



Department Source: City Utilities - Solid Waste

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: July 6, 2021

Re: Report: Solid Waste Update on Citizen Feedback on Curbside Refuse and Recycling Collection

## Executive Summary

The Council approved changes to curbside collection requirements as part of the FY2021 budget process in an effort to improve working conditions for solid waste staff while encouraging conservation. The intent of the changes in residential trash collection reduces the potential for large volumes of refuse and large bulky items placed at the curb for collection. The first phase was implemented November 1, 2020 which required all material left curbside to be placed in bags and eliminated the unscheduled collection of large bulky items.

The second phase of the changes began on February 1, 2021, which implemented the “pay as you throw” portion of the program. All material placed curbside for collection must be in City provided bags with a City logo. Via a voucher program, customers are provided 104 trash bags per year. Extra bags, if needed, will be available for purchase at the rate of \$2 per bag.

This report is intended to provide a summary of the customer feedback that has been received in regards to the curbside refuse and recycling program.

## Discussion

Between January 1 and June 22, 2021, the Contact Center received 2,201 calls related to City refuse bags or bag vouchers. These calls include citizen questions, comments and complaints. Unfortunately, the City’s record system is not capable of quantifying the number of number of complaints within the 2,201 calls received.

Some of the common complaints regarding the curbside refuse and recycling program include:

- Bag size: Some citizens thought the bag is too big while others wanted smaller bags.
- Bag quality: Multiple reports of defective bags were received.
- Bag cost: Reports of not being able to afford the \$2 bags.
- Receipt of vouchers: Reports of not receiving vouchers.
- Lost Vouchers: Multiple reports of citizens losing vouchers.
- Roll carts: Some reported they wanted to use a roll cart.

Some of the common questions regarding the curbside refuse and recycling program include:



- Receipt of vouchers: Several citizens called during the mailing of the initial round of vouchers in January to inquire when they would receive their vouchers.
- Voucher redemption: Several homebound citizens asked for assistance in redeeming vouchers.
- Bag limit: Several citizens called to ask how many City logo bags could be set out each week.
- Old non-City logo bags: Several citizens called to ask if they could continue to use their old non-City logo bags.

Some potential alternatives for the curbside refuse and recycling program include:

- Discontinue the City provided bag and “pay as you throw” program. Under this alternative curbside customers could utilize any type of refuse bag and place an unlimited number of bags at the curb each week. This alternative would minimize the incentive for conservation, reuse and recycling, while worsening working conditions for solid waste staff. This alternative would likely have a negative impact on residential collection staffing levels.
- Several customers have requested using roll carts however, the use of roll carts and automated collections is not feasible at this time as voter approved ordinances do not allow for automated residential collection or the use of roll carts.
- Hiring a private solid waste contractor to perform the curbside refuse and recycling collections is possible but would take several months to implement. Automated collection is becoming the industry standard for residential curbside service. Therefore, finding a private solid waste contractor that is willing to provide manual collection could be difficult or result in a higher monthly rate for residential customers.

## Waste Reduction

The current City provided bag and “pay as you throw” program for curbside refuse and recycling was implemented in an effort to improve working conditions for solid waste staff while encouraging conservation. Early indications show that the program is having the desired effect. The total tons of residential curbside refuse for February – May of 2021 is 25% less than the same period in 2020 while the total tons of residential recycling (curbside and drop off sites) for February – May of 2021 has increased by 19% when compared to the same period in 2020.

### Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: No financial impact for this report.

Long-Term Impact: No financial impact for this report.

### Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)



# City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

## Legislative History

Date	Action
NA	NA

## Suggested Council Action

Report for information only