

**2022-2023**

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**Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure**

# **Education and Outreach Plan**

**Volume-based Trash Pricing – Solid Waste Management  
Division**

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This document is a recommendation from the Education Working Group and will be updated throughout the implementation of Volume Based pricing based on customer feedback, data collection and emerging issues.

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## Program Overview

The City and County of Denver is exploring opportunities for residential waste services that would provide weekly recycling and composting for all customers and incentivize waste reduction. Denver is proposing a tiered fee based on the trash cart size that residents would select, encouraging households to compost and recycle more in order to lower their direct costs. The trash-based service fee would cover the cost of service for all Solid Waste programs, including the new weekly recycling collection and composting for all. Other services include Large Item pick-up, electronics recycling subsidies, appliance pick-up, hazardous waste collection, seasonal events, and more. This concept of “Volume-based pricing” (VBP) is a nationally recognized, successful strategy for incentivizing waste reduction.

## Background

The City and County of Denver services about 180,000 households – approximately two-thirds of Denver residences. The city currently provides recycling every two weeks, and residents have been requesting weekly recycling for several years. Denver also currently charges for composting, which discourages many from adopting the practice of composting their food scraps and yard waste rather than sending it to the landfill. By expanding recycling and compost collection services, the city plans to increase our recycling and composting rate and send less of our waste to the landfill. Denver’s current diversion rate is 26%, well below the national average of 34%. The more waste that ends up in the landfill, the more methane that is produced as that material decays over decades. The production of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, hampers Denver from reaching its climate action goals, which residents have asked the city to rapidly advance.

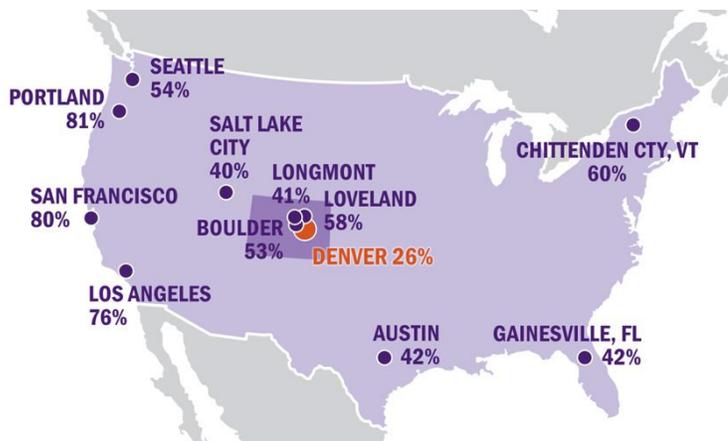
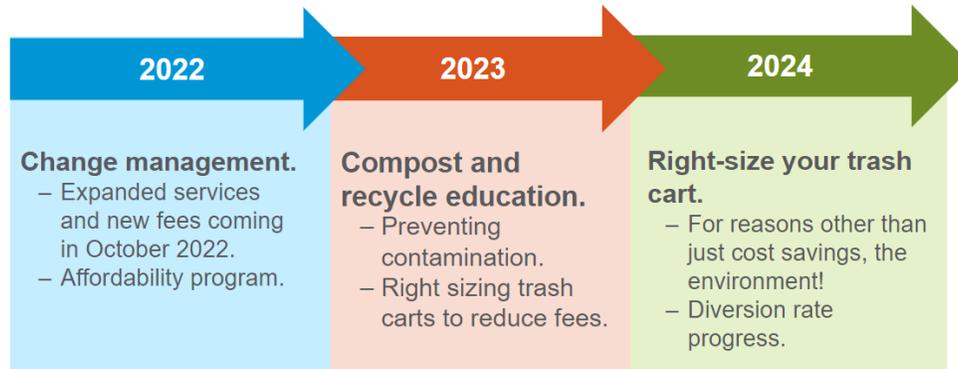


Figure 1 Denver's diversion rate is well behind comparable cities.

