



What We Heard Report: Phase Two Food Waste Engagement for the RDCO

August 2024

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Summary

In the fall of 2023, the Regional District of Central Okanagan began Phase 1 of a public engagement process to gather feedback from residents on a possible curbside food waste collection program. The goal of Phase 1 engagement was to measure overall community support for such a program and identify residents concerns.

To gather this information, the RDCO conducted a statistically valid mail out survey with approximately 1800 residents randomly selected to participate. An engagement platform was also launched at yoursay.rdco.com to gather additional feedback from residents who did not receive a survey but still wished to share their thoughts.

Survey results indicated 73% of respondents would support a curbside food waste collection program. Of those residents that engaged via yoursay.rdco.com, 53% of comments were in strong support of a curbside food waste collection program.



In June of 2024, the RDCO began Phase 2 of a broader based public engagement initiative providing an opportunity for all residents of the Central Okanagan to offer feedback as well as learn more about the proposed food waste program.

The purpose of Phase 2 was to gather more specific feedback from residents to help shape what food waste collection in the Central Okanagan could look like, diving deeper into garnering feedback on specific elements of program design and service options, including curbside collection options, elements to consider when siting a transfer station, feedback on potential fees associated with the collection program, specific wildlife concerns, engagement preferences and more.

A key component of Phase 2 engagement was a survey hosted on yoursay.rdco.com from June 3 to July 2, 2024. Throughout the month of June, RDCO staff attended a mix of public events and pop ups to encourage survey participation, raise awareness about the proposed food waste program and give residents an opportunity to speak one on one with staff. This coincided with a media and advertising campaign to help promote the survey and encourage residents to take part in the engagement process and share their feedback.

Over 4200 residents completed the Phase 2 food waste survey. During the month of June over 8,000 residents visited the yoursay.rdco.com page. In addition, staff connected in person with over 500 residents at outreach events.

Key themes Phase 2: What we heard

Below is a summary of the findings identified in the Phase 2 survey and feedback from Phase 2 engagement at yoursay.rdco.com.



Overall support

Phase 2 engagement results continue to show strong support for a curbside food waste program, with 76% of respondents in favour of the program.



Cost concerns

Cost of the program is still a concern for residents. 27% say they want a food waste collection program but do not support a tax/utility bill increase.

However, 49% of respondents support food waste collection and are willing to pay at least \$66 annually for such a service, while 19% don't want food waste collection and don't support any tax/utility increase.



Scheduling of collection

There is overall support for bi-weekly versus weekly garbage collection once a food waste program is implemented with yard waste/food waste collection changing to weekly. 70% support bi-weekly versus weekly garbage collection if food waste is added to yard waste carts.



Wildlife/nuisance issues

Wildlife/rodent/pest issues still present a concern for residents. While 24% don't have wildlife concerns, 72% are concerned food waste collection could attract rats, bears, racoons or insects/pests.



