

THREE-STREAM COMMUNAL COLLECTION PROGRAM

Recommendation

That the March 9, 2026, City Operations report CO03144, be received for information.

Requested Action	Information only		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Climate Resilience		
City Plan Values	LIVE. THRIVE. ACCESS. PRESERVE.		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Greener as We Grow	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Climate adaptation and energy transition
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25-year Waste Strategy • Bylaw 20363 - Waste Services Bylaw • C558C - Waste Services Fiscal Policy • Climate Resilient Edmonton Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan • The City Plan • Waste Reduction Roadmap 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 29, 2019, City Operations report CR_5829, Waste Strategy - Comprehensive Waste Management Strategy - Waste Diversion Strategy • April 30, 2021, City Operations report CO00391, Multi-Unit Program Development Update • June 25, 2021, City Operations report CO00581, Multi-Unit Strategy • March 25, 2022, City Operations report CO00581rev, Multi-Unit Strategy - Alternative Business Model 		

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the July 2/4, 2025, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

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That Administration provide a report on the rollout of the three-stream Communal Collection program, including progress and strategic methodology of the rollout, a summary of metrics, targets and outcomes to measure success and any preliminary indicators or results, and any adjustments or lessons learned being integrated into the next phase of City-wide implementation, and return for consideration in the First Quarter of 2026.

Executive Summary

- Starting in 2023, the City began introducing three-stream waste collection to apartments and condos, which requires food scraps and recycling collection in addition to the existing garbage collection service. The primary goal of this program is to encourage residents to separate their food scraps and recyclables from garbage, diverting more waste from landfills.
- The program is being rolled out in phases, starting with City-staffed collection routes on the east side of the city, to allow for early program adjustments before expanding to areas with contracted collection services.
- Administration works closely with property decision-makers to ensure collaboration and support throughout the entire process.
- Administration provides resident support through the delivery of food scraps pails and educational resources to all units, along with comprehensive communication, education and outreach campaigns.
- By the end of 2025, the program has been rolled out to approximately half the city or 1,775 properties containing 87,042 residential units.
- The project is on schedule and expected to be completed in 2027.

REPORT

The 25-year Waste Strategy, approved by Council in 2019, sought to introduce separate organics, recycling and garbage collection for all Edmonton residents. In 2021, the Edmonton Cart Rollout added separate food scraps and yard waste collection to residents receiving curbside collection. In 2023, the City began introducing separate food scraps and recycling collection to residents receiving apartment and condo collection.¹ Edmonton is home to approximately 3,400 apartment and condo properties, containing over 179,000 units.

The primary goal of the program is to encourage residents to separate their food scraps and recyclables from their garbage, diverting more waste from landfills and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. As food scraps decompose within the landfill, methane is created, a potent GHG. Having consistent expectations for sorting waste helps to reinforce and develop responsible waste habits.

¹ Apartment and condo collection is referred to as “communal collection” in Bylaw 20363 - Waste Services Bylaw.

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Strategic Methodology

The March 25, 2022, City Operations report CO00581rev, Multi-Unit Strategy paved the way for introducing three-stream collection to all apartments and condos in Edmonton. The project rollout was planned and implemented with the following methodology:

- Adopting a phased approach, starting from the areas where City collectors service buildings, followed by areas serviced by contracted collectors. This allows the City to receive feedback and make necessary adjustments as early and quickly as possible.
- Tailoring solutions to the needs of individual properties in collaboration with property decision-makers.
- Supporting residents during the rollout through comprehensive communications, education and outreach campaigns.
- Seeking continuous improvement based on feedback received from industry organizations, property decision-makers, the general public and operations.

