



DENVER'S EXPANDED WASTE SERVICES

Response to Questions

Can Denver achieve a higher recycling and composting rate through education without a fee?

Recycling experts agree that the best way to boost diversion rates is through policy change and education. The cost and effort of solely focusing on education alone does not move the needle because there are additional barriers to recycling and composting, such as access and affordability. Denver has put forward recycling and composting education for years and Denver's recycling and composting rate has inched its way up slowly to its current rate of 26%. At this pace it will take 35 years or more for us to catch up with leading cities like Fresno, California, which is recycling and composting 72% of the city's residential waste.

We don't have time to waste. We need to address the climate crisis now. Recycling and composting are two of the fastest and most effective ways we as a city can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions today. We can prevent or even reverse some of the effects of climate change by reusing recyclable materials and diverting organics, a leading source of methane emissions when sent to the landfill.

Financial incentives have proven to be far more effective at driving changes in consumer behavior than education programs, in recycling programs and across many other sustainability or lifestyle behaviors.

According to Skumatz Economic Research Associates (SERA), volume-based pricing for trash (included in the Expanded Waste Services proposal for Denver) is a nationally recognized model for successful waste diversion, increasing recycling and composting rates more than any other approach. In a recent study of more than 500 cities, volume-based pricing for trash adds, on average, a 10–11 percentage point increase to the overall diversion rate. Education programs alone only add 1–3 percentage points in comparison. Without the financial incentive, Denver will not see a significant increase in recycling and composting. Similarly, water and energy conservation have greatly improved as a result of cities like Denver charging residents for the amount of resources they use.

Since Construction & Demolition (C&D) and commercial waste make up a larger portion of Denver's waste stream, shouldn't the city focus on these sectors first?

In order for Denver to reach its climate and recycling goals, the city needs ALL players to do their part. While the Construction & Demolition and commercial sectors make up more of the waste stream, they are recycling more of their waste than Denver residents. In 2020, the waste diversion rates for C&D and commercial waste are 36% and 37% respectively, whereas residential waste diversion was only 26%. Denver residents are still sending 180,000 tons of material to

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the landfill each year, and up to 75% of that waste could be recycled or composted. The new Expanded Waste Services program will help close that gap significantly while other policies, such as the 2022 Waste No More ballot initiative (measure 305) will require recycling and composting at Construction & Demolition sites, commercial buildings, and more. Learn more at wastenomoredenver.org.

The city needs to lead by example. Before the city requires businesses to recycle more, the city's own residential recycling and composting program needs to improve.

Additionally, multifamily complexes and businesses currently pay taxes that support only residential waste services for single-family homes; they are paying for services that they don't receive. By state law, Denver can only provide waste services to residential homes of seven units or less. The Expanded Waste Services proposal corrects this so that only those who receive the city services pay for those services.

What amount of greenhouse gas emissions could the Expanded Waste Services program save?

According to Denver's 2022 Sustainable Resource Management Plan, if the city reached a 70% diversion rate, it would have the climate impact of taking more than 600,000 cars off the road annually. The amount of Denver's greenhouse gas emissions from waste is more than just what is emitted at landfills. Consumptive emissions are those produced from the use of goods and services by residents. The Denver 2020 Climate Action Report states that 21% of Denver's total emissions comes from consumption and



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waste. Expanded Waste Services would take a big bite out of the city's greenhouse gas emissions.

Is this the right time to start this program with a new fee?

The climate crisis is getting worse and Denver can take action now. City Council has been considering this policy for years, and now is the time to vote for a more sustainable future for Denver.

Low-income households will be able to cover the new costs through a first-in-the-nation instant rebate program. It will allow residents to receive the help that they need at the point of application as opposed to them paying their bills and waiting for a refund.

Expanded Waste Services creates a more fair system. Denver residents that live in multifamily complexes with eight or more units have been subsidizing free trash and recycling for single-family homeowners with their taxpayer dollars. It's time that these funds are freed up to be used on programs that benefit the entire city.

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