

COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 5 December 2022

Subject: Waste and Recycling Services -
Public Engagement Results

Boards Routed Through: Environmental Advisory Board

Date: 13 October 2022

Issue:

Council is being provided with the results of the Waste and Recycling 2022 public engagement survey for information.

Background:

In October 2019, Waste and Recycling Services (WRS) was introduced to Dr. Mehdi Murali, a psychology professor at the University of Calgary whose research focuses on understanding how people make judgments and decisions in the marketplace. WRS worked with Dr. Murali and Corporate Communications to develop a survey that would be used to help guide strategic decisions around future program planning.

Survey questions were designed to assess barriers, habits and motivations for existing curbside programs and understand disposal practices and information needs and preferences. The survey also allowed residents to provide open feedback on current programs and express their priorities for the department.

Community engagement aligns with Council's focus area to have an informed and engaged community and the City's public participation framework identifies surveys as a tool for the public to consult on important community issues.

Results

A total of 2209 eligible residents completed the survey, which provides a confidence level of 95 per cent with a margin of error of ± 2.1 per cent.

This is more than double the number of responses received for the citizen satisfaction survey in 2022.

The detailed survey results are attached as Appendix A. Results show a high level of overall satisfaction with blue and green cart programs; however, residents expressed that the City does not offer a garbage collection service comparable to other municipalities. The top priority from residents was to review and revise the current garbage collection program.

Opportunities

Over the years there have been inquiries and discussion around black carts as an option for waste collection in Airdrie. This message was echoed in the survey responses.

The City's position has been that reducing the waste going to the landfill is financially beneficial to Airdrie residents and that implementation of black cart collection would negatively impact waste diversion progress.

There is an opportunity to conduct further research on the feedback received specific to the garbage collection program. Research could focus on alternative garbage collection systems that would maintain department efforts to increase diversion (divert waste from landfill to other streams like recycling/organics) and decrease contamination (remove material that doesn't belong in each stream) while addressing the community's desire for litter-free streets and decreased scavenging by pests.

Research would include regional practices, cost analysis of various programs as well as challenges and benefits to residents and the collection contractors.

A decision to research alternative garbage collection options would ensure that community stakeholders felt heard and that their input was considered. The risk would be raising resident expectations.

A revised Waste Management Strategy that considers the results of the survey and any additional research by WRS staff is planned for presentation in 2023. Further research on garbage collection options could be timely and valuable to the future Waste Management Strategy.

Alignment with South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and AirdrieONE:

The Five-Year Waste Management Plan is a significant tool for implementing the vision, guiding principles, goals, objectives, and strategies of the AirdrieONE Sustainability Plan specific to the focus of Waste Management. Identifying the barriers residents have to using the City curbside program was listed as a step of the five-year plan.

Boards Routed Through:

At the October 13, 2022, Environmental Advisory Board meeting, members voted unanimously to accept the report as presented.

While the report was accepted for information, it generated a considerable amount of discussion with a specific comment that the topic of black carts comes up all the time in-person and on social media.

A suggestion was made that Administration could put together information on the costs and benefits of black carts, including the cost difference between automated pick-up versus manual pick-up.

Alternatives/Implications:

1. Council could choose to endorse the recommendation of the Environmental Advisory Board and accept the public engagement results report for information but direct staff to conduct further research including regional practices, costs, challenges, and benefits of alternative garbage collection programs.

This alternative addresses comments from the EAB and allows community stakeholders to feel heard and that their input has been considered in decision making. This option also aligns with Council's focus area for an informed and engaged community.

2. Council could choose to request further information relating to curbside recycling and/or organics programs. Staff would bring the information to a later EAB and Council meeting to present the update.

Public Engagement and Communications Plan:

In alignment with the Public Participation Framework, Waste and Recycling Services will work with Corporate Communications to share the information received through this survey with the public.

Recommendation:

That Council accepts the recommendation of the Environmental Advisory Board to accept the Waste and Recycling Services Public Engagement Results report for information.

Leanne Moreira
Program Coordinator

Presenter:	Leanne Moreira
Department:	Waste and Recycling Services
Reviewed by:	L. Stevens
Attachments:	#1: Survey Results
Appointment:	N/A

APPENDIX A: Survey Results

The baseline question below was asked to establish whether those completing the survey were also responsible for taking out the organics, recycling, and garbage in the household.

