

Document 3 – Update on the Multi-residential Waste Diversion Strategy

Background

In April 2022, Ottawa City Council approved the Multi-residential Waste Diversion Strategy (the Strategy) ([ACS2022-PWD-SWS-0001](#)) to support increasing waste diversion in the multi-residential sector. The Strategy consists of five Project Pillars and was developed using extensive stakeholder engagement. The Strategy seeks to address the barriers that are unique to the multi-residential sector and was advanced ahead of completion of the Solid Waste Master Plan (SWMP) to progress waste diversion improvements in these buildings, while the SWMP continued to be developed.

Aiming to increase waste diversion in the multi-residential sector also supports other City initiatives as well as provincial direction:

- The Province's [Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement](#) provides direction to multi-residential properties to increase waste reduction and resource recovery of food and organic waste.
- The Province of Ontario is committed to phasing out food and organic waste from landfills by 2030.
- The City's Energy Evolution project calls for 98 per cent organics diversion from landfill and 100 per cent diversion of paper products.

The Strategy includes five pillars to support increasing waste diversion at multi-residential properties. Each pillar includes project recommendations to support the pillars:

- Pillar 1: Expanding organics collection to all multi-residential properties the City services.
- Pillar 2: Enhancing promotion and education.
- Pillar 3: Exploring pilot projects to address key barriers to waste diversion.
- Pillar 4: Dedicating and redesigning space for waste disposal.
- Pillar 5: Driving change moving forward through the collection contract

The [scope, framework and project pillars](#) for the Strategy were approved by Council in April 2022 and, in 2024, an [implementation plan for Pillar 1](#) was approved by Council.

The following projects were included in the SWMP under Action Suite 5 - Supporting Additional Diversion in Multi-Residential Buildings.

- Making Green Bin a prerequisite to receive City Waste Management services (Pillar 1)
- Multi-residential Building Development Standards (Pillar 4)
- Chute Closure/Conversion to Organic Chutes Program at Multi-Residential Buildings (Component of Pillar 3)

Updates to the Strategy will now be included in annual reporting to the SWMP. Performance metrics from both the Strategy and the SWMP will be addressed in these updates.

Project Updates & Key Performance Measures

Pillar 1: Expanding organics to all multi-residential properties

Under the Council-approved Multi-residential Waste Diversion Strategy (MRWDS), multi-residential properties are required to have an organics diversion program to receive waste collection service from the City. In May 2024 Ottawa City Council approved the detailed [cost analysis and implementation plan](#) for mandatory organics.

A 4-tier process was approved to onboard the approximately 1,050 properties (of 2,300) that did not yet have the organics program. The tier classification is based on frequency of collections and property size. The onboarding process is following the below schedule:

- **Tier 1:** Properties with additional regularly scheduled waste collection, more than once per week (220 properties)
- **Tier 2:** Properties with under 100 units (650 properties)
- **Tier 3:** Properties with over 100 units (180 properties)
- **Tier 4:** Properties that self-identify as having infrastructure barriers to onboarding

Properties that wish to onboard earlier than their assigned tier can opt in earlier and many properties are volunteering to be onboarded early.

Solid Waste Services supports properties with onboarding by assigning Solid Waste Inspectors to work with property managers to arrange site visits, offer implementation support and develop service agreements. Environmental Education Assistants (EEAs) from Solid Waste Services provide the Property Manager with a tool kit and other resources when it is their time to onboard. Within 1-2 weeks of installing the green bin, the EEAS then offer the property education and outreach so that tenants are aware of and understand the new program. EEAs distribute kitchen-catchers and educational materials to residents through door-to-door outreach, lobby booths or by attending resident events. Waste audits are then conducted quarterly by EEAs, for one year, to determine if the property needs additional support and to monitor progress.

Since mandatory implementation began in October 2024, nearly one-third of the 1,050 properties targeted have been onboarded to the green bin program. Table 1 below shows a summary of the progress of the mandatory organics program.

