

# Saskatoon Talks Trash: Curbside

## Pop-Up Conversations Feedback Summary



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# City of Saskatoon Curbside Collection Redesign - Engagement Summary Report

## Appendix A – Pop-Up Conversations Feedback Report

### Pop-Up Conversation Feedback Summary

Pop-Up engagement was used to target a broad and diverse spectrum of residents by going to where people spend time so that they had the opportunity to participate in the redesign of Saskatoon's Curbside Collection Program.

Over 200 people were engaged in face-to-face conversations over 6 community Pop-Up events held at: Alice Turner Library; Farmer's Market; St Martin's United Church; Centre Mall; Lawson Mall; and Shaw Centre. These locations were selected with the aim of reaching a diverse array of residents. The opportunity to engage with residents at these events was also used to inform and educate people on the City's waste diversion goals. Staff were able to talk to residents one-on-one and provide information and resources as needed.

Four display boards were used to engage the public in discussions at the events. A description of each board is provided below, and photos are provided with each question summary below.

- **Board 1:** Provided background information about the project and highlighted possible opportunities in addressing the issues. (i.e. Pay-as-You-Throw (PAYT) Utility and Mandatory Organics Program). Participants were encouraged to read the information and discuss any questions or concerns with on-site staff.
- **Board 2:** Provided opportunities to discuss user experiences. Participants were invited to provide feedback on sticky notes about what they like best about the current Curbside Collection Program and/or what opportunities for improvement they see.
- **Board 3:** Provided opportunities to explore other program scenarios. 3 scenarios of different programs entitled Community #1, Community #2 and Community #3 were presented. Participants were encouraged to envision each scenario in their community and write what they liked, didn't like or would want to change and why, on a sticky note and place it on the board.
- **Board 4:** Provided opportunities to discuss a redesigned program. Participants were invited to provide feedback on sticky notes about what is important in a waste management system and what ideas they might have to help achieve the City's overall goal of 70% waste diversion by 2023.

The summary of pop-up conversation feedback reflects 767 comments received during the engagement process via face-to-face conversations at pop-up events. This summary includes feedback from the following questions:

#### **Topic: Your Experience with our Current System**

1. What do you like best about the Curbside Collection Program?
2. Opportunities for Improvement

#### **Topic: Redesigning Curbside Collection**

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- 3. What is important to you in a waste **management system**?
- 4. Share your ideas: What else can we do to achieve 70% waste diversion in 2023?

**Topic: Exploring Ideas**

- 5. Community 1 - What do you like about this approach?
- 6. Community 1 - What would need to change to make this work for you?
- 7. Community 2 - What do you like about this approach?
- 8. Community 2 - What would need to change to make this work for you?
- 9. Community 3 - What do you like about this approach?
- 10. Community 3 - What would need to change to make this work for you?

**Topic: Your Experience with our Current System**

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### 1. What do you like best about the Curbside Collection Program?

There were 63 comments received in response to this question.

#### General Feedback

- Overall, respondents liked the current curbside collection program and expressed that it is working well. General features of the programs that respondents noted they liked include:
  - The ease and convenience of not having to drive to a drop-off location and having the service come right to their house;
  - Having accessibility services for garbage and recycling;
  - The collection calendar and automated e-mail reminders;
  - That the cost is included in taxes;
  - The options to recycle and compost; and
  - The current Household Hazardous Waste drop-off.
- Respondents who have back-alley collection appreciate this service for the convenience of rolling bins to the back, and not cluttering small front yard spaces. These respondents strongly noted that this service should remain.
- Many respondents supported the current frequency of pick-ups.

#### Recycling

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- Many respondents liked the current recycling program, noting specifically that they liked the collection frequency, the bin size, and single stream recycling (so that no sorting is required).
- Several respondents noted that: their use of recycling has cut down on their garbage, their recycling bin is always full, and they could use less frequent garbage service.
- One respondent was concerned about cost (in time and water use) to ensure that recycled materials are adequately clean before disposal.
- One respondent suggested adding Styrofoam to recycling.
- One respondent noted that removing plastic bags from the recycling stream will increase the number of plastic bags go into the garbage stream.