Responsibility	Percentage
I am (survey participant)	42%
Another person in the house	10%
I do most often, but everyone contributes	24%
It's shared equally by everyone	23%
Other	1%

Disposal practices

Participants were asked how they dispose of 14 specific items to determine an understanding of the respondent's knowledge.

Item	Percent correct	Correct disposal location
Paper coffee cups (Tim Horton's, McDonalds)	47 %	Blue cart
Pet waste (feces, litter, cage shavings)	85%	Green cart
Toothpaste tube	90%	Garbage
Furnace filters	83%	Garbage
Chip bags	82%	Garbage
Meat trays	72%	Garbage
Garden hoses	62%	Garbage
Plastic cutlery	46%	Garbage
Plastic toys	27%	Garbage
Dish ware (ceramic plates, mugs)	27%	Garbage
Clothing (t-shirts, pants, shoes)	87%	Other
Batteries	83%	Other
Charging / electrical cables	71%	Other
Styrofoam	51%	Other

Program motivations, habits and barriers

Participants responded to a series of questions regarding their motivations, habits and barriers for curbside programs.

Agreement with a statement includes those who selected either "strongly agree", "agree" or "somewhat agree" on the original scale; disagreement with the statement included those who selected either "strongly disagree", "disagree" or "somewhat disagree".

Blue cart program

Motivations	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
I feel confident the items I put in the blue cart are recycled into new items	50%	25%	25%
Recycling is confusing	44%	41%	15%
Recycling is inconvenient	16%	74%	10%
Recycling makes a positive difference to the environment	78%	6%	16%
My neighbours don't recycle properly, so I shouldn't have to either	1%	89%	10%

Habits	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
If I am not sure that an item is recyclable, I toss it in the garbage	71%	21%	8%
If I have a cardboard box with a plastic (i.e., a toy box) I will put the whole thing in the blue cart	51%	43%	6%
If a recyclable item requires washing, I toss it in the garbage	15%	78%	7%
I consider if packaging is recyclable when I am at the store	23%	60%	17%

Barriers	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
I don't have the time to recycle	3%	93%	4%
I don't have space in my home to store my recyclables	19%	76%	5%
There are no incentives to recycle	28%	57%	15%

Green Cart Program

Motivations	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
I feel confident the items I put in the green cart are turned into a reusable end product	66%	11%	23%
Composting makes a positive difference to the environment	86%	4%	10%
Composting is confusing	15%	72%	13%
Composting is inconvenient	15%	76%	9%
My neighbours don't compost properly, so I shouldn't have to either	1%	88%	11%

Habits	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
If I am not sure that an item is compostable, I toss it in the garbage	61%	31%	8%
If I am not sure that an item is compostable, I look it up	61%	29%	10%
If a compostable item requires separating from packaging, I toss it in the garbage	26%	65%	9%
I consider if packaging is compostable when I am at the store	21%	59%	20%

Barriers	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
I don't have the time to sort out food waste	13%	79%	8%
I don't have space in my kitchen to collect food waste	21%	74%	5%
I believe my kitchen will smell if I collect organics	27%	68%	5%

Garbage Program

Habits	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
When I have more garbage than usual, I will purchase excess waste tags or take it to the Transfer Site	68%	21%	11%
When I have more garbage than usual, I will wait until the next week to throw it out	75%	8%	17%
When shopping, I consider the amount of garbage an item will create	24%	58%	18%
I feel that I am doing all that I can to reduce the amount of garbage I produce each week	71%	16%	13%

Barriers	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
I typically have more material than will fit in the allowable garbage bag	22%	70%	8%
I could have less garbage if I used by blue and green carts more	23%	60%	17%

The following tables show a series of statements and how participants responded based on how many individuals live in the household, how many years they have lived in Airdrie, and age bracket.

