

**DATE:** October 6, 2022  
**TO:** Environmental Services Commission  
**FROM:** Jon Gire, Utilities Solid Waste Program Manager  
**SUBJECT:** 2022 Solid Waste Collection Contract Performance Review Results

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## **ACTION REQUIRED**

No action required. This is an informational briefing.

## **BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS**

Bellevue Utilities outsources solid waste collection services including the related customer service functions to Republic Services (Republic) under the 2014 Comprehensive Garbage, Recyclables, and Organics Contract (Contract) with the City. The Contract is valued at about \$27 million annually. As part of the City's annual review of Republic's performance, the City hired Elway Research, Inc. (Elway) to conduct customer surveys to gauge:

- A. Satisfaction with Republic's services and
- B. Awareness of, and practices around, recycling and compost services.

940 single-family residents and 153 multi-family/commercial operators participated in the survey via phone and online in Summer 2022. The number of responses is statistically representative of the customer base for each sector. This memorandum summarizes the results of the customer surveys.

### **Satisfaction with Republic's Services**

The City expects high levels of customer service from Republic particularly when performing core functions including providing reliable waste collection, delivering containers in a timely manner, courteously handling customer inquiries and response to missed collections. To comply with the minimum satisfaction levels established in the Contract, Republic must score at least 80 percent satisfaction for each of six customer satisfaction questions, less the relevant margin of error.

For both single-family and multi-family/commercial sectors, Republic surpassed minimum satisfaction scores for three of the six areas surveyed for the eighth straight year. The three areas with satisfactory scores for both sectors were:

- Overall satisfaction
- Collection crew
- Telephone courtesy

Republic did not meet the minimum satisfaction scores for:

- **Response time following a missed collection.** This is the eighth straight year for the single-family sector and the fifth straight year for the multi-family/commercial sector that Republic did not meet the minimum standard in this area.
- **Response time following request for replacement container for the multi-family/commercial sector.** This is the first time Republic did not meet the minimum standard in this area for this sector.
- **Helpfulness of customer service staff for single-family sector.** This is the second time in the past three years this standard was not met.

The survey results from 2022 compared to 2021 are shown in the table below.

Area Surveyed	Single-family Satisfaction		Multifamily/Commercial Satisfaction	
	Figures appearing in <b>red</b> type did not meet minimum satisfaction ratings			
	2021	2022	2021	2022
General satisfaction	83%	84%	86%	79%
Collection crew	83%	86%	82%	84%
Response time following a missed collection	51%	43%	63%	36%
Response time following a request for a new or replacement container	76%	78%	70%	47%
Telephone courtesy	82%	79%	85%	86%
Helpfulness of customer service staff	76%	74%	71%	71%

#### Awareness of, and practices around, recycling and compost services

Survey findings show single-family customers rely on multiple sources of information to learn about services, with the top three sources of information being 1) Republic's website (62%), 2) brochures (52%), and 3) stickers on their carts (50%). These findings underscore the importance of keeping Republic's website current, providing recycling guides to customers, and proper container labeling.

The multi-family/commercial survey indicated that 86% of property managers participate in recycling, a slight uptick compared to 85% of those surveyed last year. When asked about participating in recycling, multi-family residential managers were twice as likely than commercial property managers to say there were challenges.

For compost services, 33% of property managers surveyed participate, while 50% are aware that they can receive compost service at no additional cost. Given the level of participation versus the level of awareness, there is opportunity for Republic and the City to collaborate to further roll out this service.

#### Next steps

Since Republic did not meet all the minimum satisfaction ratings required by the Contract, they are subject to a \$50,000 performance fee. Republic is also required to develop a mutually agreed upon Action Plan (Plan) with the City to improve customer satisfaction in the areas that minimum satisfaction ratings were not met. The Plan must include scheduled milestones for implementing changes to meet the minimum customer satisfaction ratings at the time of the next annual survey in 2023.

In addition, based on the 2022 survey findings around customer recycling practices and preferences, the City will work with Republic and regional partners to prioritize the following activities in the coming year.

- Continue to improve promotion of year-around options for convenient recycling of unusual items like household hazardous waste at Republic's Recycling Drop-off Center, the Factoria Recycling and Transfer Station, and the Factoria household hazardous waste drop-off site.
- Improve promotion of recycling and composting resources available to apartments and condominiums with a focus on offering strategies that could potentially save costs. This includes matching the size of garbage containers to the service level needs and providing tools to increase the convenience and amount of recycling and composting such as recycling tote bags, kitchen compost containers, and posters with guidelines for sorting recyclables and compost.
- Raise awareness of the availability of Republic's compost services at no additional charge for businesses by providing direct technical assistance.
- Ensure containers are in good condition with functioning lids and the latest labels to avoid overflows and help customers at the point of action.
- Continue to update Republic's website with the latest resources, including recycling and composting guides with clear visuals, and ensure the website is user-friendly so customers can easily find resources and make service requests.

Republic continues to achieve a high level of overall customer satisfaction. The City and Republic are working collaboratively to address the issues identified in the customer surveys.

#### **POLICY ISSUES**

N/A

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with implementing the Plan.