Today, Solid Waste Management educates customers about service schedules, cart management, how to recycle and compost, specialized services like hazardous waste and electronics recycling, and much more. This plan builds on and expands Denver's solid waste education infrastructure to continue providing education on the full range of solid waste topics and services while also providing more focused education on the changes and services coming with the new ordinance, as outlined below.

## Goal

Provide education to successfully implement a new pricing model for solid waste services, introduce citywide compost service to more than 140,000 households, and increase Denver’s diversion rate beyond the national average.



## Strategies

These strategies will guide education outreach efforts for the DOTI Solid Waste team and supporting agencies to ensure all activities support priorities and target audience needs:

- In summer 2022, hire a Program Manager for Solid Waste Management to oversee this Education and Outreach Plan and a \$3.8M annual budget for education.
- Identify and partner with Community-based Organizations (CBOs) to assist with education outreach efforts
- Create multiple, multi-lingual, education pieces (video, digital, print and cart signage) about materials accepted for recycling and composting and how to find more information about the services
- Provide additional information to new compost customers on using curbside compost for kitchen and yard waste, how to avoid common contaminants and ways that composting can reduce trash volumes
- Promote availability of rebate program to all customers and facilitate opportunities (with 311, DHS, CBOs, and others) to assist eligible residents in the application process
- Provide instructions to customers on using the online customer account system to pay invoices, opt-in to paperless billing and select cart sizes
- Ensure that target audiences and traditionally underserved and underrepresented residents are involved

## Measurable Objectives

- Increase residential diversion rate above the national average of 34% by the end of 2024.
  - Reduce trash tonnage (waste sent to landfill) by 15% across all neighborhoods by the end of 2024.
  - Increase compost tonnage by 50% across all neighborhoods by the end of 2024.
  - Increase recycle tonnage by 10% across all neighborhoods by the end of 2024.
- Increase smaller trash cart sizes by 15% by December 2024.
- Enroll at least 2,000 households in the rebate program by the end of 2023.
  - Auto-enrolling eligible customers receiving assistance from other local and federal programs.
- Reduce missed collections by 15% by the end of 2024.
- Increase customers receiving e-bills up to 60% by end of 2024.

## Key Messages

- Denver's waste diversion rates are well-behind cities of similar size across the nation, with 74% of Denver's waste being sent to a landfill. The volume-based pricing model has proved to be extremely effective in increasing waste diversion across the country.
- All current Solid Waste Management customers – single family homes and apartments with 7 or less units – will be charged a fee based on the size of trash cart they use. Weekly recycling and composting carts and services will be included at no extra cost.
- Trash carts are available in three sizes, priced at \$9, \$13, and \$21 per month (figure 2).
- Customers can manage their costs by sorting their household and yard waste between the three carts. With recycling and composting collection available every week, many households will be able to fit their waste in a smaller trash cart at a lower fee.
  - Customers can request a smaller cart at any time and billing will be adjusted accordingly.
- Most of Denver's neighboring cities don't provide residential trash service through the city and residents pay more than the large cart fee with a private trash service.
- An instant rebate is available for low-income and fixed-income households. Applications will be available upon passage of this ordinance. Eligibility will be based on income and number of people in a household (Area Median Income). DOTI is offering 50%, 75%, or 100% off based on those criteria.



Figure 2 Trash cart sizes and prices.

## Why these changes are necessary

- It is the right thing to do in response to the local and nationwide movements calling for action on climate change.
  - Landfills generate methane, a dangerous greenhouse gas that causes climate change.
  - Volume based pricing is a proven strategy to increase use of beneficial, sustainable services like composting.
- Residents have been clear in wanting weekly recycling.
  - Recycling carts are overflowing – more frequent collection keeps bottles, cans and cardboard in the carts and out of the streets.
  - The fee structure of volume-based pricing provides the means to fund expanded services.
- This makes Denver's compost program available to all households instead of an optional, fee-based service.

- The fee has been a barrier for low and fixed-income households to participate in Denver's compost program as it is the only service with a direct charge. Only 30,000 homes participate (see appendix, figure 3).
- Adding food and yard waste collection to every household can divert 50% or more of our waste away from the landfill, creating valuable compost.