#### Garbage

- Overall, respondents support the current frequency of garbage pick-up. However, one respondent expressed concern that moving to biweekly pick up in the summer might lead to odours.
- In terms of bin size, one respondent felt it was too big, while another felt it was too small.
- Specific concerns noted related to illegal dumping and litter in back alley ways, and bins filling up with renovation waste.

#### Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- The most frequently mentioned feature of the composting program noted positively by respondents was the current depot and drop-off locations. Some respondents noted that these could be improved by increasing the number of depots and having locations closer to home.
- One respondent noted they like the compost and mulch give-away.

## 2. Opportunities for Improvement

There were 186 comments received in response to this question.

#### General Feedback

- Overall respondents noted general concerns with illegal dumping and privacy issues. One respondent referenced this concern for back alleys/older neighbourhoods specifically, and another respondent (who lives in a condo) indicated that this is an ongoing issue.
- Several respondents mentioned bin size in regard to space efficiency of collection services. Space efficiency concerns were highlighted around narrow street parking, as well as aesthetics (specifically in the front of homes).
- A few respondents indicated a willingness to accommodate more bins if they are smaller sizes, or less bins if they are larger sizes in order to address space-efficiency concerns or address their specific household waste requirements. Consideration of landlord and tenant arrangements in one household was mentioned as a specific example.
- Larger wheels on carts of all sizes were suggested to address weather concerns, especially during winter months, with regard to mobility and accessibility.
- It was noted that back-alley collection should be maintained.
- Those who indicated using the collection depots suggested increasing the hours of operation and number of available collection depots. The Recovery Park project was mentioned as an appealing way to achieve a higher diversion rate.

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- A couple of respondents suggested a need for more education.

#### Recycling

- When discussing the pick-up frequency and bin size of the current recycling program, one respondent noted that biweekly collection was too frequent while a few others noted that it was not frequent enough.
- Some respondents who noted a desire for increasing recycling pick-up frequency particularly mentioned collection during peak holiday seasons (e.g. Christmas).
- Several respondents indicated the desire for an increase in acceptable items for the recycling program. Some examples of items to include were glass and Styrofoam as well as including bulky items that do not fit in bins.
- A few respondents indicated concerns about co-mingled items and contamination. One respondent indicated that there needed to be clearer instructions on what is clean material that can be picked up. It was suggested that signs on bins would help in sorting waste. One respondent noted that attention should also be paid to reducing waste at the source, such as less Styrofoam packaging.

#### Garbage

- Most respondents who provided feedback about their garbage cart size indicated that they could use a smaller black cart.
- A couple of respondents indicated that the collection frequency is currently too frequent and some others indicated that it could be more frequent.
- One respondent indicated that it needed to be more frequent because they have children at home and other respondents stated that more frequent collection was needed in the summer and the month of December.
- One respondent suggested better incentives for using less garbage should be included in a redesigned program. It was particularly noted that the introduction of a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) system could encourage people to be more aware of what they throw and encourage more diversion.
- One respondent noted that diapers and medical waste should be exempt from PAYT system.

#### Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- Overall, there was high support for a year round organics program.
- One respondent indicated that they only wanted organic collection in the winter months when it is more difficult to backyard compost.
- Some respondents indicated the desire for an increase in acceptable items for the organics program. This included meats, fat, and bones.
- Concerns about items and carts cleanliness (odor) in the summer months was noted. Some suggested weekly collection of food waste during summer months.
- Some respondents found the current subscription program too expensive.
- One respondent indicated that bagging would help.

## Topic: Redesigning Curbside Collection



### 3. What is important to you in a waste management system?

There were 111 comments received in response to this question.