Table 1: Mandatory Organics Progress Summary (As of September 29, 2025)

Summary, as of September 30, 2025	Properties	Units	Percentage complete (by # of units)
Total number on the Mandatory list	1,012	69,087	NA
Total number onboarded	345	23,742	34%
Total number that requested to onboard early	84	6,987	10%
Tier 1 sites onboarded	173 / 191*	14,514	86%
Tier 2 sites onboarded	149 / 639*	5,652	31%
Tier 3 sites onboarded	23 / 174*	3,576	12%

*= targeted versus completed

Performance Measures gathered as of September 29, 2025

- 69 per cent of all multi-residential properties receiving City collection services now have the green bin program (compared to 53 per cent in 2023).
- In total, of the 2350 (139,500 units) of multi-residential properties serviced by the City, 1,625 properties (92,000 individual units) now have the City's Green Bin Program.
- 345 properties have been onboarded since the mandatory organics program began in October 2024.
- There has been a 34 per cent increase of organic material collected from multi-residential properties from 2024 to 2025 for the January to August reporting periods.
- 82 per cent of Property Managers who responded to a post-outreach survey said that outreach was helpful, and residents were using the green bin.
- According to anecdotal visual waste inspections conducted by Solid Waste Services, 66 per cent of properties, inspected after onboarding, are using the green bin and have less than 25 per cent contamination.

A small percentage of properties on the Tier 1 list (10 of 192) have not yet onboarded the green bin program, despite an escalation process involving communication attempts in writing, over the phone, and in person from the City of Ottawa. Only 8 properties have been moved to the Tier 4 list, following an inspection. Solid Waste Services staff make every effort to support the installation of an organics program at these properties and continue to work with them to identify solutions. This includes the projects which may be piloted in Pillar 3 of the MRWDS.

Future measurements as referenced in the SWMP

- The capture rate of organic waste for multi-residential units receiving City service (%).
- Set out rates
- Waste generation by multi-residential household (kg/household)
- Contamination rate of the organics stream in multi-residential properties.

Pillar 2: Enhancing promotion and education

Pillar 2 proposes exploring opportunities to build upon and enhance current P&E tactics used by the City by gaining a better understanding of motivating and deterring factors that influence participation in diversion programs. In 2023 new tools were developed to support how new tenants and multi-residential residents receive information about waste programs including materials such as multilingual educational materials, stickers for kitchen-catchers, magnets for fridges. A new outreach tool kit was established for green bin outreach including a display booth, a presentation, and door hangers for door knocking. A Property Manager Toolkit was also developed that contains tips and tricks from industry best practices, to ensure each building's success with the program. Every property manager who receives outreach receives the tool kit.

In 2024, as part of pillar 1, an expanded EEA team was formed and trained to conduct green bin outreach in buildings and at events. The education team reinforces program participation, encourages behaviour change, and addresses low diversion rates which are typical in the multi-residential sector due to demographics, higher turn-over, infrastructure challenges, and barriers to access. The new materials created in Pillar 2 have amplified this educational work.

While EEAs are primarily focused on onboarding and supporting the properties in Pillar 1, they regularly provide education and outreach in buildings with existing green bin programs to help ensure the program is being utilized by residents. When Solid Waste Inspectors find low participation in the green bin program, they recommend outreach for that property. The EEAs also conduct outreach at community events in targeted neighborhoods with multi-residential properties.

In October, as part of Pillar 2, Solid Waste Services will launch a Multi-Residential Waste Reduction Ambassador Program. The Ambassador Program is designed to empower residents of apartment buildings, condos, co-operatives and other multi-unit properties (six units or more) to take a leadership role in creating cleaner, greener, and more sustainable communities.

Waste Reduction Ambassadors are dedicated volunteers who inspire and support their neighbours in reducing waste, improving recycling and composting habits, and enhancing the natural environment around their homes. The program includes a suite of resources and activity ideas for ambassadors to implement in their communities. Suggested activities include, for example, hosting swap events, creating welcome packages for new residents, sharing green bin tips on social media groups, or setting up

battery recycling boxes. Ambassadors will receive support, encouragement and recognition by Solid Waste Services staff.

Performance Measurements gathered to date

9,300 residents directly engaged at outreach events in 2024 and 2025.

