



DATE: March 5, 2026
TO: Environmental Services Commission
FROM: Scott Edwards, Utilities Deputy Director
Jon Gire, Utilities Solid Waste Program Manager
SUBJECT: Solid Waste Contract Procurement

ACTION REQUIRED

Staff will present an overview of the solid waste contract procurement process, providing opportunities for discussion and feedback from the Environmental Services Commission (ESC). The Utilities Department is seeking ESC concurrence on the staff-recommended objectives for developing the future solid waste services package.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS

The City of Bellevue contracts citywide solid waste services to provide solid waste collection/processing, customer service, and billing for over 30,000 single-family households and nearly 2,000 multi-family and commercial properties. The contract has an annual value of \$37 million. The current contract services began in July 2014, the sole contract extension was exercised in 2021, and the contract will expire in June 2028. To plan for services beyond June 2028, the Utilities Department (Utilities) is leading the development of the future contract, including gathering input, benchmarking, and facilitating the procurement process.

Work has already started on developing the future solid waste contract to allow adequate lead time for procurement package development, the request for proposals (RFP) process, contract negotiation, and preparation for the service provider. Utilities has assembled a core team to lead this work that includes a nationally recognized consultant firm, NewGen Strategies and Solutions, that supports solid waste procurement processes across the country.

Procurement Process

State law, the City's procurement policy, and industry best practice require the use of a competitive process for a contract of this type, value, and duration to ensure fairness and transparency as well to allow the City to take advantage of innovations and most up to date best practices in service provisions and technology. Additionally, the Solid Waste Association of North America's policy on competitive procurement cites "where practically possible, local agencies should competitively procure contracts in order to secure the best possible service for the lowest price with the most advantageous contract administration and enforcement provisions."

Primary Objectives

Staff recommends four primary objectives to shape future solid waste services: alignment with best practices, responsive to customer needs, compliance with state and local policy, and leverage technology and data.

Alignment with best practices

Over the last five years, numerous competitive processes have been completed regionally to procure local solid waste contracts, including Renton, Redmond, Kirkland, SeaTac, Maple Valley, Des Moines, North Bend, Issaquah, and Tukwila. The City anticipates leveraging the outcomes of these efforts to benefit from the latest developments in local service provisions.

In addition to learning from our neighbors, we are also considering best practices on a national level. Expert consultant NewGen Strategies and Solutions will contribute lessons learned and perspectives from solid waste contracts across the country.

Responsive to needs

Community input and perspectives were gathered to shape future solid waste services. Multiple methods have been used, including formal annual surveys, informal bi-monthly surveys, user experience research conducted by the University of Washington's Human Centered Design and Engineering program, community workshops, and listening sessions with community partners and organizations. Community engagement continues over the coming months, including on-going dialogue with the Bellevue Diversity Advantage Network.

Community engagement has identified the following priority areas for future services:

- **Reliability** – solid waste pickups happen as scheduled.
- **Affordability** – rates are as low as possible, and there are opportunities to save money by recycling and composting.
- **User experience** – innovative tools, such as a self-service platform, provide a convenient, modern user experience.

City departments also serve an important role in planning future services, with Utilities engaging subject matter experts from Community Development, Transportation, Development Services, Information Technology, and Parks & Community Services for input and guidance on service provisions relating to their respective operations.

Compliance with state and local policy

On a State level, the solid waste policy landscape has significantly evolved since 2013, with two major, transformative pieces of legislation recently passed into law:

- **Organics Management Laws** (2022, 2024, 2025) aim to reduce organic waste in landfills by 75% by 2030, promoting food waste prevention, recovery, and composting. The laws will help residents and businesses divert food and yard waste from landfills to reduce methane emissions and slow climate change.
- **Recycling Reform Act** (2025) requires producers of residential packaging and paper products to be responsible for the end-of-life management of their products. The law also requires harmonized lists of recyclable materials to be accepted in programs throughout the state. In addition, facilities that sort and process collected recyclables must ensure materials go to responsible end markets.

Given the scope and complexities of these policies, it will be important for the future solid waste contract to comply with emerging statutory requirements, including ensuring broad access to compost collection service, harmonizing with the statewide recyclables list, providing standardized public education provisions, and fulfilling data/reporting requirements for both city and contractor.

In addition to overarching City policies, including the Bellevue 2044 Comprehensive Plan and Council's Strategic Target Areas and Objectives, two recent plan updates are especially relevant to planning future solid waste services:

- **Diversity Advantage Plan 2035** is a citywide strategic plan designed to embed diversity, equity and inclusion into every facet of Bellevue's operations, services and culture. Specifically, objective E5.9 is to provide reliable, high-quality and affordable utility services that improve public health and ensure equitable access for all residents.
- **Sustainable Bellevue Plan** charts the next phase of the city's commitment to a healthy, resilient and thriving community for generations to come. The plan includes a Materials and Waste action area with a 50% recycling rate goal by 2030, and a long-term zero waste goal by 2050, as well as a strategy to leverage the solid waste contract to advance goals for zero waste and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Efforts under this strategy could include exploring alternative fuel technologies and new educational approaches to improve access and participation in recycling and composting services, especially for multi-family residents and commercial businesses.

Leverage technology and data

Developments in industry standards and technology will inform the upcoming solid waste procurement package, with Utilities seeking opportunities to leverage innovation to enhance service delivery where feasible. For example, electric vehicle (EV) technology has advanced over the past decade, and EV options are available for solid waste support vehicles and are also emerging for collection vehicles.

The technology deployed in collection vehicles has also evolved, with software and hardware advances to seamlessly integrate operations and customer service, while providing a real-time, geospatial view of service delivery. There are opportunities to innovate data and reporting for a more advanced, real-time view of the contractor's performance.

The solid waste industry has also used Artificial Intelligence (AI) for many years, with a common area of deployment being recycling facilities to enhance material sorting. As the City considers advances in technology, it is not a question of whether AI will be used in solid waste services, but how. The scope and appropriateness of AI will be carefully evaluated, as it has potential to enhance customer service, billing, collections, and public education services in the next solid waste contract.

Next Steps

Following ESC concurrence, staff will present the objectives for developing the future solid waste services package to City Council for consideration in late March.

POLICY ISSUES

Relevant policy for future solid waste services:

- Bellevue 2044 Comprehensive Plan
- Council's Strategic Target Areas and Objectives
- City contracting and procurement
- Diversity Advantage Plan 2035
- Sustainable Bellevue Plan
- Washington State Organics Management Law and Recycling Reform Act
- King County Solid Waste Interlocal Agreement, Comprehensive Plan