



Public Space and Event Waste Diversion

2026 SWANA Northern Lights
Chapter Conference

Presented by
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This project was undertaken in partnership with
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Agenda

1. Project introduction
2. Baseline Assessment
3. Public Engagement
4. Pilots, Pilot Findings and Lessons Learned
5. Potential Next Steps

Public Space and Event Waste Diversion

In 2024 and 2025, the City of Saskatoon's Public Space and Event Waste Diversion project prepared research and pilots to reduce and divert organic and recyclable waste at events and in public spaces.

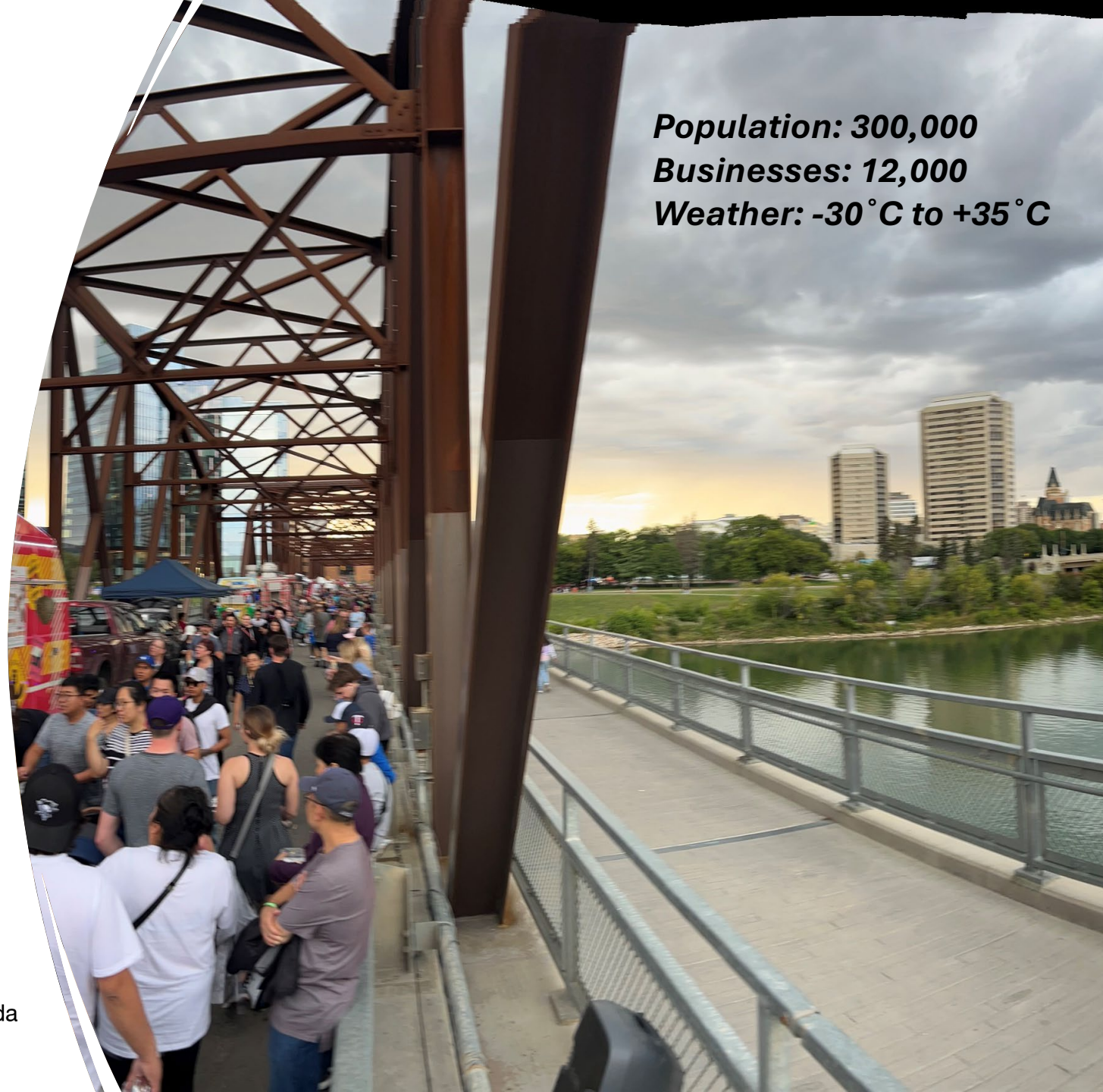


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Population: 300,000
Businesses: 12,000
Weather: -30 °C to +35 °C



Public Space and Event Waste Diversion

- The City of Saskatoon has a target of 70% waste diversion from the City's landfill.
- Currently composting and recycling is voluntary in public space and at events in Saskatoon.

