scan Summary
2. Multi-Unit Organics: Options Analysis

Report Approval

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