## Affordability Program

DOTI has partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide an affordability program, which provides an instant rebate for customers depending on their income level.

AMI	Instant Rebate
• 30%	• 100%
• 50%	• 75%
• 60%	• 50%

- Eligibility = **income + number of people in the house** (Area Median Income)
- Applications (print and online) are available prior to roll-out
- Auto-enrollment is available across local DHS programs

## Outreach Plan

### Audiences

- Single family homes and apartments with 7 or fewer units
- Communities of color, low-income, older adults
- Neighborhoods in DOTI Equity Index (Inverted L)
- Current compost customers
- New compost customers

### Customer Service and Collateral Distribution

**Purpose:** To reach Denver residents on and offline.

**Approach:**

- Multi-lingual
- Print and direct mail to Solid Waste Management customers and impacted property owners and residents:
  - Newsletters and postcards to service addresses
  - Letters to recorded property owners
  - Letters to current compost customers
- Print and digital toolkits available for council offices, libraries, recreation centers

- Online FAQs found at [www.denvergov.org/expandedcollection](http://www.denvergov.org/expandedcollection)
- Educate drivers, SWM customer service agents, and 311 (front line staff) on the program by providing scripts and training on the program
- Direct contact with customers via field Supervisors, Superintendents, and Inspectors who are able to educate on contamination concerns and assist with operational issues such as set out locations
- Printed/digital guides, short videos, and online tools to assist new compost customers on how to use your compost cart and make it convenient

**Schedule:** Q3-Q4 2022

### Advertising Plan

**Purpose:** Additional visibility for program start date and rebate availability

**Approach:**

- Multi-lingual
- Print advertisements in local and neighborhood publications, August–October
- Targeted social media advertisements on Facebook and Instagram
  - July: Announcement of new program
  - August–Sept: Affordability program
  - October: Weekly recycling, invoicing
- Collection truck signage
- Outdoor advertising in key neighborhoods (bus bench/shelters)

**Schedule:** Q3-Q4 2022

### Activity centers and events

**Purpose:** To reach target areas and share information about the VBP program where the community already gathers. To develop and foster relationships among DOTI staff and the greater Denver community.

**Approach:**

- Attend community events and visit activity centers (tabling)
- Develop sustainable relationships with Registered Neighborhood Organizations and HOAs
- Deliver community presentations. Examples include:
  - Compost trainings for new compost customers
  - How to use the online customer portal for payments and cart management
  - How to sign up for the affordability program
- Develop resource materials for use by organizations

**Schedule:** Q2-Q4 2022

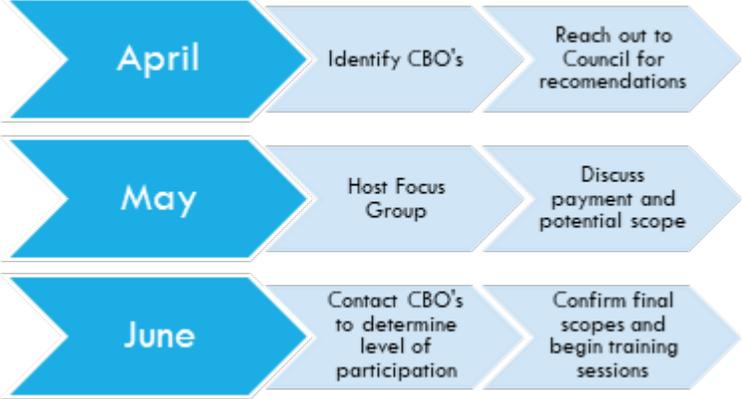
### Partnership with Community-based Organizations (CBOs)

**Purpose:** To leverage existing community connections to reach historically underrepresented Denver communities. To gain insight from community organizations on how to best reach these communities.