Public space for this project is defined as space where the public is responsible for sorting and disposing their own waste and includes:

- events,
- cityscape, and
- facilities.

Events

In 2024, the City of Saskatoon recorded **418** events contracts and **494,368** anticipated attendees for public and private events.

In 2024, an estimate of **113 tonnes of annual waste** was collected by the City for events.



Cityscape

On record in 2024, is **2,471** waste receptacles in parks, on business improvement district city sidewalks and at transit stops.

An estimate of **163 tonnes of annual waste** is collected from these receptacles.



Facilities

An estimate of **102,000 tonnes** of garbage from Saskatoon businesses and organizations goes to Saskatoon and area landfills each year.

The City of Saskatoon has regulations in place for facilities to recycle and compost waste generated as part of their operations, but not yet in place for the public facing waste.

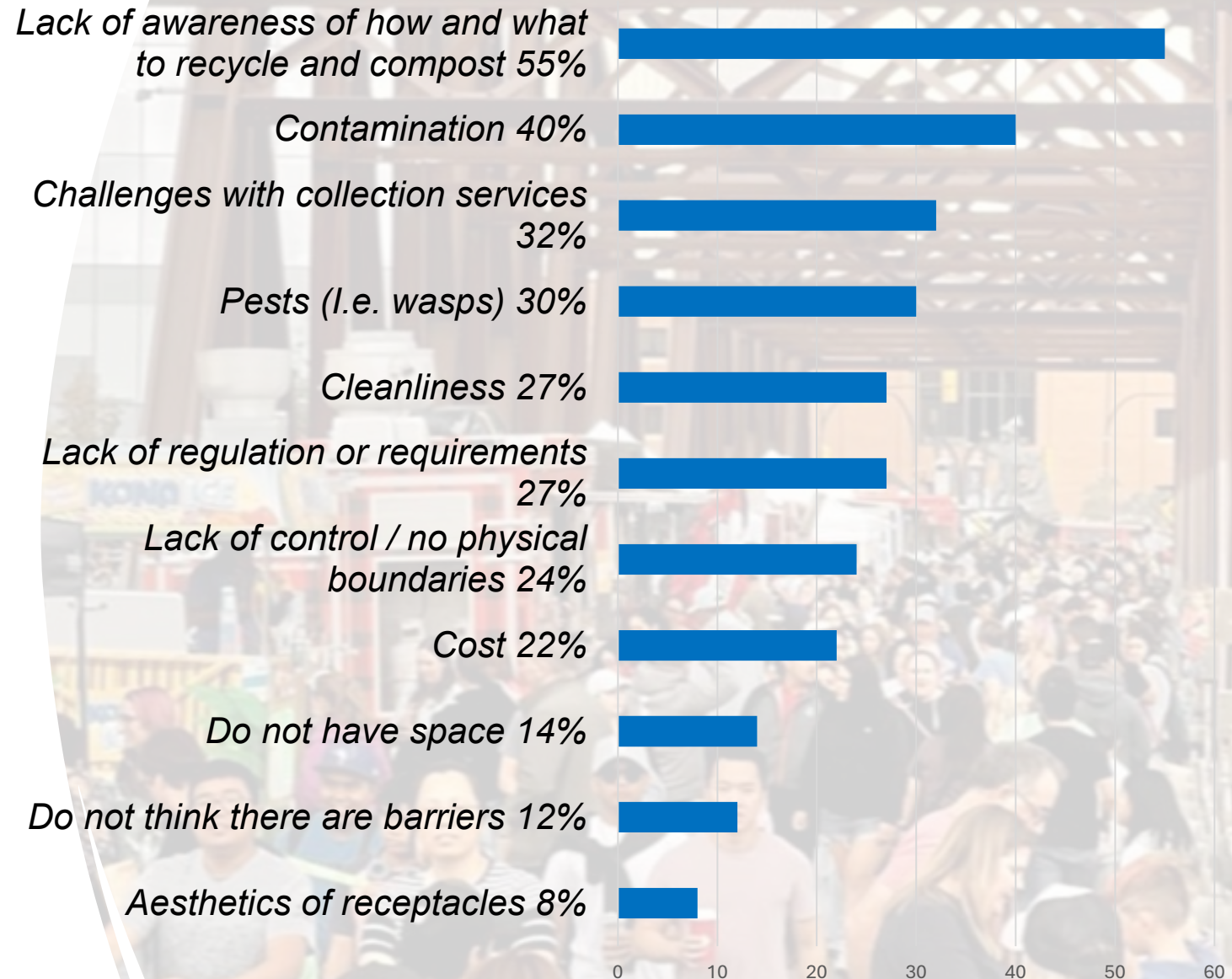


Public Engagement

A total of **62** representatives from a variety of organizations participated in the **Events Hosts and Public Space Owners Survey**. The largest group of respondents were:

- event hosts / organizers (53%),
- various organizations (48%),
- business owners (24%),
- food service vendors (24%)
- service providers (22%).