136 properties chose to onboard before it became mandatory and received additional support and education from the EEA team.

69,000 education materials distributed by EEA's to residents in 2024 and 2025.

Future Performance Measures as referenced in the Solid Waste Master Plan:

- Number of Multi-residential Waste Reduction Ambassadors
- Number of multi-residential buildings with Ambassador programs (# or %)
- Number of downloads of the multi-residential toolkits or posters

Future Pillar 2 initiatives to be explored commencing in 2026:

- Different education and engagement approaches based on the property design and tenant profile of the property.
- Use of behaviour change tactics such as prompts and community commitments to encourage participation, which will partly be formed by development of a Behaviour Change Management Strategy, a SWMP action commencing development in 2026.
- Methods to support new tenants' participation in waste diversion programs.

Pillar 3: Exploring pilots

Through extensive engagement, residents living in multi-residential properties, the property management sector, City staff and the Multi-Residential Working Group identified barriers and challenges to multi-residential waste management that could be addressed through new technologies or collection approaches that would require research, funding, and piloting. This project pillar allows the City to explore and advance new management and diversion techniques in the multi-residential sector.

Pilot programs will investigate opportunities to address a system need or barrier in multi-residential waste management. They will be informed by feedback collected during

the mandatory organics onboarding as well from market research and best practices. Pilot programs may investigate opportunities pertaining to program delivery, outreach and education, enforcement, technology, and building operations, and could include:

- Recycling and garbage room redesign
- New waste collection methods and containers, such as organics collection in front-end loading containers or carbon-filters for smell.
- Collection report cards for property staff and residents to view progress.
- Emerging educational tactics such as gamification (education through web or app-based games).
- Composting solutions both outside and indoor, such as the FoodRecycler In-unit food grinder.
- Closure of garbage chutes or conversion to organic chutes to facilitate waste diversion.

A business case for these pilot projects is expected to be brought to Council in 2026.

Future Performance Measurements:

- Number of pilot projects
- Number of chutes closed or converted to organics chutes (chutes/year)
- Number of barriers addressed by pilot projects

Pillar 4: Dedicating and Redesigning Space for Waste Disposal Programs:

As new property types emerge to accommodate growth and intensification, it is crucial that waste programs are considered in the building design to facilitate participation and that design specifications are established that consider the unique needs of these new property types.

Requirements for solid waste collection were added to the City's site plan application and development review process in 2012 to ensure that multi-residential properties were designed to allow on-site collection of waste and ensure adequate storage space of garbage, recycling, and green bin containers. To compliment this, the City developed the [Guidelines for Multi-Unit Residential Development](#) in 2012. The guidelines include

requirements to receive City waste collection as well as best practices that developers can consider integrating into the building design to facilitate better participation in waste diversion programs.

Currently the Multi-residential Waste Collection Design Guidelines are being revised and updated to reflect legislative and contract changes such as the transition to the Provincial Blue Box Program. In 2026, Solid Waste Services will update the guidelines further to address barriers and respond to the changing property types expected in Ottawa's official plan. External and internal stakeholders will be consulted.

In 2026-2027, the City will look at other pathways to encourage best practices in waste management for new developments as well as ways to remove access and inconvenience barriers to facilitate better opportunities for residents to use waste diversion programs at properties where it is currently difficult to do so.

Future Performance measures include:

- Quality and quantity of feedback from internal and external stakeholders, including the development community and waste collection providers.
- Future updates follow the standard operating procedure developed during the project.

Pillar 5: Driving Change Moving Forward through the Collection Contract.

Solid Waste Services has awarded the 2026 multi-residential collection contract which will begin in June 2026. As part of the new collection contract, Solid Waste Services will be assuming the responsibility for Customer Service Agreements with each property. The multi-residential property owners or managers will be required to commit to waste diversion efforts at their properties through the Customer Service Agreement.

The 2026 collection contract also includes a change management clause. This will allow for the exploration of improvements to collection processes including different collection containers, increasing the frequency of green bin pick up or pilot projects to be determined by Pillar 3.