The City uses a variety of ways to raise awareness of the program among owners, residents and property decision-makers (condo boards or property managers). This includes the use of mailed letters, geotargeted digital advertisements, road signs and social media. Specific tools and channels were also developed to provide support throughout the program rollout. These include in-person and virtual information sessions for property managers and residents, a dedicated email address for property decision-makers to contact the project team, one-on-one meetings with property decision-makers and a dedicated webpage containing a comprehensive list of resources.²

Administration recognizes many residents require time and support to adjust to new habits. As the program is rolled out, the City delivers a food scraps pail, a What Goes Where poster and an information booklet to the door of every unit to help residents start positive sorting habits. An in-depth public outreach strategy was developed, including a detailed message box for educators and a reciprocity gift for residents (a blue bag and battery storage box). This strategy uses community-based social marketing³ theory for adopting sustainable behaviour, which helped inform the Multi-Unit Strategy and was used successfully in the Edmonton Cart Rollout.

Waste educators canvass all homes with apartment and condo collection to support residents in properly sorting and disposing of their food scraps and recycling, overcoming barriers, highlighting the benefits of responsible sorting behaviour and asking residents for a public commitment to sort their waste. The resident public commitment plays an important role in creating positive social norms around waste sorting, allowing neighbours to model proper waste sorting and disposal behaviour within their community. This commitment takes the form of their name, initials or unit number being written on a sticker that reads "I sort my waste," which is then added to a poster typically hung in a high-traffic area such as a building lobby or waste sorting room for maximum visibility. If a resident does not answer the door, a door hanger with program information is left behind. This direct contact allows for a more personalized conversation and highlights the City's commitment to supporting residents during this transition.

² edmonton.ca/ApartmentAndCondoCollection

³ [Community-Based Social Marketing](#). McKenzie-Mohr & Associates, Inc.

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Rollout Status, Metrics, Preliminary Results

The project is on schedule. By the end of 2025, the City introduced the program to 1,775 of approximately 3,400 properties and 87,942 of approximately 179,000 units. The program has fundamentally changed how waste is managed in apartment and condo collection, with many factors contributing to the program's success.

Waste Characterization Study and Tonnage

Prior to the rollout, a four-season waste characterization study was conducted to determine the percentage of divertable materials in the garbage stream and the contamination rate in the recycling stream. A waste characterization study examines the composition of waste in samples taken from a specific collection service or geographic area. Over a two or three week period, collection trucks from across Edmonton transport waste to their respective processing facilities for analysis across multiple seasons. While a waste characterization study in apartment and condo collection is ongoing, preliminary results and comparisons are found in the table below.

Composition of Garbage Collected from Apartments and Condos			
Type of Waste	2022 Four-season Study	2025 Three-season Study ⁴	Change
Garbage	22%	27%	+5% ↗
Recycling	16%	24%	+8% ↗
Food scraps	45%	39%	-6% ↘
Eco Station	17%	10%	-7% ↘

The preliminary results indicate that more food scraps are being sorted out of the garbage stream. Since the project's rollout, 4,771 tonnes of food scraps have been collected as of December 2025. A decline in Eco Station waste (e-waste, building materials, bulky items, etc.) in the garbage stream is another improvement. However, recyclable materials in the garbage stream increased, despite more buildings having access to recycling collection at their properties. The City will continue to conduct tonnage and waste characterization studies to monitor this trend and identify areas for improvement. Occasionally, the accuracy of waste characterization studies is affected by the use of private waste haulers to clean up litter and overflowing waste from certain properties.

Door-to-Door Education and Resident Commitment Rates

By the end of 2025, waste educators knocked on over 82,500 unique doors, with many receiving more than one visit. The current door answer rate is 59 per cent. To continually improve this rate, Administration attempts to contact all property decision-makers to arrange for access to their properties and complete at least two rounds of door-to-door education per building in the afternoons and evenings when residents are most likely to be home. At the end of the

⁴ Winter 2026 waste characterization is in progress. Data is unavailable for a full four-season study.

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conversation, educators ask residents to make a public commitment to sort their waste, which is tracked as a resident commitment rate. As of December 2025, 79 per cent commit to sorting their food scraps.

Convenience of Sorting

One of the most important elements of this program is providing residents with convenient waste sorting. Research from the Multi-Unit Strategy determined that locating containers for all three waste streams in one area is the most effective way to overcome this barrier. This is known as co-location and is mandated in Bylaw 20363 - Waste Services Bylaw. By the end of 2025, 95 per cent of properties rolled out had co-located their waste containers, while the remaining five per cent received exemptions due to waste chute constraints.