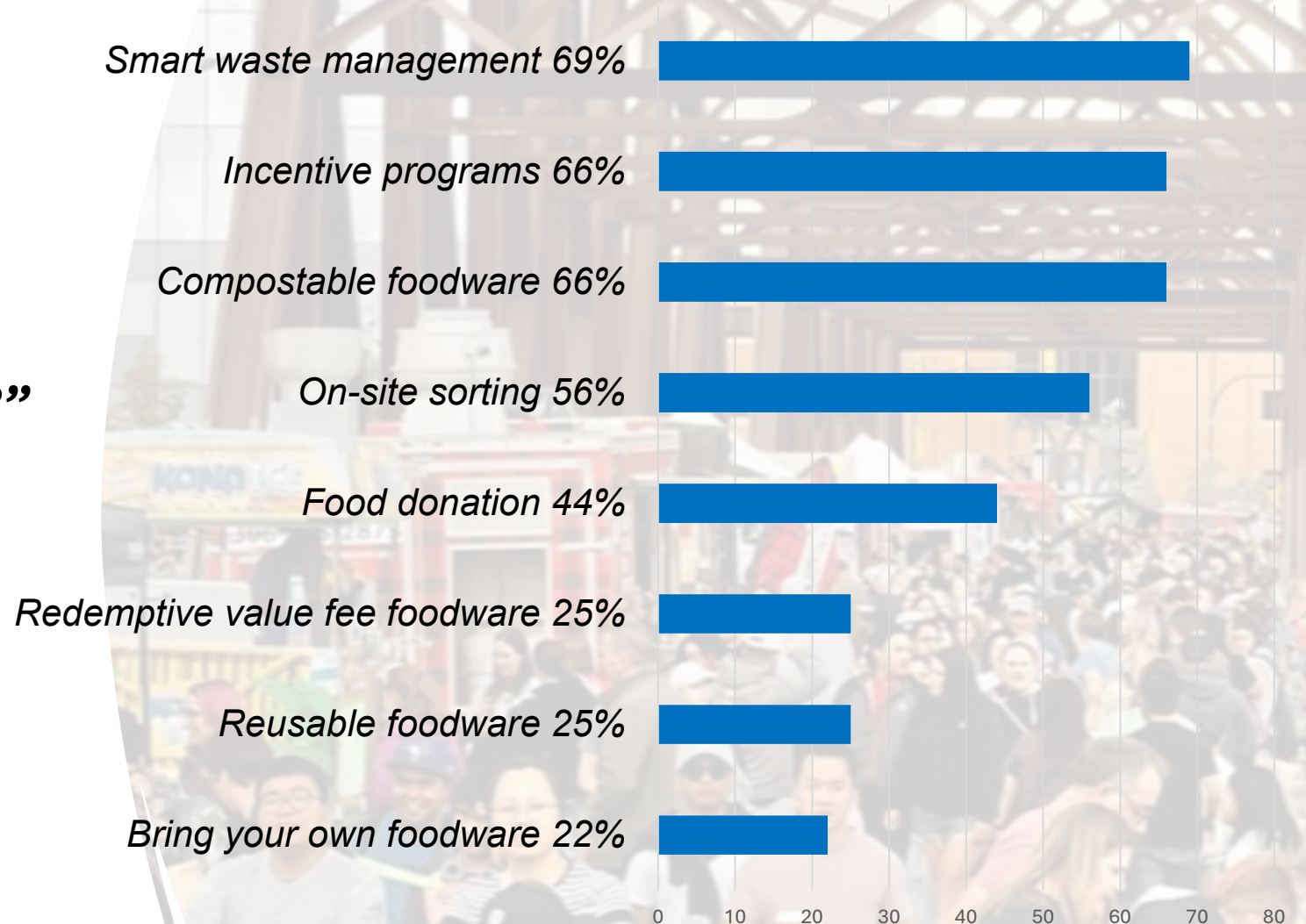
“What are the greatest barriers?”



