

Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
Innovation. Collaboration. Practical Solutions.

MEMO

DATE: December 5, 2012
TO: Mayor Sam Adams and Portland City Council
FROM: Susan Anderson, Director
SUBJECT: Accept Report on Year One of the New Curbside Collection Service.

I am pleased to submit for your consideration and acceptance the Year One Report of Portland's new curbside collection service. On October 31, 2011, the City of Portland launched a new curbside collection service that included weekly collection of all food scraps along with yard debris and shifted garbage collection to every other week.

Today, Portlanders in single family homes and small multiplexes have been using this new curbside collection service for over a year. This report presents outcomes from the first year of the new program and summarizes the steps the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has taken to assist residents, provide ongoing customer service support, coordinate with garbage and recycling companies, and gather data to evaluate progress.



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December 5, 2012

New Curbside Collection Service Year One Report

On October 31, 2011, the City of Portland launched a new curbside collection service that included weekly collection of all food scraps along with yard debris and shifted garbage collection to every other week. No changes were made to weekly recycling collection.

Today, Portlanders in single family homes and small multiplexes with two to four units have been using this new curbside collection service for over a year. This report presents outcomes from the first year of the new program and summarizes the steps the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) has taken to assist residents, provide ongoing customer service support, coordinate with garbage and recycling companies, and gather data to evaluate progress.



During the launch of the new curbside collection service last fall, TriMet buses displayed a reminder for Portland residents to “Include the Food.”



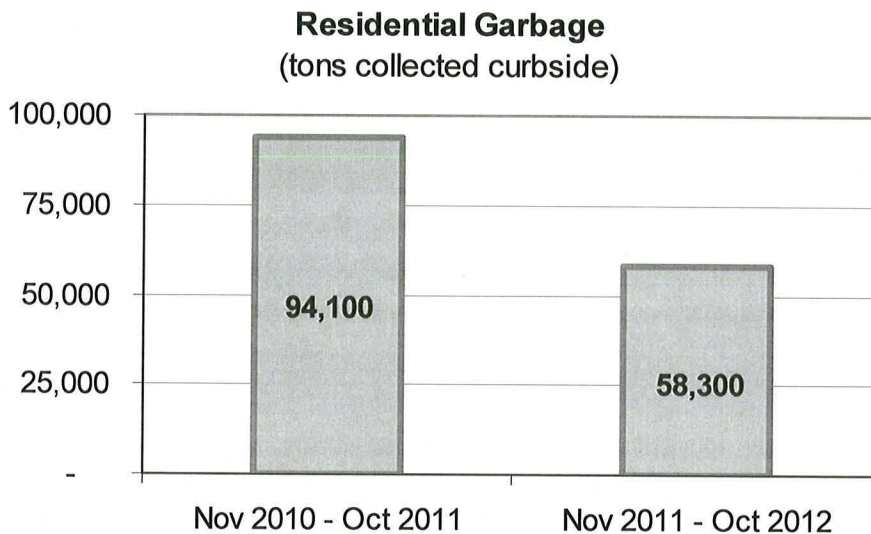
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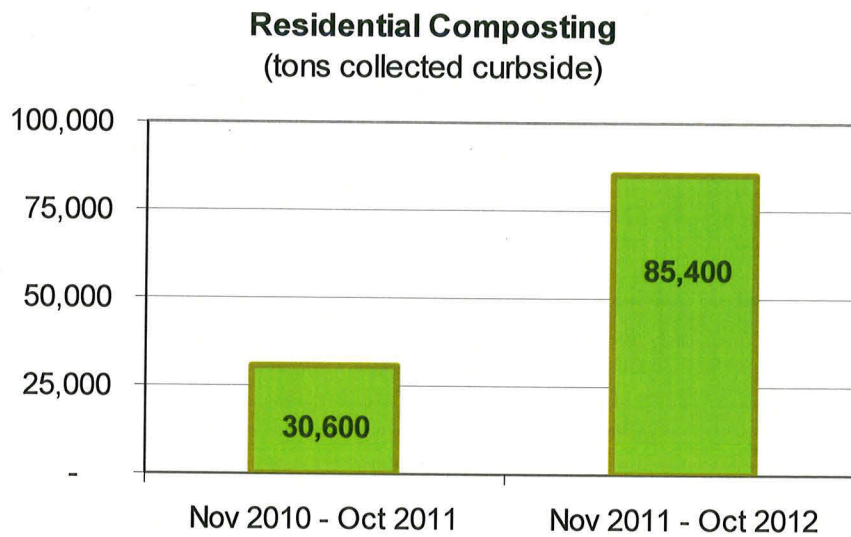
Reduction in Garbage