Transfer Station Considerations

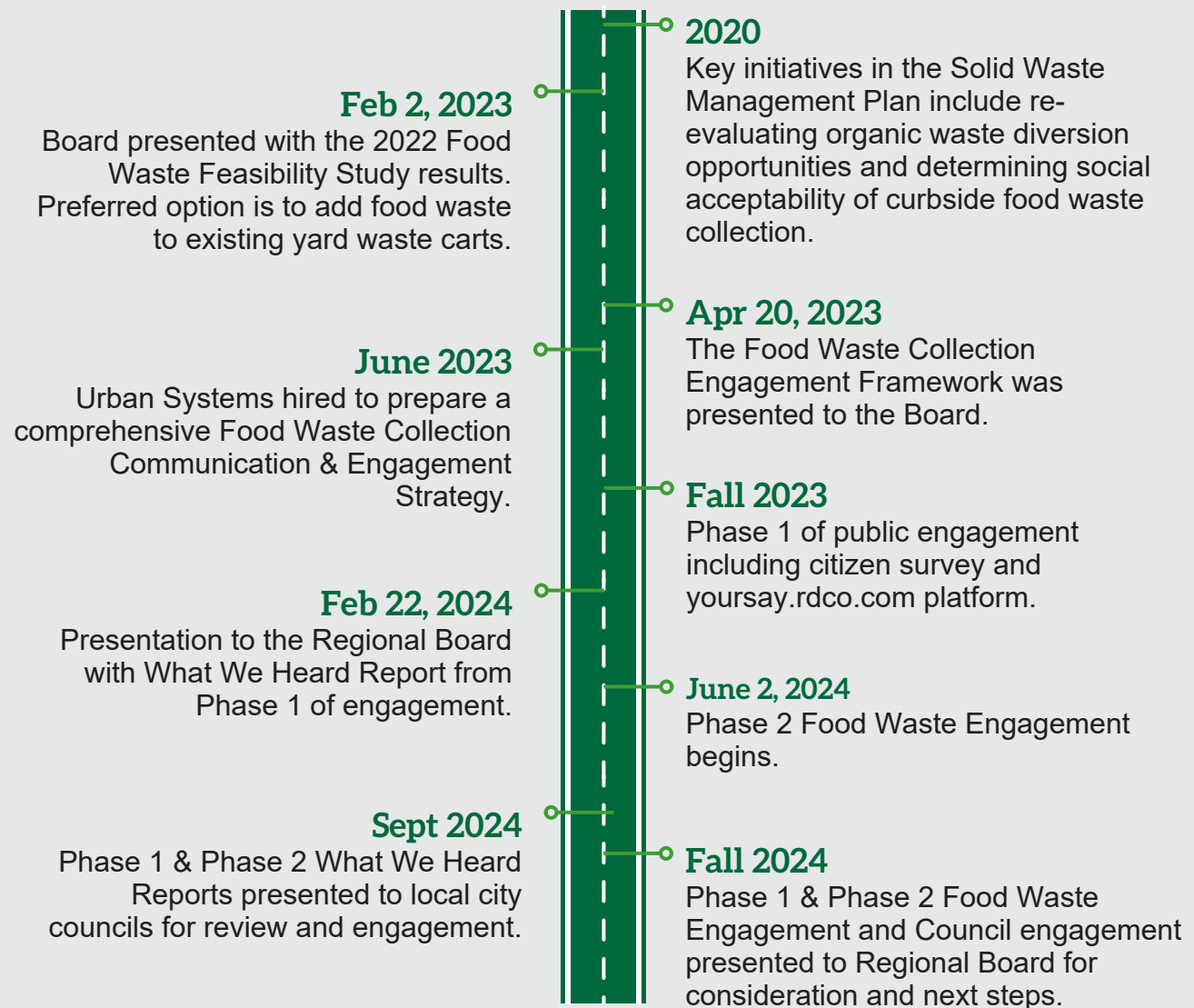
Transfer station(s) will be required prior to implementing curbside food waste collection and residents said cost is the most important consideration when siting a transfer station, followed by pests and wildlife concerns and odour, noise and dust.

Background

The Regional District of Central Okanagan's Solid Waste Management Plan includes re-evaluating organics diversion in the region and in particular determining if food waste diversion is supported by residents in the region.

Below is a recent timeline of events leading to the consideration of a curbside food waste program, including Phase 1 and Phase 2 engagement, where we are now and where we are headed.

ROAD TO CURBSIDE FOOD WASTE COLLECTION



How we Engaged-Phase 2

Online Survey

The RDCO launched a month-long online survey at yoursay.rdco.com to provide all residents of the Central Okanagan an opportunity to share their input and feedback on a proposed food waste collection program.

In June, media and education awareness campaigns were launched on multiple platforms and in various venues to help promote the survey and engagement opportunities. This helped educate residents about the program. Below is a summary of engagement initiatives.

Community relations activities

Staff attended 10 events throughout the engagement period to promote awareness of the community engagement opportunity and to provide information on the proposed food waste program. Staff connected in person with over 500 residents at these outreach events.



Social Media, Print, Online Ads

- Facebook Ads, paid boosted ads and organic ads for the month of June
- Print and online ads, Castanet, Kelowna Now, Daily Courier, and Capital news for the month of June

Printed (promotional) materials

- Posters (distributed to community boards across the region)
- Postcards (Over 8000 direct mailed to select City of Kelowna residents) and displayed at front counters of high-profile community locations, as well as handed out at all outreach activities
- Display boards in municipal hall foyers for the month of June

Public Notices

- Published news releases throughout the Central Okanagan to promote Phase 2 engagement
- June 3, 2024: launch of survey and Phase 2 Food Waste engagement
- June 24, 2024: second Media release to promote one week left to take the survey

Regional Partner's digital toolkit

- Produced Phase 2 Food Waste public engagement materials and content to share with regional partners.