#### General Feedback

- Overall, respondents noted important features across all waste streams including:
  - Education about the importance of the project with added emphasis on recycling and composting (especially in schools);
  - Affordability/Cost (particularly with consideration of low-income/fixed income households);
  - Accessibility (especially with the population aging and being encouraged to stay in their homes. One participant noted that more thought needs to be put into helping seniors move carts);
  - Space-efficiency (fewer or smaller carts made available);
  - Reliability of pick-up frequency (coming on schedule day, no variance even for holidays);
  - Customization of cart size and collection frequency (tailored to individual not communities);
  - Addressing illegal dumping concerns (people using other bins or alleys); and
  - Reminders for pick-up schedule (it was noted that the Recollect app reminders are great).

#### Recycling

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- Several respondents indicated that education about the need for recycling is required in order to change behaviour.
- A few respondents indicated that the curbside collection for recycling is important because they are home a lot and this makes the service accessible and convenient.
- A few respondents stated that everything should be taken, and that it shouldn't matter if the materials are dirty or clean. However, one respondent suggested that recyclables should be put in clear bags and if workers do not approve of the content (i.e. not clean) they can reject it (the City of Halifax was provided as an example).
- A few respondents noted that glass is one material that should be included in this collection stream. One respondent said that glass should not be in blue bins due to contamination.
- One respondent stated there is no paper recycling in leisure centres and suggested that civic facilities need recycling too.

#### Garbage

- A few respondents suggested that keeping costs down and addressing illegal dumping concerns is important. One respondent suggested that this could be addressed with fines and enforcement.
- The importance of a PAYT system as an incentive to reduce waste was highlighted. Some like the approach of having varying waste cart sizes that is proportional to the cost of a PAYT system.
- When cart size was discussed, one respondent suggested that a large cart should not be an option because it encourages more garbage disposal.
- Another respondent said that their family of two only puts out their garbage once every two months during the winter because they do not fill it up.

#### Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- Overall, many respondents support a curbside organics program but some respondents suggested that an option to opt-out of a city-wide organics program should be considered (recognizing those who compost in their own yard).
- Bagging items to address cleanliness issues with carts was suggested by one respondent. However, another respondent noted concerns around the material of bags (particularly if bags are plastic and not compostable).
- Several respondents also indicated a desire for the organics service to accept as many materials as possible. Increasing a list of acceptable items collected included: meat, bones, seafood, fat, oils/dairy, diapers, fruit cores, coffee, tea bags and pet waste.

## **4. Share your ideas: What else can we do to achieve 70% waste diversion in 2023?**

There were 107 comments received in response to this question.

#### General Ideas

- Ideas at a City or community level included:
  - Conducting a pilot project before a city-wide roll-out. This could include two different neighbourhoods (east and west) for 4-6 months in order to capture information from different seasons;

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- Creating an education, marketing and awareness campaign (especially in schools) to educate the public about what is actually garbage vs. compostable items;
- Communicating updates on overall program effectiveness with the general public;
- Introducing a program design similar to City of Toronto with the inclusion of 'Environment Days';
- Adding Recovery Park and increasing hours of operation for drop off depots;
- Including incentives such as tax cuts for farmers and utility fee reductions for residents who recycle and compost more than their garbage output;
- Reducing the use of plastic bags both in residential households and commercial establishments; and
- Engaging with community associations to help with information dispersion about the program to the public and creating networking opportunities;
- Some respondents suggested the following ideas as personal ways for reducing waste:
  - Encouraging neighbourhoods with back-alley collection to clean-up with neighbours. One respondent suggested a 'block party' with organics pick-up trucks available on request to collect blocks organics (city owned/operated trucks); and
  - Making an effort to use less stuff with lots of packaging materials, composting and recycling more.

#### Recycling

- Several respondents noted the importance of education and providing programs within schools about why recycling is important.
- It was noted that ideas are needed for addressing concerns of contamination of co-mingled recycling items in a redesigned program.
- A few respondents also suggested the need for recycling scrap wood, Styrofoam and cardboard that is not flattened.