Comparing the first 12 months of the new program with the same time period the previous year, the amount of residential garbage collected curbside has decreased by an estimated 38 percent.



Increase in Yard Debris and Food Scraps

The new curbside collection service has contributed to a large increase in the material collected from Portland residents for composting. The amount of yard debris and food scraps collected in the first year of the program is nearly triple the amount of yard debris collected during the prior year.

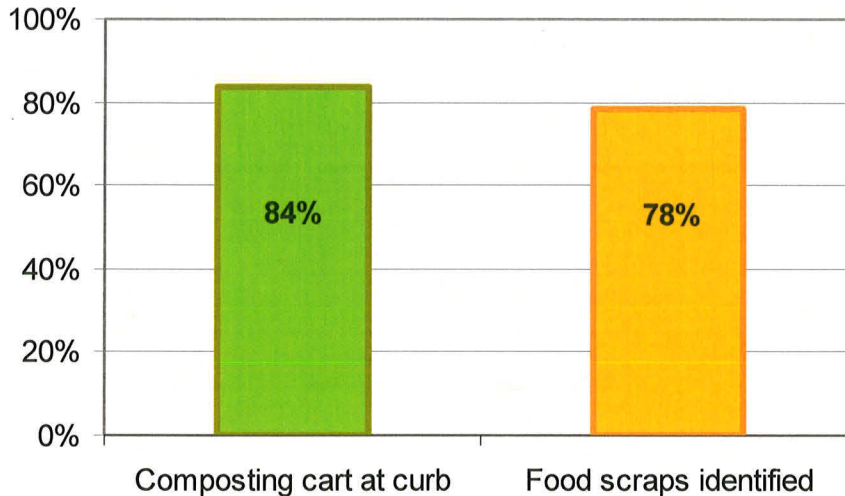


Customer Participation

About nine out of ten composting roll carts at the curb contain food scraps, according to a field study conducted this fall.¹ Assuming that customers whose carts were not at the curb during the study are not participating in the program, the study indicates that at least 78 percent of customers are placing food scraps in their green Portland Composts! roll cart.

¹ Based on a positive identification of food scraps in the curbside composting roll cart in a sample of about 1,000 Portland homes during September and October 2012.

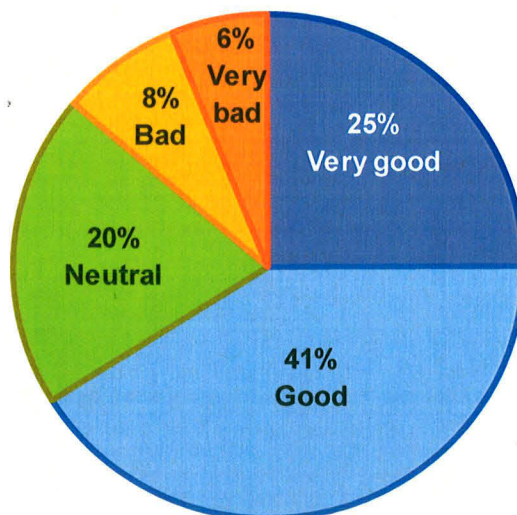
Composting Participation
(Percent Customers in Sample)



Positive Perception of Curbside Collection Service

The annual Community Survey report released by the City Auditor in October 2012 revealed a very positive public perception of the curbside collection service. The survey showed that 66 percent of respondents felt good or very good about the new curbside collection service. An additional 20 percent of respondents felt neutral about the quality of service.