Waste Volumes

Waste container allocations for all apartment and condo buildings are reviewed before three-stream sorting is introduced at properties. Administration found many were over-allocated for garbage and under-allocated for recycling, leading to poorer waste diversion outcomes. Waste characterization data also identified food scraps as a large component of the garbage stream.

In line with this research, the City increased recycling capacity at every property and introduced volume limits on the garbage stream, reflecting the expectation the garbage collected no longer contains the same volumes of recycling and food scraps. This limit on garbage volumes includes a 30 per cent buffer to accommodate the transition to the new sorting habits. The introduction of volume limits establishes equitable waste allocation methodologies between both curbside and apartment and condo waste collection services.

Improper sorting or illegal dumping can lead to overflowing garbage containers. In some situations, overflowing containers may prevent collection if the bins are unsafe for waste collectors to approach and pick up. Of the properties rolled out by the end of 2025, less than one per cent of collection attempts could not be completed due to overflowing waste.⁵

Illegal Dumping

Waste Services has heard from residents and property managers that illegal dumping is an ongoing issue and continues to work on solutions for apartments and condos. The problem of illegal dumping at apartments and condos has been recognized for decades, and was managed through unlimited waste bin pick-ups. Illegal dumping at apartments and condos primarily takes two forms: the disposal of bulky items such as furniture and appliances and the use of site containers by non-residents or commercial entities.

Solutions to illegal dumping must be tailored to the specific property and not all solutions are suitable in certain scenarios. For example, with the site decision-makers' approval, the City can install locks on the property's bins to reduce unauthorized access. Moving bins farther from public access typically resolves many problems, but cannot be done if there are space and access constraints at the site. Administration initiated a project exploring strategies that could reduce illegal dumping at apartments and condos, producing the following recommendations:

⁵ Approximately 1,200 collections out of 206,000 total collections.

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1. Reviewing existing services, such as the various waste drop-off programs and facilities, to assess the ease of their accessibility and use.
2. Investigating new programs to increase accessibility, including large item collection and enhanced education and awareness programs.
3. Improved education and awareness of illegal dumping, combined with a review of existing enforcement tools in Bylaw 20363.

Administration will complete the evaluation of these recommendations in 2026 to determine the cost implications and operational feasibility.

Program Adjustments and Lessons Learned

The staged rollout naturally allows for continuous improvement. Feedback from staff and external collaborators, including residents, industry and property managers, is incorporated throughout the rollout and in advance of new program phases. This feedback has resulted in the following program adjustments, improving efficiency, service delivery and outcomes:

- Developing the Excess Waste Program (EWP), allowing properties to request additional free food scraps and recycling capacity, and additional garbage capacity up to 50 per cent of their assigned allocation. EWP has two models, Extra Collection By Request and Ongoing Extra Collection.
 - After the Excess Waste Program was launched, some property decision-makers found the process of requesting additional collection each time inefficient. To provide a more convenient service for property managers, Ongoing Extra Collection was adapted by Administration in October 2025 to be available to all property managers, rather than only group homes and buildings with excess medical waste.
- Acquiring and testing front-load bins that can accommodate garbage and recycling at the same time. These 'split bins' reduce the quantity of bins needed on properties with existing space constraints by half and are available in six and four cubic yard sizes.⁶
- Developing the Container Sharing Program, which allows properties in close proximity to share one larger container, reducing the space needed for bins while maintaining the same waste volume.
 - Administration heard that applying for the Container Sharing Program was complex. In response, the project team updated the requirements and refined the application process to make joining the program more accessible.
- Automating certain processes when developing and mailing letters to EPCOR account holders has saved over 200 person-hours per year.
- Improving the program webpage to increase ease of use for residents and property decision-makers.
- Creating and implementing a tagging system for properties whose containers cannot be serviced due to the containers being blocked or inaccessible.
- Creating and applying door hangers to units where residents do not answer their doors during the outreach visits.