**Approach:** After identifying CBOs throughout the city, a focus group was held to gather recommendations and input regarding contracting and levels of participation. Based on the focus group recommendations each CBO will be contacted and an RFP will be issued with a menu of

participation levels including scope and payments. Contracts will then be issued for interested and qualified CBOs to perform outreach in their communities. As Denver anticipates a large number of contracts, individual contracts will be managed through contracted firms (including Triunity and CIG).  
**Schedule:** Q2, 2022 through 2024

**CBO Pre-Ordinance Timeline**



**CBO Post-Ordinance Timeline**



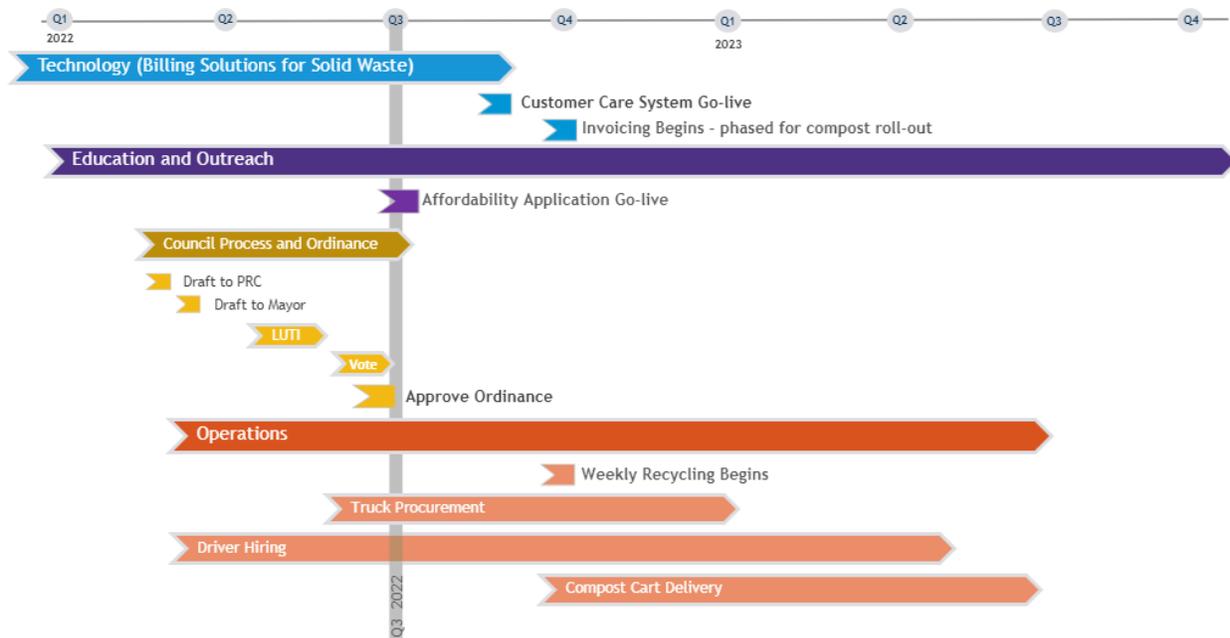
## Project Timeline

If passed, the following schedule will take effect:

- **Week of ordinance passage**
  - Media advisories
  - Organic social media posts
- **Post-ordinance educational outreach begins**
  - Update website with FAQs
  - Mailed notices to all service addresses
  - Affordability program application period opens with DHS
  - Targeted social media advertising begins
  - Educate current compost customers on downsizing their trash carts
- **Late Summer 2022**
  - Promotion of affordability program to all service addresses
  - Targeted advertising in local publications begins
  - Targeted social media advertising continues
  - Communication with existing compost customers about the transition
  - Online customer portal (Denver Utilities Online) updated for all new and existing users
- **Fall 2022**
  - Outdoor advertising in key neighborhoods
  - Continued print and social media advertising
  - Weekly recycling begins
  - Existing compost customers will no longer be charged for this service
  - Invoicing begins based on trash cart size
    - Instant rebate applied for approved households
    - Invoices also include credit for compost service roll-out
  - Compost cart delivery begins
- **2023 – Compost service roll-out**
  - Compost collection will begin in phases across Solid Waste Management districts. Current compost customers will not see a change in service.
    - Compost guides and kitchen pails provided with every cart
  - Contamination education
  - Trash cart downsize education provided citywide
- **2024 - Ongoing education dependent on feedback from original outreach priorities**
  - Address repeated contamination via education and gradually escalating approach with enforcement as last resort
    - Utilizing cart audits, cart tags, and direct contact as tools for engagement.
  - Continued billing and customer support education (how to pay bills on time and online)