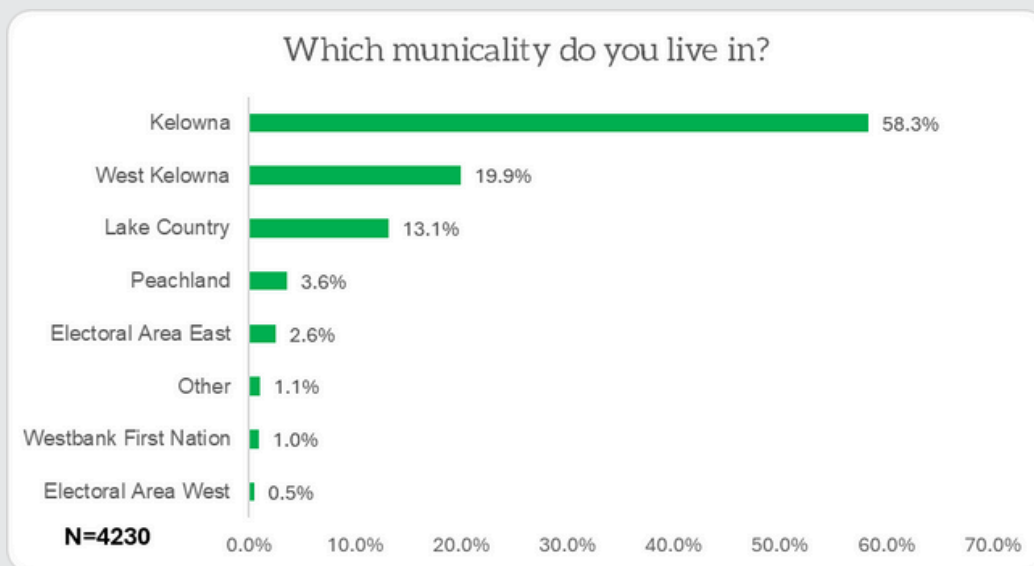
Survey results

Demographics and response rate

The Phase 2 Food Waste survey was open to the community from June 3 until July 2, 2024. Over 4200 people completed the survey.

While the results are not statistically significant due to the opt-in nature of participation, the high completion rate of surveys provides a solid level of confidence in the snapshot of attitudes, motivations and barriers specific to curbside food waste collection in Central Okanagan communities.

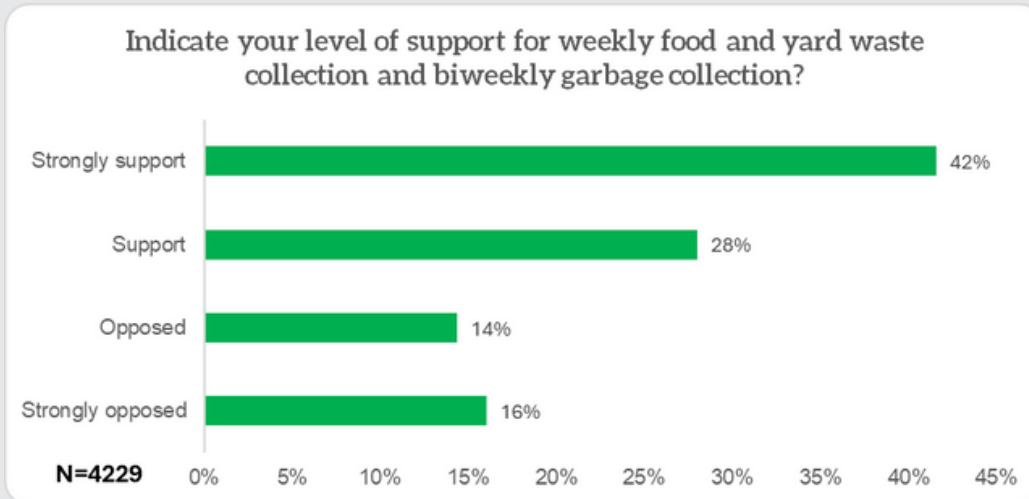
Overall findings indicate there continues to be solid support for a food waste collection program, with 76% of respondents supporting or strongly supporting such a program.