Public Engagement

“What pilots would you be interested in participating in?”

Events Hosts and Public Space Owners



We want to hear from you!

Fill out our survey
for your chance to
Win an iPad!

➤ saskatoon.ca/publicwaste

Put waste
in the right
place!



Public Engagement

Communications signage was provided at pilot sites with a QR code to the **Community Survey** and project webpage.

From July to October of 2025, **145** community members participated in the survey.

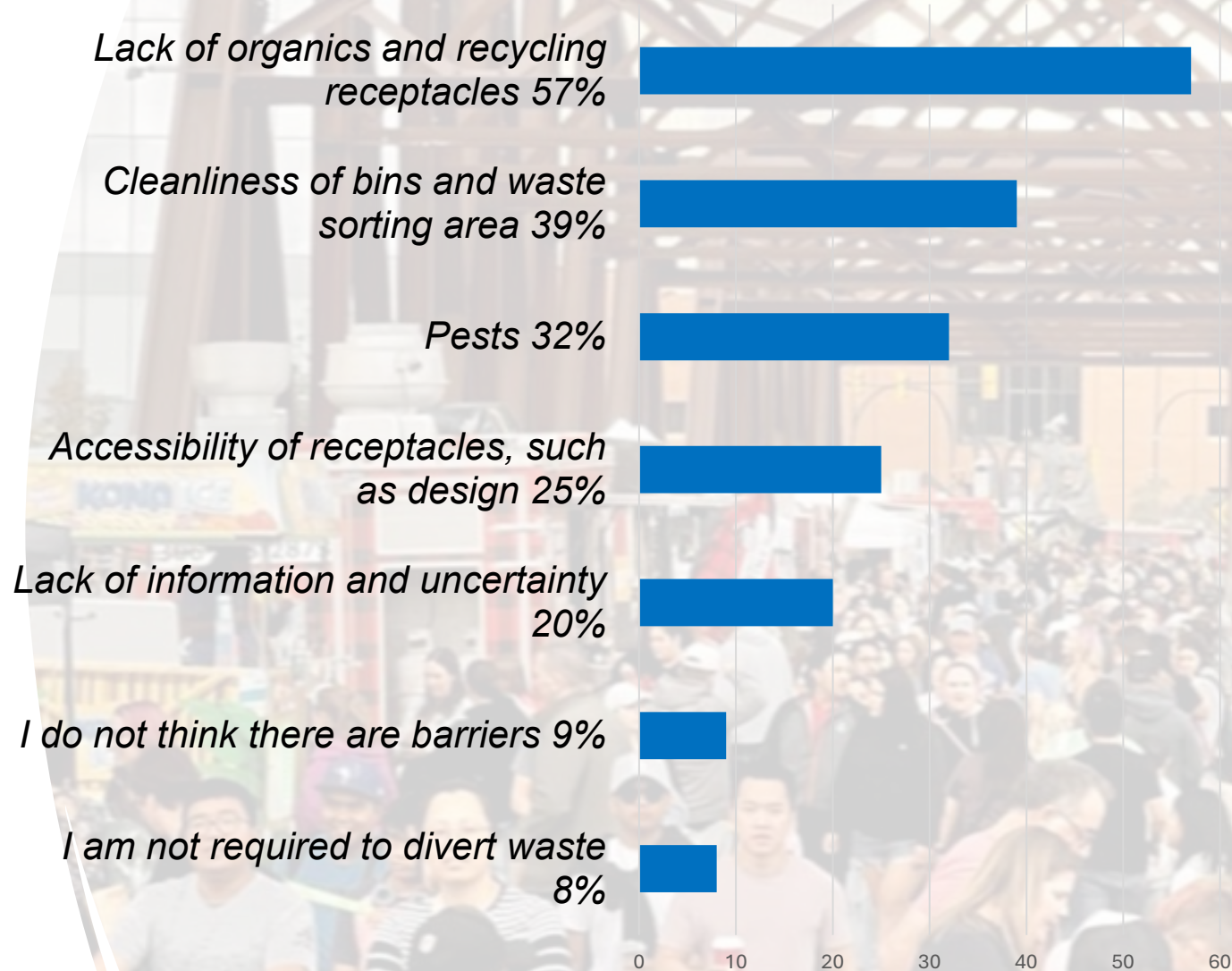
Public Engagement

Most **Community Survey** participants believe composting and recycling in public space and at events is **very important** (average 5/5)

Most **common public space waste items** include beverage cups (77%), food packaging (66%), food waste (65%), cans/bottles (63%) and take-out food containers (37%)

Some public space waste includes pet waste and illegal dumping

“What are the greatest barriers?”



