

City of Spring Lake Park Staff Report



Agenda Date	Status
May 18, 2026	
Requestor	Agenda Section
Buchholtz/Morrison	Discussion
Agenda Item:	
2030 Residential Organics Collection Requirement – Policy Discussion and Direction	
Executive Summary	
<p>The City Council is asked to provide direction to staff regarding how the City should prepare for the 2030 residential organics collection requirement. The Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan requires residential curbside organics collection to be made available in cities with a population greater than 5,000 by 2030. Both Ramsey County and Anoka County has incorporated this requirement into their Solid Waste Management Plans, including a strategy to make residential curbside organics collection available in cities with a population greater than 5,000 by 2030. A number of Ramsey County cities will be going online with organics collection in July.</p> <p>Staff is seeking Council direction on whether to begin evaluating compliance options, including further review of the Ramsey/Washington food scrap bag model, the Walters Recycling and Refuse proposal, and other options that may work within the City’s open collection system.</p>	
Background	
<p>The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan 2022–2042 establishes regional goals to reduce landfilling and increase recycling and organics recovery. These regional policies have subsequently been incorporated into county solid waste management plans throughout the metropolitan area.</p> <p>Under Anoka County’s Solid Waste Management Plan, residential organics collection is expected to be available in cities with populations greater than 5,000 by 2030. The County’s plan also emphasizes that organics collection services should be consistent, efficient, and designed to maximize the diversion of food waste from landfills. Ramsey County’s Solid Waste Management Plan contains similar requirements and goals, including expansion of</p>	

residential food scraps collection programs to all residents by 2030, including multi-unit housing.

The City has broad authority under Minnesota law to regulate refuse collection through its solid waste licensing and ordinance authority. The City currently operates under an open collection system, where multiple licensed haulers provide refuse service. The City presently licenses Ace Solid Waste, Curbside Waste, Lepage and Sons, Republic Services (Allied), Walters Recycling & Refuse, and Waste Management. The City also maintains an organized residential recycling program currently operated by Walters Recycling & Refuse. Organics collection is presently optional, with the City operating a public organics drop-off site at City Hall.

As the 2030 county requirement approaches, several policy options are available for City Council consideration.

1. Require Licensed Haulers to Offer Organics Collection

The City could amend its solid waste ordinance or hauler licensing requirements to require all licensed residential haulers to provide an approved organics collection option by a specified date. This approach would preserve the City's existing open collection system while allowing haulers flexibility in determining the collection model that best fits their operations, provided it complies with applicable City, County, and state requirements.

Potential collection methods could include:

- Food scrap bag programs utilizing a qualified sorting facility;
- Dedicated organics carts;
- Bag-at-curb collection systems; or
- Other County-approved collection methods.

The primary advantage of this approach is flexibility and preservation of the City's current refuse collection structure. However, different haulers may utilize different collection methods, pricing structures, educational materials, and customer instructions, which could create inconsistency for residents and make citywide communication and program oversight more difficult. Depending on the collection model used, this approach could also increase garbage truck traffic within the community.

2. Establish a Food Scrap Bag-in-Trash-Cart Model

Ramsey and Washington Counties currently support a food scrap bag model that allows residents to place accepted food scraps into designated bags and place those bags directly into their regular garbage carts. The material is then separated at a processing facility capable of identifying and diverting the bags for organics processing.

Walters Recycling & Refuse has invested in this sorting technology at its Blaine transfer station and has maintained capacity for participation by Blaine, Spring Lake

Park, and Columbia Heights. Other haulers could either utilize the Walters facility or develop their own compliant processing capabilities.

A major advantage of this approach is that it does not require additional garbage truck traffic, separate organics collection routes, or an additional cart for residents. It may also provide a lower-cost and simpler transition into organics collection compared to traditional curbside programs.

3. Evaluate a Traditional City-Managed Organics Collection Program

The City could evaluate implementation of a traditional organics collection program through a city-administered contract, similar to the City's organized residential recycling program. This could include either a dedicated third organics cart or a bag-at-curb collection system.

The primary advantage of this approach is consistency. Residents would receive the same collection method, accepted materials list, and educational materials citywide. A uniform system may improve participation, reduce contamination, simplify public communication, and provide clearer accountability and reporting.

The primary disadvantages are cost and administration. A dedicated organics program would likely require additional carts, collection vehicles, routing, processing, and program management costs.

4. Continue Monitoring and Revisit the Issue Later

The City could continue monitoring county requirements, regional implementation efforts, processing capacity, and hauler readiness before making decisions regarding a local organics collection program.

The primary advantage of this approach is flexibility. Waiting may allow processing technology, regional programs, and collection methods to mature, potentially resulting in lower costs and clearer long-term guidance.

The primary disadvantage is that delaying decisions could reduce the City's flexibility as the 2030 deadline approaches. If many communities implement organics programs simultaneously, demand for equipment, processing capacity, and collection services could increase costs and limit available options. Additionally, some emerging models — including the Walters food scrap bag system tied to Ramsey/Washington County infrastructure — may no longer be available or economically viable if the City waits too long to evaluate participation. Delaying action could also compress the City's future implementation timeline for ordinance amendments, public education, and operational planning.

Board/Commission Review

N/A

Financial Impact

There is no immediate financial impact associated with this discussion item at this time. Future financial impacts will depend on the organics collection model ultimately selected by the City and/or licensed haulers.

A traditional third-cart organics collection program would likely result in the highest operational costs due to the need for additional carts, collection vehicles, routing, and processing. A bag-at-curb system may avoid the need for a third cart, but would still require separate collection handling and additional labor. A food scrap bag-in-trash-cart model may reduce collection impacts by utilizing existing refuse routes, but would still involve costs associated with bags, sorting technology, and processing.

Additionally, under Minnesota law, if a hauler provides organics collection service to one residential customer within a service area, the hauler must generally make the service available to all residential customers and include the associated cost in the rate structure, regardless of whether individual residents choose to participate in the program.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council provide preliminary policy direction regarding whether the City should begin evaluating potential organics collection models and associated ordinance amendments in advance of the 2030 county requirements.

Attachments

1. [Metropolitan Solid Waste Management Policy Plan 2022-2042](#)
2. [Ramsey County Solid Waste Management Plan 2024-2042](#)
3. [Anoka County Solid Waste Management Plan 2024-2042](#)
4. [Walters Food Scrap Bag Program Brochure](#)