These are hard questions and burdens to ask, but will be even harder for future generations. Let's not put the burden of food waste solutions on the shoulders of our children and grandchildren.

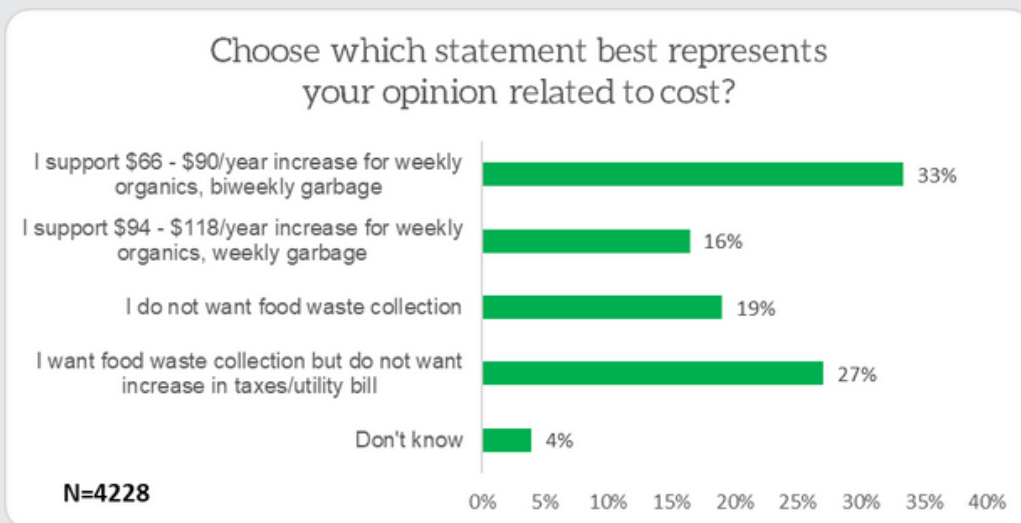
Changes to collection schedule

We are considering collecting food waste/yard waste weekly and switching garbage collection to bi-weekly or every other week. 70% of respondents either supported or strongly supported this change. 30% were either opposed or strongly opposed to bi-weekly collection.



Cost concerns

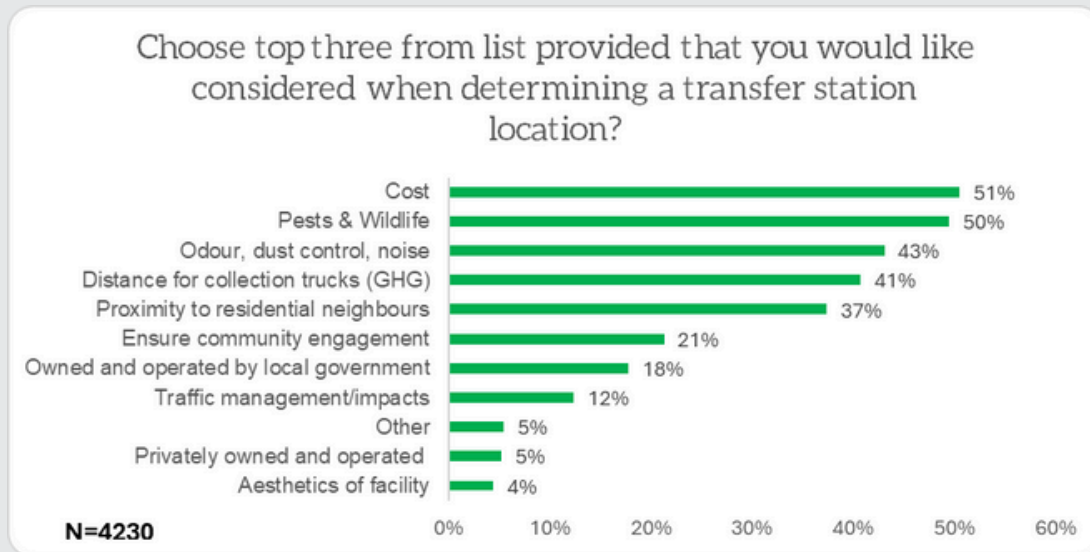
Cost for a food waste program is still a concern for residents. 49% are willing to pay at least \$66 annually for a food waste collection program. 27% want a food waste program but are not willing to pay for it, and 19% do not support a food waste collection program.



