

What We Heard Report: Multi-unit Mandatory Waste Sorting Program

Executive Summary

April 2021

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Edmonton

Executive Summary

The City of Edmonton is in the process of developing a Multi-unit Mandatory Waste Sorting Program for multi-unit residences with communal waste collection (i.e. multi-unit properties not receiving curbside collection). The program will require multi-unit residents to sort their waste into three streams for waste collection: food scraps, recycling and garbage. This program is targeted to begin implementation in 2023, upon Council approval.

For the purposes of this program, multi-unit properties are defined as apartment and condo buildings including four-story walk-ups, highrise apartments, townhomes and detached or semi-detached condominiums, where residents may rent or own their unit.

To help develop and inform this program, public and stakeholder engagement was conducted in two phases with residents, managers and service providers throughout Edmonton. The purpose was to determine preferred options and potential solutions in providing three-stream waste collection to all multi-unit residential properties with communal collection. For the purpose of these engagements, managers include people who manage or are responsible for properties including property managers, developers and condo board members. Service providers include waste haulers and processors.



Phase One: How We Collected Input

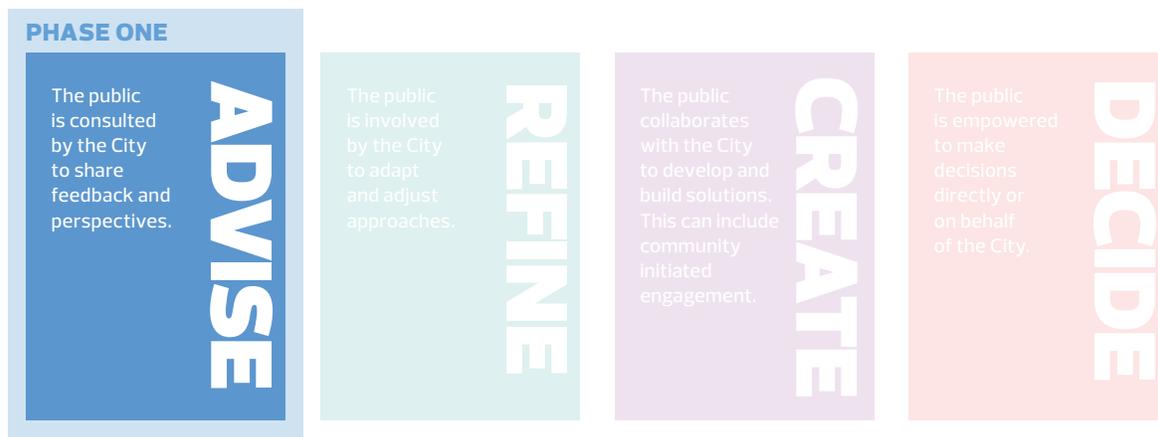
Phase One of engagement was held from September to October 2020, and was designed to learn about resident and stakeholder needs, barriers and potential solutions for the Multi-unit Mandatory Waste Sorting Program. Stakeholders were asked to participate in the engagement process in an **Advise** capacity along the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum, in order to provide feedback used in our options analysis and the development of this program.

Stakeholders included property managers, condo board members, developers, waste haulers and waste processors. Engaged Edmonton, the City of Edmonton's official online public engagement space, was used to provide these groups with information on five topic areas:

- + Program rollout
- + Collection containers
- + Regulatory requirements and incentives
- + Education and outreach
- + Program success measurements

On Engaged Edmonton, stakeholders had an opportunity to respond to questions about these five topics, discuss with other stakeholders, and ask the project team questions about this program. There were a total of 767 site visitors to the Engaged Edmonton page and 20 active participants who left a combined total of 61 comments and four questions for the project team. Three online workshops were also offered to stakeholders to provide an opportunity to learn more about the program in detail, ask the project team questions and collaborate in breakout sessions. A total of 67 stakeholders participated in the three online workshops.

Resident engagement in Phase One consisted of focus groups and in-depth interviews. A total of 52 multi-unit residents participated in one of eight online focus groups to discuss their perceived barriers to separating their waste and potential solutions to those barriers. Ten interviews were also conducted with residents who have previous experience with sorting their food scraps in multi-unit properties in other jurisdictions.



Phase One: What We Heard

Stakeholders mentioned that in order to prepare for this program, sufficient communication from the City and time to make changes to building infrastructure will be needed. Some managers noted that they might not have enough space for additional waste containers on their site and would like containers that fit on the same footprint as existing containers. In some cases, changes to building enclosures might be needed to accommodate additional containers in limited spaces. Providing enough time for residents to learn about the program and prepare for waste sorting was discussed as important.

Stakeholders also discussed the importance of education and outreach for multi-unit residents. Information to stakeholders and residents should include why the City is implementing this program, as well as how to sort waste properly with pictures and specific examples. Ongoing communication with residents throughout the implementation and on a regular basis will help prepare residents for the changes.

Residents discussed anticipated barriers regarding the Multi-unit Mandatory Waste Sorting Program, which included smell and mess, lack of space in their kitchens and the feeling that other residents will not properly sort their waste. Residents suggested solutions for these concerns. For odor concerns, residents talked about using food scrap pails and collection containers with tight seals to keep smells inside or adding air fresheners to the containers to control smell. The option to use compostable bags to contain food scraps would also address odour and mess concerns. Residents suggested that space concerns could be managed by having the City offer food scrap pails in a variety of models.

