



Key Challenges for Multi-Residential Waste Management

As the City begins developing its new Solid Waste Master Plan (Waste Plan), it is important to provide an understanding of the current waste management system in order to identify opportunities to strengthen the services and programs provided to customers. The information in this document offers insight into the challenges faced in managing and diverting waste at multi-residential properties. It is important to have an awareness of these challenges in order to recommend how the City best moves forward in addressing challenges and supporting the vision and guiding principles of the Waste Plan.

Background

As the capital of Canada and an urban centre, the housing portfolio in the City of Ottawa is a mix of single-family households, semi-detached homes, and multi-residential properties (a combination of townhome complexes and apartment buildings that have 6 or more residential units). The City of Ottawa provides waste collection services to approximately 1,700 multi-residential properties totalling 113,000 residential units. This represents approximately 27% of the total residential dwellings in the City.

Waste collection data indicates that 20% of all waste collected by the City of Ottawa is generated at multi-residential properties. Despite only contributing one-fifth of all the waste collected by the City, this sector presents tremendous opportunity to increase waste diversion. 2018 waste collection data indicates that the diversion rate for multi-residential properties is approximately 17%. This means that there is almost a 32% difference in waste diversion rates between curbside households and multi-residential properties!

It is important to recognize that multi-residential waste management is different than curbside waste management and faces unique challenges to improving waste diversion. These challenges will be explored in the next section.



Provincial Direction on Multi-Residential Waste Management

Residential waste management is regulated by the Province, and the City of Ottawa is responsible for delivering programs and services to meet provincial requirements.

Under provincial regulation, multi-residential properties are considered a part of the industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) sector. This means that they are subject to O. Reg 103/94 – *Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional Source Separation Programs*. Under this regulation, property owners are responsible for delivering waste management programs. The City has no statutory role to play in waste collection and diversion from multi-residential properties. However, the City of Ottawa has chosen to provide waste collection and diversion services to multi-residential properties to support property owners in meeting provincial requirements. This is done through the Solid Waste Management By-law (No. 2012-370).

In 2018, the Province of Ontario released its [Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement](#) under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016* to guide municipalities and businesses in reducing food and organic waste and increasing diversion. In the Policy Statement, the Province set aggressive food waste reduction and diversion targets for each sector. **Multi-residential properties are required to achieve 50% waste reduction and resource recovery of food and organic waste by 2025.**

The City of Ottawa provides food and organic waste collection to multi-residential properties through the green bin program. As of March 2020, 36% of the 1,700 multi-residential properties serviced by the City of Ottawa are registered for the green bin program. Property owners can also partner with the City to overcome challenges in starting and maintaining a green bin program to meet their provincial targets.





Key Challenges and Opportunities for Multi-Residential Waste Management

Multi-residential waste management involves several stakeholders to make waste diversion and management successful, including residents who participate in recycling and green bin programs and property staff who implement and maintain the programs.

Residents

Residents play an important role in improving waste diversion at multi-residential properties. It is important to understand their opinions and challenges with waste management in order to reduce barriers and encourage participation in waste diversion programs.

In 2018, the City completed [market research](#) (please see the French executive summary [here](#)) on resident's attitudes and behaviours towards solid waste management. Residents identified access to programs and convenience to participate as the two biggest challenges to participating in waste diversion programs at multi-residential properties:

Access: Even though all multi-residential properties receiving garbage collection from the City have recycling programs, 25% of residents indicated they do not have access to recycling programs. This could mean that the residents did not know where the recycling bins were located, or it was difficult for them to access to recycling bins. Also, less than one-third of residents at multi-residential properties stated they have access to the Green bin program. Of those without a green bin, 73% said they would use the program if they had it.

Convenience: For those with recycling and Green bin programs in place, residents identified inconvenience as the biggest barrier to using the programs or using them more. For residents in apartment buildings, many have convenient garbage chutes located on each floor but are required to transport recycling and green bin materials to a centralized area (often on the main level, in the basement, or outside).

Both of these challenges present the opportunity to explore options to make waste diversion programs more convenient to use for those living at multi-residential properties.

Property staff - owners/managers/superintendents



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As mentioned earlier, it is the responsibility of property owners to implement and manage waste diversion programs at their properties. The Province only requires multi-residential properties to provide garbage and recycling programs to residents. Many properties support and promote recycling and green bin programs, but face challenges in expanding diversion programs at their properties. One of the biggest challenges they face is space limitations.

Space limitations. The City has been providing services to the multi-residential sector since the regionalization of waste management in 1995. 80% of the apartment units in the Ottawa are in buildings that were constructed before this time. This means that they may have been designed without a space to put diversion containers. This challenge presents the opportunity to explore space efficient ways to provide garbage, recycling and green bin service while complying with all property by-laws and Fire Code requirements.

Policies, Tools and Resources Available from the City

The City has explored various policies, tools, and resources to reduce barriers and encourage participation in waste management and diversion programs.

Solid Waste Management By-law: The by-law states that multi-residential properties must implement source separation programs in order to receive City waste collection and outlines the requirements for waste containers and collection.

Site development standards: All multi-residential property development applications are reviewed to ensure that there is adequate storage for garbage, recycling, and green bin containers, and that the waste collection vehicle can access the containers. This has been in place since 2012.

Solid Waste Inspectors: The City's Solid Waste Inspectors work with the collection contractor and property staff to overcome challenges, ensure timely collection of materials, and encourage participation in diversion programs. They also provide educational resources to property staff and residents.

3-1-1 Call Centre: 3-1-1 will provide information on waste management programs, how to resolve collection issues, and how to support setting up a new waste service.



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Lobby displays and presentations: The City offers free waste diversion promotion and education support for residents, including lobby displays and presentations.



Posters: The City provides free signs and posters to multi-residential properties to educate residents about waste diversion programs. Market research found that 62% of residents reference signs and posters as a good resource to get information about waste diversion programs.

What's Next?

The City of Ottawa is developing a Multi-Residential Waste Strategy (Strategy) as one of the first component projects of the Solid Waste Master Plan. While the Waste Plan will explore short, medium, and long-term options to address the City's waste management needs over the next 30 years, the Strategy will explore waste diversion policies, programs and pilot initiatives to be implemented within a five-year timeframe. All recommendations in the Strategy will support the vision and guiding principles of the Waste Plan. The Strategy is set to be ready for Council consideration in early 2021.

Feedback from residents and key stakeholders provided to the City through [Engage Ottawa](#) and other Waste Plan public consultations will be considered in developing the Strategy.

We look forward to hearing from you!