Siting a transfer station

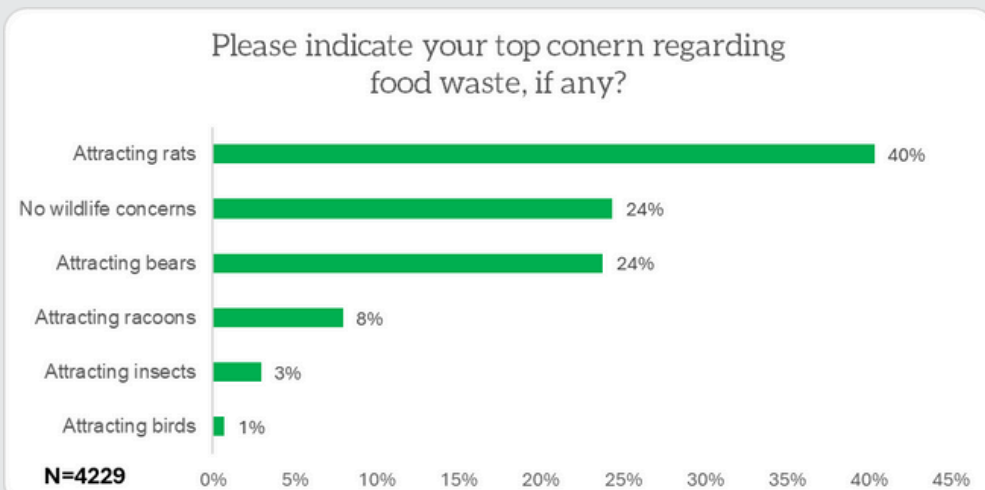
Current facilities able to process food waste are either out of region or too far for collection trucks to travel to, therefore food waste would need to be sent to a transfer station and eventually sent to processing facilities.

Residents were asked what the RDCO should consider when determining a transfer station location. Residents top three concerns were cost, pests and wildlife management, and odour/dust control and noise.



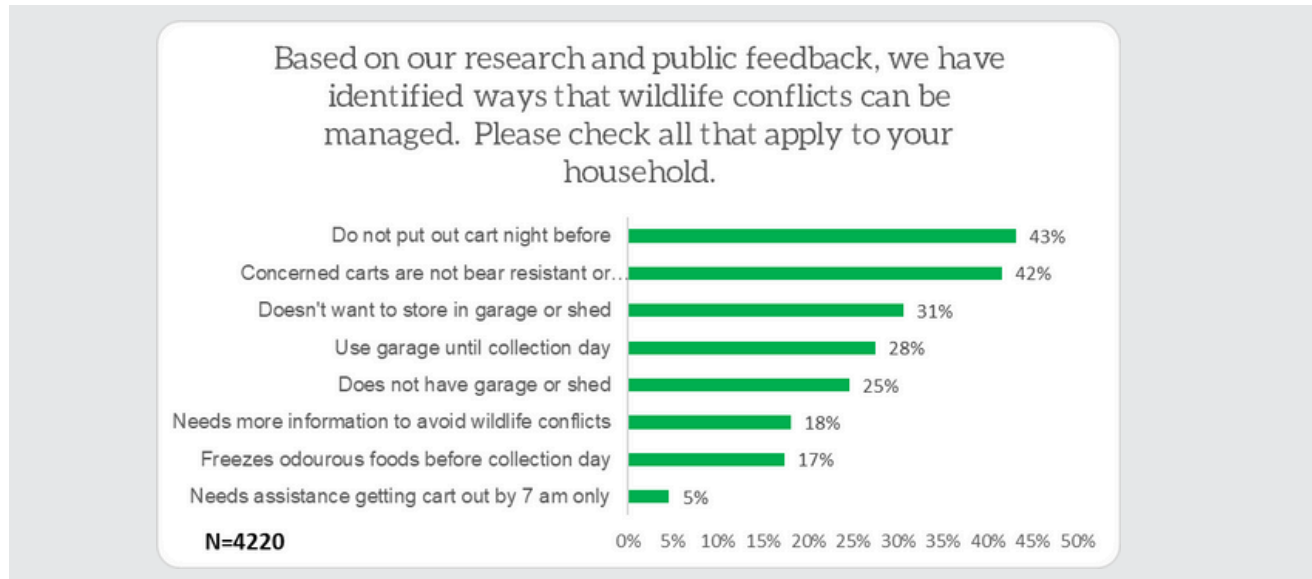
Wildlife concerns

In Phase 1 engagement residents expressed concerns over separating food waste out from garbage potentially attracting wildlife. During the Phase 2 survey, 24% indicated they don't have any concerns about attracting wildlife, however over 76% are still concerned about attracting rats, bears, racoons and other insects with such a program.