#### Garbage

- Several respondents noted the importance of education and providing programs within schools about the composting process.
- Some respondents expressed concerns and provided suggestions about a PAYT system. One respondent suggested that bagged items should be tagged for pick-up and another respondent suggested that households should only be charged when their 'black bin is tipped'.
- One suggestion to address affordability was enforcing a fee for plastic bags and using the generated revenue for waste diversion programs.
- One respondent suggested the use of incentives for putting out less garbage or having a small cart in order to encourage more participation.
- One respondent also suggested burning garbage using plasma technology.

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**Topic: Exploring Ideas**

Three scenarios were provided to help residents envision a different future:



**5. Community 1 - What do you like about this approach?**

There were 46 comments received in response to this question.

Recycling

- Many respondents indicated that the large size bin for recycling is appealing for this scenario.
- Some respondents noted that bi-weekly collection frequency should be the minimum and some households may benefit from more frequent collection service.

Garbage

- Overall discussions about garbage waste and the PAYT system were positive. Many respondents were in favour of the customization ability of choosing varying cart sizes.
- A few respondents noted that a small cart size was good for garbage or even an extra-small cart size would suffice.
- One respondent suggested that weekly collection of organics would decrease the amount of garbage output.

Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- A few respondents indicated that they liked that food waste and yard waste is collected separately because the required frequency for each is different.
- Several respondents noted that food waste should be collected weekly.
- Yard waste was seen as requiring less frequent collection service than food waste.



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- One respondent indicated that yard waste collection would not be needed at all in their household because they have a contractor for this service.
- Some respondents indicated that they prefer the cart over the bag option for food waste but that paper bags are good for yard waste.

## 6. Community 1 - What would need to change to make this work for you?

There were 53 comments received in response to this question.

### General Feedback

- In regard to collection frequency and service reliability, some respondents suggested that all collection services should be biweekly, and the redesigned program should address schedule confusions/conflicts for users and drivers if four separate collection pick-up schedules are implemented.
- Concerns about affordability and illegal dumping were noted. Respondents suggested incentives and subsidies for low-income or fixed-income households and policies to address illegal dumping.
- Some respondents indicated that they prefer systems that require less sorting.

### Recycling

- A few respondents noted that they need a large recycling cart.
- A couple of respondents suggested that more frequent collection is needed for this scenario.
- One respondent said recycling collection service should not have a fee associated to it.

### Garbage

- A few respondents suggested that garbage collection frequency should be once a month.
- Some respondents said they did not like the PAYT system and the cart options. Concerns were raised about the collection frequency or cart capacity during “high-waste times of year” such as Christmas and spring cleaning.

### Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- Many respondents noted that the items list of acceptable items should be increased.
- Some respondents noted that less sorting is needed and smaller food carts should be available for smaller households.
- When discussing the collection frequency of yard waste, several respondents indicated that twice a year pick-up for spring and fall was not enough. One respondent noted that large trees have lots of leaves and gardening is May/June-October which also increases the amount of yard waste. Another respondent noted that too much material will build up especially in older areas with big trees.
- Some respondents noted they did not want bags for their organics collection, especially bags with plastic materials.

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### 7. Community 2 - What do you like about this approach?

There were 55 comments received in response to this question.

#### General Feedback

- Some respondents noted that a bigger cart size option was appealing for those who want to do less sorting. Other respondents noted that smaller cart size options with more frequent collection was appealing.
- This scenario was noted by one respondent as seeming like a good place for Saskatoon to start a redesigned program. A couple of respondents suggested it would be simple and easy.

#### Garbage

- Several respondents noted they like the PAYT system for garbage collection because of the customization of choosing various cart sizes.
- It was also noted that the PAYT system is based on output which could be affordable if a household is putting out garbage once a month.

#### Recycling

- A few respondents indicated that the recycling program needs to continue the way it is.
- Many respondents like weekly pick-up collection frequency with a medium size cart. It was noted that a medium size cart addresses space efficiency concerns.

#### Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- Some respondents indicated that an organics program is needed and carts are preferred over bags. One respondent said that a collection system with no bags is more efficient for yard waste.
- Several respondents like the large cart size option for organics collection. One respondent suggested it is useful for gardening waste and leaves. Another respondent mentioned that they have a corner lot and would require a large cart.
- Respondents also said they would like free food waste collection.