Blue Cart Program

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6 up
If I am not sure that an item is recyclable, I toss it in the garbage	65%	71%	67%	74%	73%	77%
If I am not sure that an item is recyclable, I look it up	67%	70%	63%	64%	58%	57%
I don't have space in my home to store my recyclables	21%	15%	19%	19%	23%	27%
Recycling is inconvenient	18%	14%	16%	15%	21%	20%

Statement	Less than 1 year	1 – 5 years	6 – 9 years	10 years +
If I am not sure that an item is recyclable, I toss it in the garbage	67%	77%	75%	66%
If I am not sure that an item is recyclable, I look it up	70%	62%	60%	68%
Recycling is confusing	45%	47%	49%	38%

Statement	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50 -59	60 - 69	70 up
If I am not sure an item is recyclable, I toss it in the garbage	75%	75%	72%	65%	66%	69%
If I am not sure an item is recyclable, I look it up	55%	57%	63%	74%	75%	77%
If a recyclable item requires washing, I toss it in the garbage	22%	18%	16%	11%	9%	10%
If I have a cardboard box with a plastic window (i.e., toy box) I will put the whole thing in the blue cart	74%	59%	49%	46%	37%	30%
I consider if packaging is recyclable when I am at the store	15%	22%	22%	28%	27%	23%
I feel confident the items I put in the blue cart are recycled into new items	46%	44%	50%	58%	54%	63%
Recycling makes a positive difference to the environment	83%	87%	86%	88%	89%	95%
There are no incentives to recycle	36%	32%	28%	25%	24%	18%
Recycling is confusing	45%	44%	44%	45%	41%	36%
Recycling is inconvenient	27%	17%	15%	17%	14%	10%

Green cart program

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6 up
If I am not sure that an item is compostable, I look it up	62%	65%	58%	62%	54%	57%
I don't have the time to sort out food waste	18%	12%	12%	12%	13%	14%
I don't have space in my kitchen to collect food waste	28%	19%	21%	18%	24%	19%
Composting is confusing	20%	15%	15%	14%	16%	20%
Composting is inconvenient	18%	15%	14%	12%	21%	19%

Statement	Less than 1 year	1 – 5 years	6 – 9 years	10 years +
If I am not sure that an item is compostable, I toss it in the garbage	61%	64%	64%	56%
I believe my kitchen will smell if I collect organics	30%	28%	31%	24%
Composting is inconvenient	17%	16%	16%	15%

Statement	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50 -59	60 - 69	70 up
If I am not sure that an item is compostable, I toss it in the garbage	70%	64%	63%	57%	52%	51%
If I am not sure that an item is compostable, I look it up	57%	54%	59%	71%	67%	69%
If a compostable item requires separating from packaging, I toss it in the garbage	37%	31%	26%	23%	15%	14%
I don't have the time to sort out food waste	18%	15%	14%	12%	9%	3%
I don't have the space in my kitchen to collect food waste	37%	22%	20%	19%	15%	12%
I believe my kitchen will smell if I collect organics	41%	30%	27%	23%	20%	16%
I consider if packaging is compostable when I am at the store	13%	20%	21%	22%	25%	28%
I feel confident that the items I put in the green cart are turned into a reusable end product	48%	64%	68%	69%	75%	76%
Composting is confusing	11%	14%	17%	20%	12%	9%
Composting is inconvenient	28%	17%	15%	15%	12%	5%
Composting makes a positive different to the environment	84%	86%	86%	86%	89%	87%

Garbage program

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6 up
When I have more garbage than usual, I will purchase excess waste tags or take it to the Transfer Site	53%	67%	70%	73%	76%	60%
When I have more garbage than usual, I will wait until the next week to throw it out	84%	75%	73%	75%	68%	73%
I typically have more material than will fit in the allowable garbage bag	5%	14%	24%	25%	38%	46%

Statement	Less than 1 year	1 – 5 years	6 – 9 years	10 years +
I typically have more material than will fit in the allowable garbage bag	26%	28%	22%	10%
I feel that I am doing all that I can to reduce the amount of garbage I produce each week	65%	65%	72%	74%
When shopping, I consider the amount of garbage an item will create	23%	24%	20%	24%
When I have more garbage than usual, I will purchase excess waste tags	57%	66%	68%	73%
When I have more garbage than usual, I will wait until the next week to throw it out	73%	75%	74%	75%