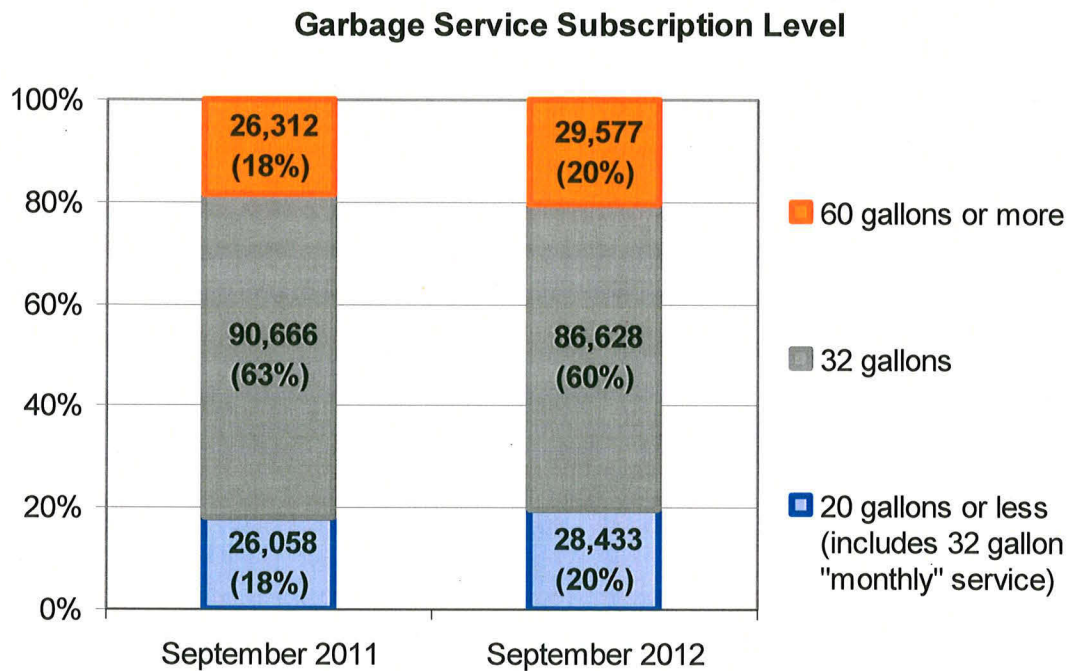
How do you rate garbage/recycling service in terms of quality?
(2012 Community Survey)



Adapting to the New Service

While most customers have adapted to the new program without changing the size of their garbage container, some customers are taking advantage of the multiple service options offered in the curbside program to customize service to fit their households' needs. In September 2012 the number of customers with larger can sizes had increased by just two percent from the previous year, and the number of customers with smaller cans or every-four-week service was also up by about two percent compared with the year before.

BPS staff continue to provide customers with information about their service options and encourage them to find the service level that meets their household's needs.

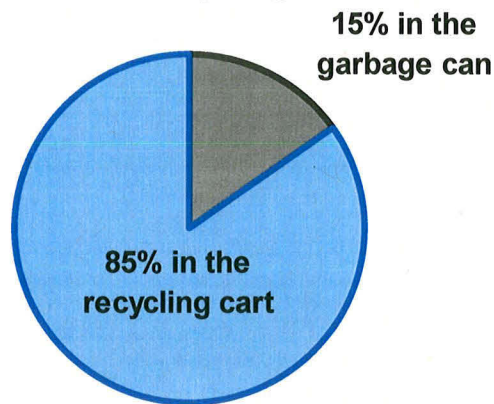




Portlanders continue to recycle 85 percent of accepted materials

According to waste composition studies conducted during September and October 2012,² Portland residents are recycling 85 percent of the materials that can be recycled curbside.

Where is Portland's curbside recycling?



