

Waste Diversion Planning and the Road to Zero Waste

In order to begin moving toward the waste diversion target of 70% by 2023, the Administration has been working on a Waste Diversion Plan which will provide a long-term roadmap for the City of Saskatoon's (City) waste management programs and guide future policies and initiatives. Most of the waste diversion initiatives that the City has focused on to date have been aimed at downstream material and recycling material.

Figure 1: 5R Waste Prevention Hierarchy



In the traditional waste management system, materials move through a linear “make-use - dispose” process where they are manufactured from raw resources, consumed and ultimately sent to landfill. In 2016, the City conducted a waste characterization study of the materials that all sectors were sending to landfill. It found that 16.6% of landfilled waste was made up of paper, plastics, metal or glass that was recyclable, but another 18.6% of waste was made up of paper, plastic, metal or glass that was non-recyclable. To address unrecyclable materials that are landfilled and to get to the next phase of waste diversion, the City needs to begin work on policies and programs that influence upstream behaviour and look at reducing and reusing.

Case Study: Vancouver Zero Waste 2040 and Single-use Item Strategy

City of Vancouver recently adopted a strategic policy framework called Zero Waste 2040. The plan includes forward looking policies and actions to help stimulate, support, and allow Vancouver to become a zero waste community where:

- Residents and businesses value materials as finite resources.
- Consumption of resources is reduced to the fullest extent possible.
- Resources that must be used are kept in a circular economy.
- Community networks involve robust sharing, reuse, and recycling systems.
- Actions to achieve zero waste result in co-benefits to the environment, the economy, and Vancouver.

Through this lens, Vancouver recently launched the Single-use item strategy that includes:

- Plastic and paper bags
- Polystyrene cups and take-out containers
- Disposable cups
- Take-out containers
- Straws and utensils

As much as possible, the strategy is designed to shift societal norms to support lasting behaviour change. Bylaw changes that are accompanied by supportive actions to help affected stakeholders with the transition to zero waste are key components of the plan.

City of Saskatoon and Zero Waste

As part of the next phase of development for the Waste Diversion Plan, the Administration is going to begin work on aligning future program and policy decisions with a zero waste framework. This is consistent with the City's membership in the National Zero Waste Council and the Strategic Plan update that will measure success through a reduction in the amount of solid waste per household. Key components that the Administration are looking at includes ways to reduce or eliminate single use items, food waste reduction and reclamation, and leading through example through sustainable procurement policies.

The public engagements on waste for the curbside and multi-unit residential sectors indicates interest in zero waste initiatives. For example, curbside residents were asked in an open ended format for ideas for how Saskatoon could reach the target of 70% waste diversion. In the survey, restricting or banning single-use items was the 8th most suggested idea, with suggested items including plastic bags, takeout containers, straws, and Styrofoam. Similarly, in multi-unit residential engagement, the most suggested idea for diversion was addressing plastic bags, with many urging a ban and some extending it to other single use items such as straws, plastic packaging/takeout containers, and Styrofoam.

The next steps include launching an ICI (Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional) sector engagement in the fall that, in addition to looking at city-wide recycling and organics programs, will consider source reduction and local diversion options for single-use items such as plastic film. The intention of the engagement is to work with businesses and organizations to help develop strategies that will move Saskatoon closer to a zero waste city. The Administration will also use the next Waste Behaviour and Awareness Survey in 2019 to get statistically significant resident opinions on potential zero waste policies and programs, including ways to reduce or eliminate single use items from landfilled waste.