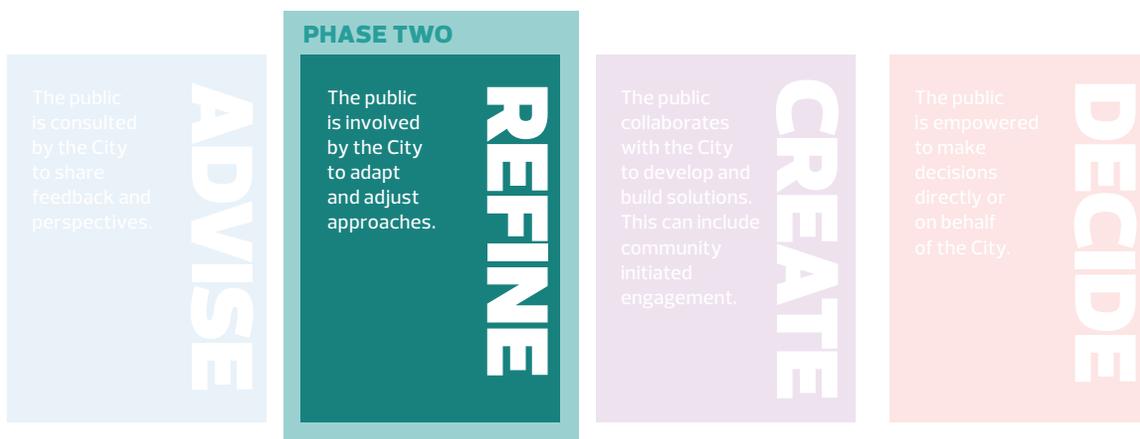
Residents also provided suggestions to make the program easy and convenient, such as having accessible waste containers for residents with mobility challenges, providing simple instructions and pictures in common spaces for how to sort, and including information about the benefits of a three-stream waste sorting program.

Phase Two: How We Collected Input

Phase Two of engagement was held in February 2021 and aimed to engage residents and stakeholders in adjusting the options identified through previous work. Phase Two of engagement followed a period of research and interviews with government and industry representatives, which set the foundation for identifying the program options and further analysis. Phase Two of engagement gathered additional information to further refine and narrow down these program options. Stakeholders participated in the engagement process in a **Refine** capacity along the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum, where participants were provided with more information about potential options and were asked to provide feedback on how those options would work for multi-unit properties in Edmonton. Options that stakeholders and residents had an opportunity to refine included types of collection containers for each stream, chute closure policies, educational programs, other support and enforcement tools and measures.

Property managers, condo board members and those in equivalent roles were asked to complete a survey. A total of **239 managers** completed the survey; 31% were property managers and 69% were condo board members. An Engaged Edmonton page was also used to provide stakeholders with more information about the program and to gather input through a forum for participants to discuss with other stakeholders, as well as a question and answer tool that allowed site users to ask questions of the project team. No stakeholders provided direct comments or questions on the Engaged Edmonton page, however there were **271 site visits** during this engagement phase, indicating interest in accessing information about the program.

A separate survey was developed to reach Edmonton residents living in multi-unit properties with communal waste collection. The survey was promoted to residents through social media and was distributed to the Edmonton Insight Community, which is an online citizen panel of Edmontonians who provide feedback on a variety of programs and policies. A total of **2,896 residents** completed the survey.



Phase Two: What We Heard

Managers think that having communal containers for each stream located beside each other is important for resident convenience and compliance. However, many managers identified that limited space in communal waste areas may limit their ability to place communal containers beside each other. The majority of managers also felt that one or more of the current collection container options (such as front load bins or carts) would work for their properties, however many managers were still concerned about lack of space for more collection containers onsite.

Residents also felt that having waste containers located next to each other in the same clean and well lit common area is very important to help with food scraps sorting.

Residents with communal waste containers think that the most important information and tools for them to successfully sort their waste into the correct streams include details and step-by-step guides demonstrating how to sort food scraps properly and a food scraps pail to use in their kitchens.

Both residents and managers had a strong preference for keeping chutes open for garbage, with little support for closing chutes. Many survey respondents from both the manager and resident surveys had similar concerns about mess, smell, insects and animals and felt that these issues may deter residents from sorting their waste properly. Residents and managers also shared concerns about potential increased costs and new fees; some managers suggested that the City could help offset costs with rebates or grant programs.

What's Next?

Both phases of engagement aimed to identify and further validate stakeholder and resident perspectives on the Multi-unit Mandatory Waste Sorting Program and solicit suggestions for a successful program. The input from engagement will be used alongside other criteria to weigh each program alternative and decide on the program recommendations, including decisions around chute closures, colocation of containers and communication and educational tactics. This information will inform the business case, along with recommendations for this program, and will be presented to City Council for approval in mid-2021, with a target implementation date of 2023.

City staff aim to keep stakeholders and residents informed on the progress of this program, during its development and implementation.

Please visit edmonton.ca/CommunalCollection for more information.