Employees who sort Portland's recycled materials have reported finding some household garbage in loads of residential recycling. In response to these concerns, the City has increased its outreach on this issue and has worked with the recycling sorting facilities as well as garbage and recycling companies to identify households with garbage in recycling and composting containers. A notification program was begun in April, 2011 and nearly 3,000 households out of 143,000 subscribers have been notified with a cart tag by their hauler and a follow-up letter from the City informing them of the contamination. Over half of the tags and letters were issued from April through June, with the number of notified households declining through the summer and fall. Contamination remains an issue and the notification process is an ongoing effort, though recycling sorting facilities have indicated that it has decreased from earlier levels. BPS staff will continue to monitor this issue and work with facilities, haulers and residents to keep recyclable materials clean.

² Samples of each curbside material stream were randomly selected and hand-sorted, and the constituent materials were weighed.

Communication to Residents

In addition to a two-gallon kitchen pail for collecting their food scraps, the 143,000 customers with curbside collection service received an information packet and two issues of the *Curbsider* newsletter dedicated to the change in service.



BPS conducted a broad-based media campaign that included radio, transit, and a variety of print ads, as well as earned media, both print and broadcast.

Enhanced Customer Service to Aid Transition

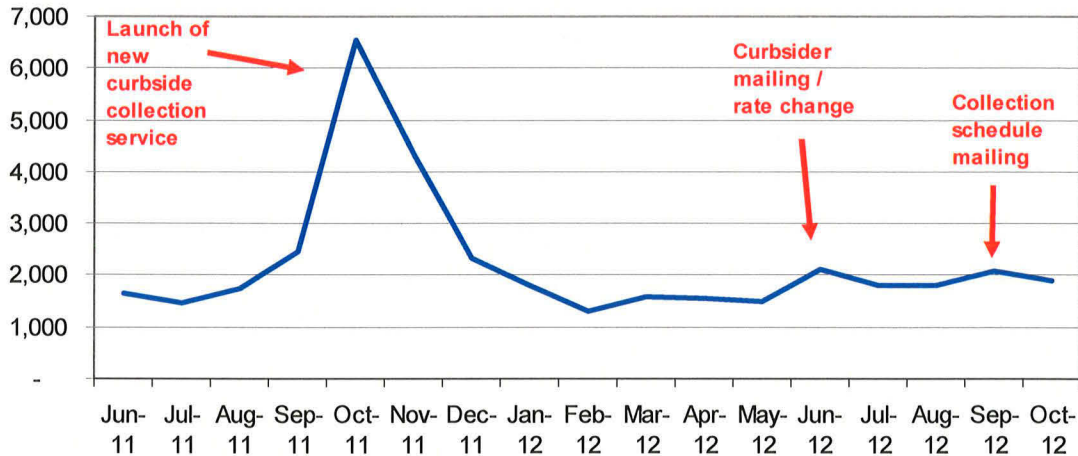
BPS started tracking customer calls and emails related to the new program in mid-September, when customers first began receiving information about service changes in the mail. At that time, BPS also added four new customer service staff, including two fluent Spanish speakers, and extended call center hours to include evening and weekend hours. (The curbside hotline can be reached at 503-823-7202.)

In the weeks surrounding the rollout, call levels spiked significantly. From mid-September to the end of the year, BPS logged over 10,000 calls and emails related to the new program. By January 2012 call levels dropped and BPS shifted back to normal staffing levels and hours.

From October 2011 through October 2012 BPS logged about 30,600 calls and emails, compared with 22,900 during the same period the previous

year. The top call reasons during the first year of the new program were similar to those in previous years: “Who is my hauler?” as well as questions about recycling and composting preparation.

Customer Calls and Emails to BPS



Online Tools

As part of the rollout of the new program, BPS launched a new web domain, www.portlandcomposts.com, which was focused on providing residents with information and tools to help them adjust to the new curbside collection service. The website included downloadable versions of all the materials sent to residents, as well as several videos providing tips on how to compost food scraps and keep containers clean.

