

# Report to Council



**Date:** June 9, 2025  
**To:** Council  
**From:** City Manager  
**Subject:** Food Waste Diversion  
**Department:** Utility Services

---

## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receive, for information, the report from the Utility Services Department, dated June 9, 2025, regarding adding food waste to the materials collected in the City of Kelowna's curbside organics collection program;

AND THAT Council not support the City of Kelowna's participation in the Regional District of Central Okanagan's proposed Curbside Food Waste Program;

AND THAT Council direct staff to ensure that food waste diversion from landfill is included in the 2030 update to the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan;

AND FURTHER THAT future food waste diversion include consideration of multi-family residential as well as commercial properties.

## **Purpose:**

To consider adding food waste to the curbside organics collection program.

## **Council Priority Alignment:**

Climate & Environment

## **Background:**

The City provides curbside collection of garbage, recycling and yard waste to 43,000 single family and ground oriented multi-family properties within the city. This is a mandatory program for single family homes and duplexes, and an optional program for ground oriented multi-family properties if the contracted service vehicles can safely service the property. Recent bylaw amendments have been made to better accommodate new higher density, ground-oriented development (1-6 units per lot) into the curbside collection program. Approximately 500 units/year are added to the curbside collection program.

To maximize economies of scale and improve customer service across the region, Kelowna partners with the District of Lake Country, the City of West Kelowna, the District of Peachland and the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) in delivering a consistent program. RDCO staff administer the program and collection contracts on behalf of the partners. RDCO staff have led the evaluation and public engagement relating to the cost and feasibility of adding food waste to the curbside organics collection program. A summary Regional District timeline relating to curbside food waste collection is provided as Attachment 1.

Recent (2021 & 2024) Waste Characterization Studies found 40% of residential waste from the curbside collection program is compostable (food waste, soiled papers, and other organic materials). RDCO staff performed public engagement in 2023 and 2024. The results of the engagement showed 73% of respondents support a curbside food waste program with the top concerns identified as cost, wildlife and reduced frequency of garbage collection. When asked about costs, 49% of residents in the region (and 55% in Kelowna specifically) said they are willing to pay up to \$66/year for a curbside food waste program.

A Food Waste Feasibility Study commissioned by the RDCO (2021) identified the best option to manage food waste for our curbside customers is to include it with current curbside yard waste carts for composting. The study estimated that 7,000 tonnes of curbside collected food waste per year could be diverted from the 32,000 tonnes of curbside collected garbage disposed of annually. Not all “compostable” waste would be appropriate for the curbside composting program and not all users would fully participate all year. The total waste stream landfilled is 150,000 tonnes per year.

The City diverts approximately 45,000 tonnes of organic materials that arrive at the landfill each year. This includes approximately 15,000 tonnes of curbside collected yard waste and 13,000 tonnes of commercial or self-hauled yard waste. Due to space constraints and costs for expected volumes and odour management facilities, co-mingled food and yard waste cannot be practically managed at the Glenmore Landfill compost site therefore this material would need to be hauled and processed elsewhere leaving 13,000 tonnes per year of yard waste continuing to be processed to create Glengrow compost.

#### *Previous Council Resolution*

Resolution	Date
THAT Council receives for information, the report from Utility Services dated September 9, 2024, with respect to updates on the second phase of public consultation on the Regional District of Central Okanagan Food Waste Diversion initiative.	September 9, 2024

#### **Discussion:**

The changes being proposed to curbside collection programs across the region are summarized as follows:

1. Allow food waste to be added to the curbside yard waste collection cart;
2. Increase yard waste collection to a weekly, year-round service from the current every other week from March 01 to December 31;

3. Decrease garbage (black bin) collection from a weekly service to every other week. As food waste is removed from the garbage stream the quantity of garbage, along with much of the putrescible waste is reduced, allowing for a reduction in collection frequency.

In Kelowna, the curbside collection program is fully funded by user fees, not property taxes. Users see the fee as separate levy on their annual tax notice. In 2025 this user fee is \$198.34 per dwelling unit.

To provide curbside food waste collection, a consultant estimated cost increase of approximately \$63 per household would be required (based on 2025 costs). A new transfer station would be required for this change, with costs required for land, construction, hauling costs and composting co-mingled food and yard waste from the curbside bins covered by the increased user fee.

If the proposed service change maintains weekly garbage collection with the increased weekly co-mingled yard waste/food waste collection, there would be an additional cost of approximately \$22 per year (in addition to the estimated \$63 per household per year).

The cost estimate provided by the consultant for a new, simple, transfer station is estimated at \$12 million (including \$6 million for 3 acres of land). However, City staff believe a transfer station within Kelowna would cost more than this, since a facility located within our urban setting would need higher investment to enable indoor operations and sufficient odour-control.

Staff also note that 65% of residential growth in Kelowna is projected to be apartment style dwelling units that are not serviced by the curbside collection program, thereby reducing the future benefit relative to growth. If the City is going to support food waste diversion from the rapidly growing apartment population, then the transfer facilities will need to be either sized or expandable (with appropriate land base) to meet the needs of all residents. This will require a higher level of investment. Further expandability will be necessary if there is a desire to address food waste diversion from commercial waste generators such as schools, hotels, grocers, and restaurants.

Given the uncertainty of transfer station location, design and technical features, as well as the need for space to accommodate significant growth, Council should consider a cost range of \$60 to \$70 per household as a potential fee if costs are to be fully recovered from users.

In summary:

Providing food waste pickup would include the following benefits to the City:

1. Increases landfill lifespan.
2. Reduced overall Greenhouse Gas emissions.
3. Allows for growth in existing or new waste recovery and future leachate and water management operations in the space constrained landfill footprint.
4. Increased return of nutrients back into the natural environment.

However, this change in service would have the following challenges:

1. Decreased Glengrow availability to the local market as co-mingled yard and food waste would most cost effectively be composted elsewhere and used for mine reclamation.
2. Additional odours and wildlife attraction to curbside bins.
3. Services would only be available to residents of the curbside collection system.

4. Increased cost of \$60-\$70 (30-35%) per year to Kelowna curbside collection households.

**Conclusion:**

Staff recommend not proceeding with the expansion of the food waste diversion program at this time due to the estimated cost impacts, uncertainty in the implementation, and a preference to consider impacts to the program from commercial food waste and the growing percentage of multi-family units in the city from the infill housing programs.

**Internal Circulation:**

Finance

Communications

**Considerations applicable to this report:**

***Financial/Budgetary Considerations:***

No additional financial considerations

***Communications Comments:***

No additional comments.

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

*Legal/Statutory Authority:*

*Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:*

*Existing Policy:*

*Consultation and Engagement:*

**Submitted by:** S. Hoekstra, Manager – Landfill and Composting Operations

**Reviewed by:** K. Van Vliet, Utility Services Department Manager

**Approved for inclusion:** M. Logan, General Manager, Infrastructure

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1 – Report to Kelowna – Curbside Food Waste May 2025

Attachment 2 – Food Waste Diversion Presentation 20250526

cc:

D. Nobel-Brandt, RDCO