### 8. Community 2 - What would need to change to make this work for you?

There were 51 comments received in response to this question.

#### General Feedback

- There were several concerns noted for this scenario option including:
  - The need to address illegal dumping concerns;
  - PAYT collection frequency and efficiency, affordability of truck use if the system is based on selecting collection frequency; and
  - Overall costs of the program with regard to cart sizes changing (customization), affordability of new bins, drivers, trucks and fuel

#### Recycling

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- Some said that the medium recycling bin size is insufficient for large families.
- There was inconsistent feedback regarding the frequency of recycling collection with a medium bin. Some respondents indicated that recycling should be picked up weekly while others indicated that it should still be picked up bi-weekly.

#### Garbage

- Many respondents highlighted a concern about illegal dumping in a PAYT system. One respondent indicated that illegal dumping will increase with PAYT and another expressed concern about costs increasing because of dumping.
- This scenario was noted as working well with curbside pick-up collection but not with rear lane collection. It was suggested that a different pay structure is required for neighbourhoods with back alley collection because of illegal dumping concerns.
- It was also noted that some respondents like having a bigger cart so that there is less frequent collection service required.
- One respondent noted they would like an option for 2 garbage carts (any size).

#### Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- Some respondents were concerned that yard waste would take up all the space and leave no room for food waste.
- A large organics cart would be necessary for some households and not necessary for other households. A couple of respondents noted that the customization of choosing a bin size would be preferable.
- Some respondents indicated that home composters should be recognized and permitted to opt-out of a mandatory organics program.
- There were also concerns about organic materials freezing and becoming stuck in the cart during winter months.

## 9. Community 3 - What do you like about this approach?

There were 39 comments received in response to this question.

#### General Feedback

- Many respondents like that this scenario had the fewest carts and less sorting. It appeared to be “more efficient” to some respondents
- The idea of having food/yard waste and garbage waste all in one cart seemed simple and was understood to mean that nothing gets wasted.
- It was also noted that this scenario is appealing if it is the cheaper option (otherwise the preference is the least amount of sorting).

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### Recycling

- Most respondents who provided feedback on the recycling program of this scenario noted they like the bi-weekly collection frequency.
- A few respondents indicated they like the large cart size and a few respondents indicated they preferred the medium cart collected weekly.

### Garbage & Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- Some respondents said they like the PAYT system because it makes the user consider how much is actually being thrown away.
- The value of customizing based on cart size was reinforced by some participants.
- A few respondents liked bagging both food/yard waste & garbage. A few respondents stated they like bagging the food waste.

## 10. Community 3 - What would need to change to make this work for you?

There were 56 comments received in response to this question.

### Garbage & Organics (Food & Yard Waste)

- Many respondents raised concerns about this scenario regarding bagging issues. These concerns include:
  - The material of the bags, particularly if they are plastic and not biodegradable - this was mentioned very frequently;
  - Affordability of buying black and green bags instead of using bags that “come into your life”, especially for low income residents;
  - Collection frequencies being different for garbage waste, food waste and yard waste;
  - Space efficiency of having bags in the home;
  - Co-mingled food and increase of contamination (lack of reliance on users and sorting technology);
  - Oddly shaped items and adequate room in one cart for both organics and garbage; and
  - Cleanliness, durability, and general mess of bags inside the home and outside of the home for collection.
- Some respondents also noted they did not want bags for yard waste because it is an extra hassle and that bagging generally is inconvenient for space-efficiency. It was suggested that it should be one or the other but not both.
- Some respondents suggested the need for free bags and carts.
- Some respondents indicated concerns about the accuracy of billing for PAYT utility if garbage and organic waste is combined in one bin.
- It was also noted that this scenario seemed complicated and generally inconvenient for sorting.



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- Some respondents raised concerns that users might fail to properly sort and ultimately just put items in the garbage that could otherwise be diverted.
- Concerns were also noted regarding illegal dumping, affordability, accuracy of sorting technology and the need for public education.