Statement	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50 -59	60 - 69	70 up
When I have more garbage than usual, I will purchase excess waste tags or take it to the Transfer Site	54%	67%	70%	71%	68%	76%
When I have more garbage than usual, I will wait until the next week to throw it out	70%	75%	73%	77%	75%	78%
When shopping, I consider the amount of garbage an item will create	22%	22%	23%	26%	25%	28%
I feel that I am doing all that I can to reduce the amount of garbage I produce each week	60%	64%	70%	80%	80%	84%
My neighbours set out more than is allowed, so I should be able to set out more too	8%	5%	5%	5%	3%	2%
I typically have more material than will fit in the allowable garbage bag	37%	29%	25%	15%	8%	5%

Feedback on current programs

A portion of the survey requested feedback on current programs, participants were asked if they feel the City has made it clear what goes where and if they feel the City offers comparable services to other municipalities.

I feel the City has made it clear what goes in the	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
Blue cart	80%	12%	8%
Green cart	86%	7 %	7%
Garbage	82%	8%	10%

I feel the City offers comparable services to other cities	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree
Blue cart	74%	4%	22%
Green cart	74%	4%	22%
Garbage	39%	44%	18%

Participants were also asked to if they feel the City has made it easy to understand how much garbage they can set out each week, 83% agreed with the statement, 10% disagreed, and 7% neither agreed or disagreed.

The following tables show those that agreed with the following statements compared to how long respondents have lived in Airdrie and the number of people that live in a household.

Statement	Less than a year	1 - 5 years	6 – 9 years	10 years +
I feel the City has made it clear what goes in the garbage	83%	79%	83%	84%
I feel the City has made it easy to understand how much garbage I can set out each week	78%	78%	85%	86%
I feel the City offers comparable garbage services to other cities	31%	33%	40%	42%
I feel the City has made it clear what can go in the blue cart	82%	73%	82%	83%
I feel the City offers comparable blue cart services to other cities	82%	76%	89%	68%

I feel the City has made it clear what can go in the green cart	89%	81%	87%	87%
I feel the City offers comparable green cart services to other cities	85%	76%	78%	70%

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6 up
I feel the City has made it clear what goes in the garbage	81%	84%	82%	82%	81%	83%
I feel the City has made it easy to understand how much garbage I can set out each week	83%	84%	82%	87%	81%	78%
I feel the City offers comparable garbage services to other cities	38%	46%	35%	37%	32%	30%
I feel the City has made it clear what can go in the blue cart	81%	81%	77%	81%	80%	84%
I feel the City offers comparable blue cart services to other cities	67%	71%	70%	76%	81%	75%
I feel the City has made it clear what can go in the green cart	84%	86%	84%	89%	84%	88%
I feel the City offers comparable green cart services to other cities	67%	72%	71%	79%	80%	75%

Open-ended questions

Three open-ended questions were asked at the end of the survey. All 2209 participants were invited to provide feedback on the current programs as well as outline what their priorities would be for the department. The percentages outlined are representative of the specific number of responses to each question.

The first question “If you were in charge of the department for Waste and Recycling Services, what would your top one or two priorities/changes be?” received 1525 responses. The top priorities are shown below and do not include mentions below 5%.

Top Priorities	n = 1525	Percentage
Introduce an automated black cart program	927	61%
Provide education	317	21%
Manage the litter issue created by garbage and blue carts	247	16%
Consistent collection schedule and set out requirements	185	15%
Provide additional services	190	12%
Provide more value for services	125	8%
Better garbage program	119	8%

The second question “How convenient do you find the green and blue carts, in terms of storage, use and reliability?” received 1630 responses. The top responses are shown below and do not include mentions below 5%.