⁶ These split bins are more operationally complex and are only recommended in specific cases.

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- Adjusting hours of work for outreach staff to increase the number of doors opened and conversations with residents.
- Improving plans to access buildings with no known contact person to deliver kitchen pails, information packages and offer door-to-door education.

Administration can also make smaller, site-specific changes when requested by property decision-makers where appropriate. This includes building access, container configuration, rollout timelines and specific requests for resident outreach. Public-facing tactics such as printed educational tools, advertising, 311 scripting and waste outreach receive ongoing review to improve how residents understand and adapt to the program.

Legal Implications

As per Bylaw 20363 - Waste Services Bylaw, the City is solely responsible for collecting, processing and disposing of all residential waste in Edmonton. Bylaw 20363 was written to implement the approved Multi-Unit Strategy, including requirements for source-separated waste and co-location of waste containers.

Community Insight

Administration offers multiple channels for site decision-makers to engage with the project team, improving relationships and leading to invitations for the project team to attend community events to share a unified message with residents. Additionally, door-to-door canvassing provides residents with an accessible way to learn about the program and provide feedback about their experience. The City is also in regular contact with property managers and industry organizations, including the Alberta Residential Landlord Association and the Canadian Condominium Institute - North Alberta Chapter.

Since the initial phase of the citywide rollout, 701 properties have submitted 1,082 inquiries to the City. The most frequent concern (42 per cent) is related to container configurations, including questions about container spacing, collection frequency and bin sizes. The second most common concern (27 per cent) is about overflowing waste containers. The remaining requests cover assessment reviews, general information requests and specific issues with containers, such as locks and illegal dumping. Inquiry volume follows a predictable pattern. An initial spike during the active rollout period is driven mainly by questions about container configuration, followed by a steady decline. After the rollout concludes at a property, the most common inquiries involve waste sorting and overflowing containers.

GBA+

The project aims to engage residents through accessible methods. Door-to-door education is a key approach, allowing staff to interact with residents directly in the environment where waste sorting occurs. This personal engagement removes barriers to education, such as the need for transportation or reliable access to technology. For residents who are unavailable for in-person visits or prefer an alternative, the team also provides virtual information sessions. The Assisted Waste Collection program is also available to residents needing support with waste disposal.

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Recognizing Edmonton's diverse multilingual population, the City has developed visual aids and strategies to educate residents. Photos and drawings are used on many educational materials, reducing the need for English-language fluency. When possible, educators prioritize having conversations in the resident's preferred language. Educators also encourage residents to use WasteWise, a free tool available in 14 different languages, to assist with waste sorting and information on other waste-related services.

Environment and Climate Review

One of the Big City Moves - Greener as We Grow - of the City Plan identifies sustainable waste management as an important step toward achieving the goals of a total community-wide carbon budget of 135 megatonnes and reaching net zero per-person GHG emissions by 2050. Given the high number of units that are contained within apartment and condo buildings in Edmonton, this program contributes to the Greener as We Grow goals by diverting a significant amount of recyclables and organic waste from landfill and as a result, contributes to the GHG emission reduction goal. This supports environmental sustainability and the circular economy while also contributing to proper management of the waste at the Edmonton Waste Management Centre.

In addition to the ongoing initiatives to address barriers and challenges of coordinating waste management practices across a large number of households, to further enable all residents who live in apartment and condo buildings to reduce per-person GHG emissions over time, additional future incentives could consider:

- Aligning continual improvements with positive reinforcements and incentives:
 - Improving the diversion rate through a grant reward system for residents who demonstrate improved compliance in separating their waste. Better compliance could also incentivize a lower waste collection rate. These positive reinforcers can increase residents' pro-environmental behaviours by making their success visible to others and further supporting voluntary compliance with the program.
 - The collected waste characterization data can be used to continually monitor waste generation and residents' sorting habits. It can help identify opportunities for improvement. This rapid analysis helps inform plans to divert more waste from the garbage stream and potentially minimize both contamination rates and illegal dumping.