



DATE: April 4, 2024

TO: Environmental Services Commission

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SUBJECT: **Solid Waste Collection Contractor Performance Report**

BACKGROUND

This briefing reports on the performance of the City’s solid waste collection contractor, Republic Services (Republic), currently in the tenth year of the 2014 Comprehensive Garbage, Recyclables, and Organics Collection Contract (Contract). The Contract is valued at over \$30 million annually and runs through June 2028. The City outsources solid waste collection, including customer service and billing functions, to Republic to serve customers from over 30,000 single-family residences and nearly 2,000 multi-family/commercial facilities.

The City uses performance metrics, performance reviews, customer surveys, and reporting to assess contractor performance in three key areas: 1) customer satisfaction, 2) customer service and contract compliance, and 3) recycling.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **Customer satisfaction** – The City surveys customer satisfaction in the following areas of Republic’s performance, with a target of at least 80% satisfaction: overall satisfaction, collection crew, telephone courtesy, helpfulness of staff, response time following request for a new container, and response time following a missed collection.
 - Overall customer satisfaction: Republic continues to receive high overall satisfaction ratings for its services.

Overall customer satisfaction with Republic Services		
Contract year	Single-family satisfaction rating	Multifamily/Commercial satisfaction rating
1 (2014-2015)	88%	91%
2 (2015-2016)	85%	90%
3 (2016-2017)	87%	93%
4 (2017-2018)	86%	88%
5 (2018-2019)	83%	93%
6 (2019-2020)	85%	94%
7 (2020-2021)	84%	86%
8 (2021-2022)	84%	80%
9 (2022-2023)	81%	81%

- Over the past year, Republic also met the customer satisfaction target of 80% for both Single-family and Multifamily/Commercial services in the following areas: collection crew, telephone courtesy, helpfulness of staff, and response time following request for a new container.
- Republic continues to be under the minimum customer satisfaction rating of 80% for response time to missed collections this past year, with satisfaction ratings of 43% for single-family and 59% for multi-family/commercial. In collaboration with the City, Republic developed an Action Plan to improve its response to missed collections, and early results following implementation of the plan indicate missed collections continue to decrease (95 in first month compared to 179 monthly average in 2023) and customer satisfaction rating for misses improving to 70% in Republic’s informal survey.

2. Customer service and contract compliance – The City expects high levels of customer service from Republic, particularly when fulfilling key contractual obligations to handle customer inquiries and collect waste.

- Call handling: The Contract requires Republic to answer calls to the customer call center within 20 seconds. Republic consistently achieved this target in 2023.
- Missed collections: Providing reliable waste collection is at the core of Republic’s performance. Republic has consistently met the City’s performance target for overall missed collections (no more than one missed pickup per 1,000 opportunities, which equates to approximately 350 total misses per month).
- Misses subject to fee: The City expects no instances of missed collections subject to performance fee (when a reported miss is not collected within 24 hours). In 2022-2023, Republic averaged 10 misses subject to fee per month, a 55% improvement compared to 2021-2022, but still short of the City’s target of zero.

3. Recycling – The City’s recycling target of 50% by 2030 has not yet been achieved by Republic. Recycling is a high priority for the City, and there are many avenues used to encourage recycling including a) rate structure that embeds the cost of recycling and composting in the garbage rate, b) campaigns that provide education on recycling, and c) contractual incentive to encourage Republic to expand recycling and composting.

Recycling rates (for contracted services only)		
Year	Target	Overall
2014	50%	41%
2015		40%
2016		40%
2017		41%
2018		39%
2019		38%
2020		42%
2021		38%
2022		38%
2023		37%

The City and Republic continue to work with residents, businesses, and multi-family properties to encourage recycling to meet the target of 50%. Outreach and educational activities to move the needle closer to the goal include:

- Labeling containers with clear visuals of acceptable material and providing recycling guides and on-site technical assistance to encourage recycling.
- Participating in King County's new Re+ program to reduce waste and maximize recycling; Bellevue signed the Re+ pledge in 2023.
- Providing ongoing support to K-12 education to engage students about recycling and composting. The City recently assisted 16 elementary schools with switching to durable metal utensils in the cafeteria, eliminating over 800,000 pounds of plastic wrapped plastic utensils and straws per year.
- Updating resources shared on-line at www.BellevueRepublic.com and via the city-wide channels.
- Pursuing innovative approaches, including a current pilot of waste container sensors to assist with reducing garbage and increasing recycling.
- Partnering with regional organizations to enhance program offerings, including the current partnership with University of Washington's Human-Centered Design and Engineering Program to research and evaluate customer engagement with recycling services.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The recent performance results show that Republic continues to achieve a generally high level of overall customer satisfaction. Republic has also kept total missed collections and call center wait times within the expected performance standards and made operational adjustments over the past year to continuously improve in these areas.

Republic has not performed to the City's expectations in the following areas: 1) timely response to missed collections and 2) improvement to the overall recycling rate. The City will continue to work with Republic to ensure exceptional services, including maintaining responsive, helpful, and courteous customer service, limiting missed collections, and cooperatively implementing more recycling and composting services.