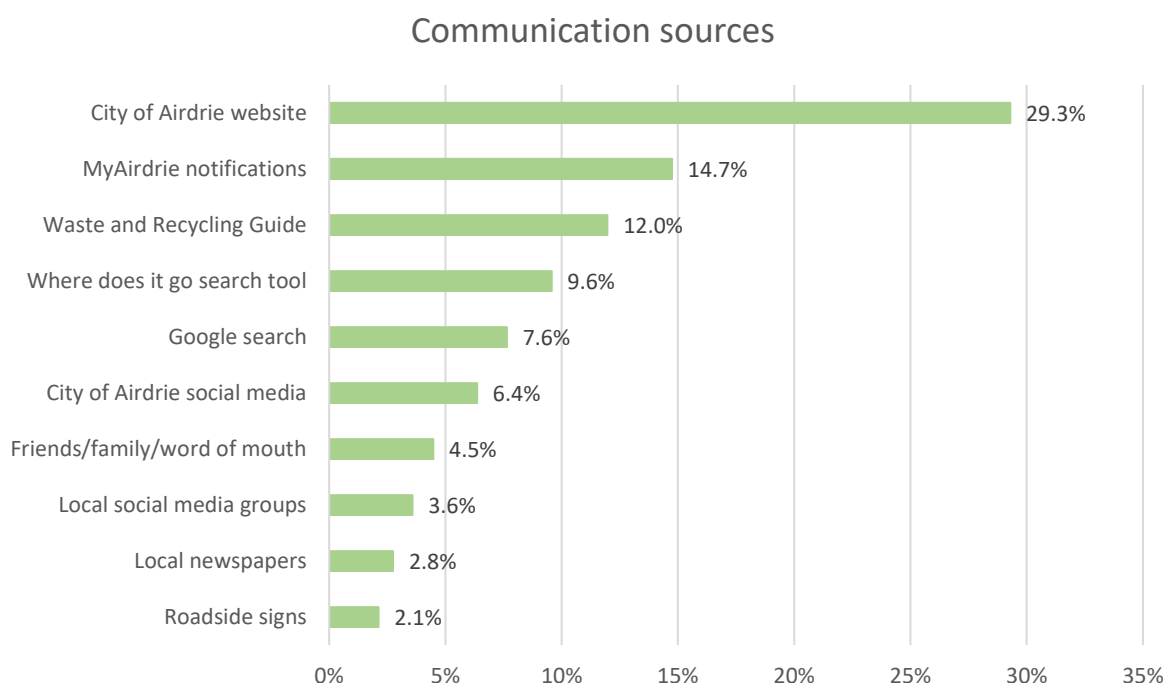
Top responses	n = 1630	Percentage
General positive feedback	1100	67%
Lack storage space	172	11%
Blue cart is not wind resistant	143	9%
Do not like having carts	84	5%

The final question “Do you have any other feedback you would like to provide?” received 801 responses.

Top Priorities	n=801	Percentage
Introduce an automated black cart program	365	46%
Provide additional services	80	10%
Manage the litter issue created by garbage and blue carts	79	10%
Provide education	57	7%
Consistent collection schedule and set out requirements	41	5%

Communication preferences

To understand communication preferences, participants were asked where they get information about the department. Participants were able to select multiple communication sources.



The following table outlines the age brackets for each communication type respondents are most likely to utilize.

Communication type	Under					
	30	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 - 69	70 +
City of Airdrie website	72%	75%	79%	84%	85%	80%
MyAirdrie notifications	42%	39%	42%	37%	41%	38%

Waste and Recycling Guide	25%	26%	25%	42%	45%	60%
Where does it go search tool	18%	24%	27%	28%	29%	26%
Google search	31%	28%	20%	16%	12%	5%
City of Airdrie social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	18%	23%	19%	15%	8%	4%
Friends/family/word of mouth	17%	14%	12%	11%	9%	8%
Local social media groups	12%	14%	11%	6%	4%	3%
Local newspapers	4%	4%	6%	7%	17%	23%
Roadside signs	3%	4%	7%	7%	6%	8%
Radio	3%	3%	6%	6%	5%	3%
Contact the department (phone/email/in person)	1%	2%	3%	3%	9%	12%
Airdrie Today eNewsletter	2%	1%	2%	4%	7%	7%

Participants were asked what kind of information they would like to have communicated to them. Options included:

- information on what goes where,
- curbside program successes such as diversion and contamination rates,
- impacts to curbside programs such as changes to national and international policy changes,
- department events,
- missed collection notifications, or
- other

Participants were able to select multiple options, total responses were 6099. Most respondents (26.7%) would like to know more about what goes where, followed by 20.2% that want to know about department events, and 19.1% want to receive notification for collection disruptions.

When asked how often they would like to see information on waste and recycling programs, most respondents said they would like to see information from the department once a month, this holds true regardless of the type of information.