# Appendix

## Education and Outreach Schedule



### Outreach Deliverables

Objective/goal	Deliverable	Type	Date Needed
General awareness	CBO focus group	Community outreach	May
	Customer newsletter 1	Print/mail	Early July
	CBO contracts established	Community outreach	Early July
	Affordability postcard	Print/mail	August 2022, mid-2023
	Digital/social media promotion (organic + paid advertising)	Online	July–October
	Letters to property owners	Print/mail	August
	Letters to current compost customers	Print/mail	August
	Advertising campaign	Print/outdoor	August/September
Recycling and composting education / contamination	Customer newsletter 2	Print/mail	October/November
	Compost Service Guide	Print (cart delivery)	October 2022 – June 2023

	Education campaign videos	Social/web	Q1 2023
	Contamination notices for inspection crews	Print	Q2/3 2023
Rightsizing trash carts (environmental awareness)	VBP progress report w/ CASR	Online/print	Q4 2023
	Email campaign to Denver Utilities Online users	Email	Q1 2024
	Advertising campaign 2	Online/print	Q2 2024

### Volume-based Pricing Staffing Resources

Calculation of FTEs Focused on SWM Education					
Organization/Team	FTEs	Total Hours Worked /Year (2,000/FTE)	% of Time Focused on Education	Total Hours Focused on Education /Year	Total # of FTEs /Year
Citywide Marketing	2	4000	25%	1000	0.50
SWM CSR Team	9	18000	17%	3060	1.53
SWM Inspectors	3	6000	20%	1200	0.60
SWM Superintendents	3	6000	17%	1002	0.50
SWM Supervisors	9	18000	17%	3006	1.50
SWM Program Manager	1	2000	100%	2000	1.00
OCBE	3	6000	33%	1998	1.00
Public Information	2	4000	10%	400	0.20
CASR	3	6000	25%	1500	0.75
<b>Total FTE's /Year</b>					<b>7.6</b>

### Denver Compost Program Participation 2022

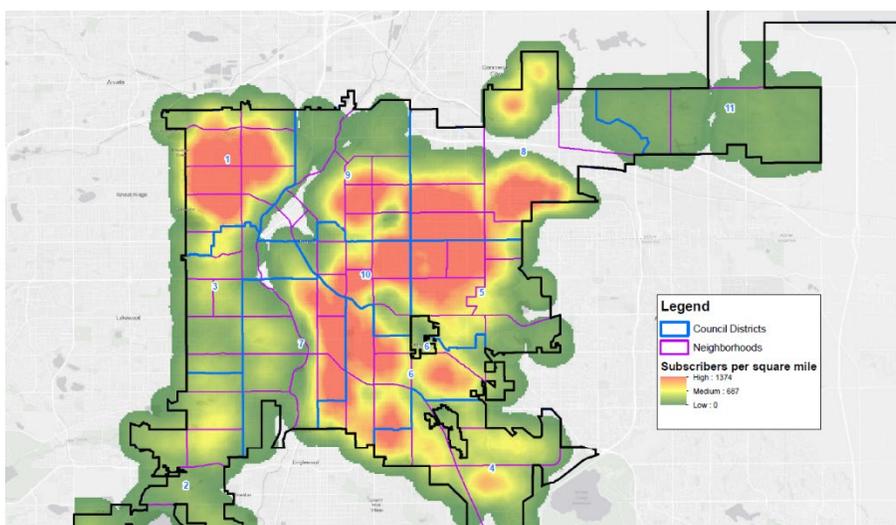


Figure 3 Heat map displaying compost program participation levels between Denver neighborhoods.