The switch to every-other-week garbage prompted development of the e-schedule, which allows residents to look up their garbage collection day online. Over 3,700 Portland residents have signed up to receive a weekly email reminder via the e-schedule at www.portlandcomposts.com. Plans for continued improvement of the e-schedule include adding an option to receive reminders by SMS/text message.

Community Engagement

Outreach efforts from August 2011 through the end of October 2012 involved 275 volunteers and resulted in conversations with over 25,000 Portlanders. BPS staff and volunteers delivered more than 25 presentations and staffed information booths at 87 community events and meetings.



Volunteers from the Urban League of Young Professionals canvassed and promoted the Include the Food message.

During spring 2012, BPS coordinated a door-to-door outreach campaign as part of the City's efforts to offer residents technical assistance. For 12 weeks, volunteers from 25 community groups joined BPS staff to canvass in 26 neighborhoods across Portland. Volunteers were from neighborhood associations, churches, ethnic and cultural organizations, school groups and the Master Recycler program. They answered questions about the changes to the curbside collection service and made sure residents had the information they needed to successfully collect their food scraps for composting and adjust to every-other-week garbage collection. The effort reached nearly 19,000 homes.

Canvassing was targeted in areas with larger households, more renters, and a greater number of linguistically isolated residents. A particular effort was made to reach linguistically isolated households by recruiting

bilingual volunteers, translating materials, utilizing translation services to place follow up calls and partnering with ethnic and cultural organizations to distribute educational materials.

Staff and volunteers continue to actively engage Portlanders regarding curbside services and options, with a special focus on renters living in single family to fourplex households.

Boosting Portland's Recovery Rate

The new curbside collection program has helped dramatically reduce the amount of garbage Portland sends to landfills and increase the amount of yard debris and food scraps turned into rich compost for healthier soil. In 2007 City Council adopted the *Portland Recycles! Plan*, which set a goal to recover 75 percent of the City's waste by the year 2015. The 2009 *Climate Action Plan* established a longer-term goal to recover 90 percent by 2030. The two plans identified weekly curbside collection of food scraps along with every-other-week garbage collection as a key step in achieving Portland's waste recovery and carbon-reduction goals.

The first year results show the new curbside collection service will likely increase Portland's residential recovery rate from 51 percent in 2010 to about 70 percent in 2012. This will help increase the city's overall recovery rate and bring Portland closer to its 75 percent near-term goal for commercial and residential combined.

Agenda No.
REPORT NO.
Title

Accept New Curbside Collection Service Year One Report (Report)

<p>INTRODUCED BY Commissioner/Auditor: Mayor Sam Adams</p>	<p>CLERK USE: DATE FILED <u>NOV 30 2012</u></p>
<p>COMMISSIONER APPROVAL</p> <p>Mayor—Finance and Administration - Adams </p> <p>Position 1/Utilities - Fritz</p> <p>Position 2/Works - Fish</p> <p>Position 3/Affairs - Saltzman</p> <p>Position 4/Safety - Leonard</p>	<p align="right">LaVonne Griffin-Valade Auditor of the City of Portland</p> <p>By: Deputy</p>
<p>BUREAU APPROVAL</p> <p>Bureau: Planning and Sustainability Bureau Head: Susan Anderson </p> <p>Prepared by: Bruce Walker Date Prepared: Nov. 28, 2012</p> <p>Financial Impact & Public Involvement Statement Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amends Budget <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Council Meeting Date December 5, 2012</p> <p>City Attorney Approval: required for contract, code, easement, franchise, charter, Comp Plan</p>	<p>ACTION TAKEN:</p> <p>DEC 05 2012 ACCEPTED</p>

AGENDA
<p>TIME CERTAIN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Start time: 2:00</p> <p>Total amount of time needed: 1 hour (for presentation, testimony and discussion)</p>
<p>CONSENT <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>REGULAR <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Total amount of time needed: _____ (for presentation, testimony and discussion)</p>

FOUR-FIFTHS AGENDA	COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
		YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz	1. Fritz		
2. Fish	2. Fish		
3. Saltzman	3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard	4. Leonard		
Adams	Adams		