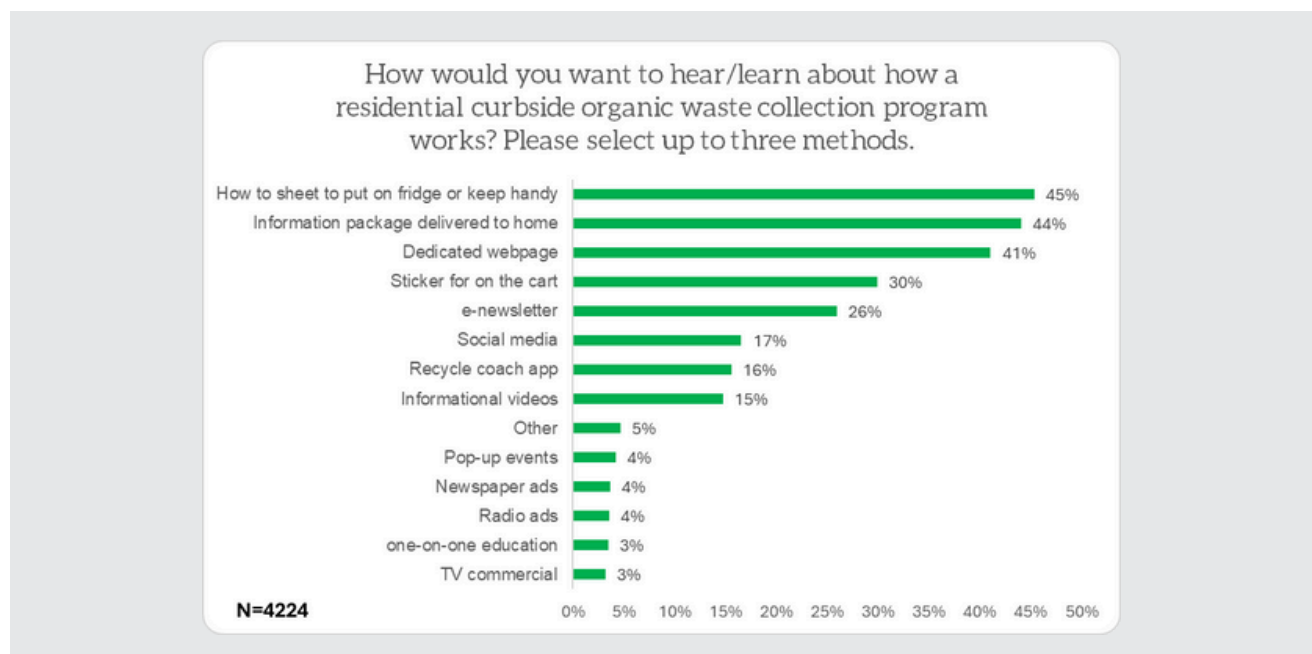
Managing wildlife issues

Based on our research and previous public feedback, we have identified ways wildlife conflicts can be managed, the most important of which is not putting curbside carts out the night before pick-up. 43% of residents say they do not put carts out to the curb until 7 a.m. on collection day. 42% are concerned the carts are not bear resistant or lockable, and 31% don't want to store their carts in a garage or shed until day of collection in order to prevent wildlife interactions.



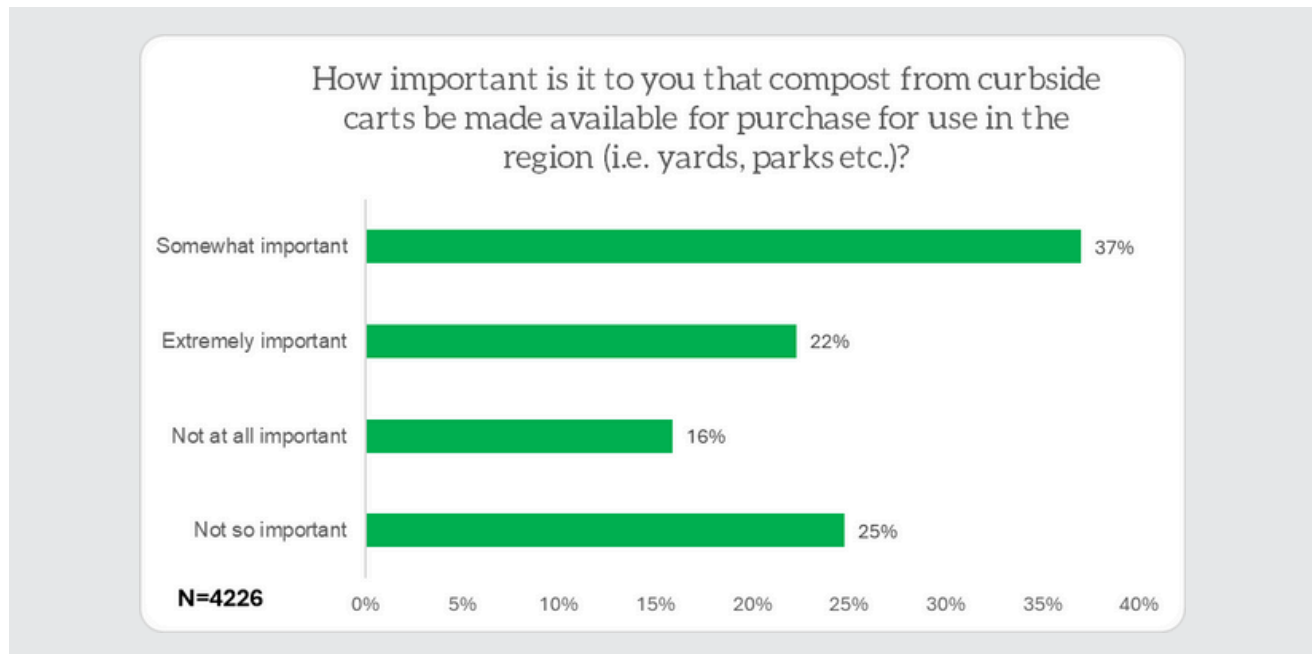
Learning about the program

Asked to rate their top three choices in how residents would like to learn how a curbside food waste collection program works, 45% of respondents favored a how-to sheet for the fridge for handy reference, 44% wanted an information package delivered to the home, and 41% favored a dedicated webpage with information and resources.



Importance of compost availability

Yard waste in the region is currently composted and made available for sale as GlenGrow. If food waste is mixed with yard waste this material would no longer be processed into GlenGrow and could be used for other purposes. When asked how important it was for residents to continue to have the ability to purchase locally made compost, 59% said it was either somewhat or extremely important. 41% said it was either not so important, or not at all important.



Additional comments

When asked what other thoughts, concerns or comments residents wished to share about a curbside food waste collection program, survey responses highlighted several key themes:

- Odour and Pests: Concerns about potential odours and pest issues related to food waste collection.
- Cost and Logistics: Worries about the cost, logistics, and impact on taxes.
- Wildlife Attraction: Issues with wildlife, particularly bears, rats, and raccoons, being attracted to food waste.
- Education and Convenience: The need for clear guidelines, education on waste preparation, and a convenient, user-friendly program.



*Create programming that helps resident learn and get excited.
Tips and tricks to make the process less gross. Ex. Freezing food waste*



What's next

Phase 1 and 2 Food Waste Public Engagement initiatives have provided valuable insights into Central Okanagan resident's appetite for a curbside food waste collection program.

The public input from engagement will now be presented to all municipal Councils in early September 2024 for information and to allow the opportunity for councils to request any additional information. The Phase 2 What We Heard report will then be presented to the Regional Board in the fall of 2024 where next steps for the curbside food waste collection program will be determined.

Thank you to everyone who participated in Phase 1 and 2 curbside food waste engagement! We could not have done it without you.

The input received and understanding residents preferred options in receiving a food waste collection program will help staff design a program that suits the needs of as many residents as possible when it comes to food waste collection for the Central Okanagan.

Stay up-to-date with this project at yoursay.rdco.com.



Regional District of
Central Okanagan