Pilot: Multi-stream Waste Management

25 locations (events, cityscape and facilities)

Portable **receptacles** were provided for public use for following waste streams:

- organics
- refundable recycling
- non-refundable recycling
- garbage

Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council summer students provided:

- **on-site sorting** and **educational resources** to reduce contamination, and
- **waste characterization data collection** to support baseline assessment.

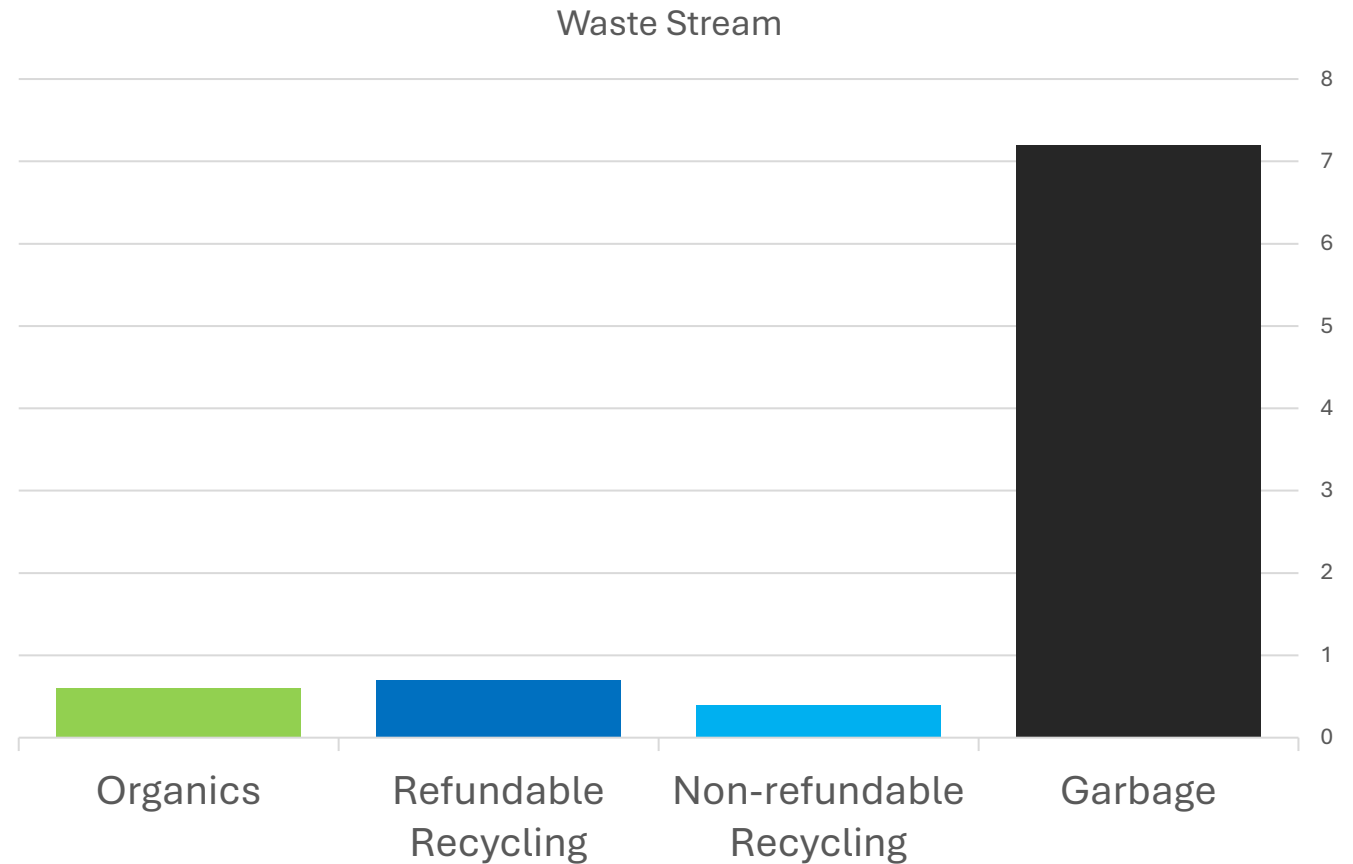




Pilot: Multi-stream Waste Management

Some public space **garbage** accounted for over **7 times** the amount of waste from each of the other waste streams.

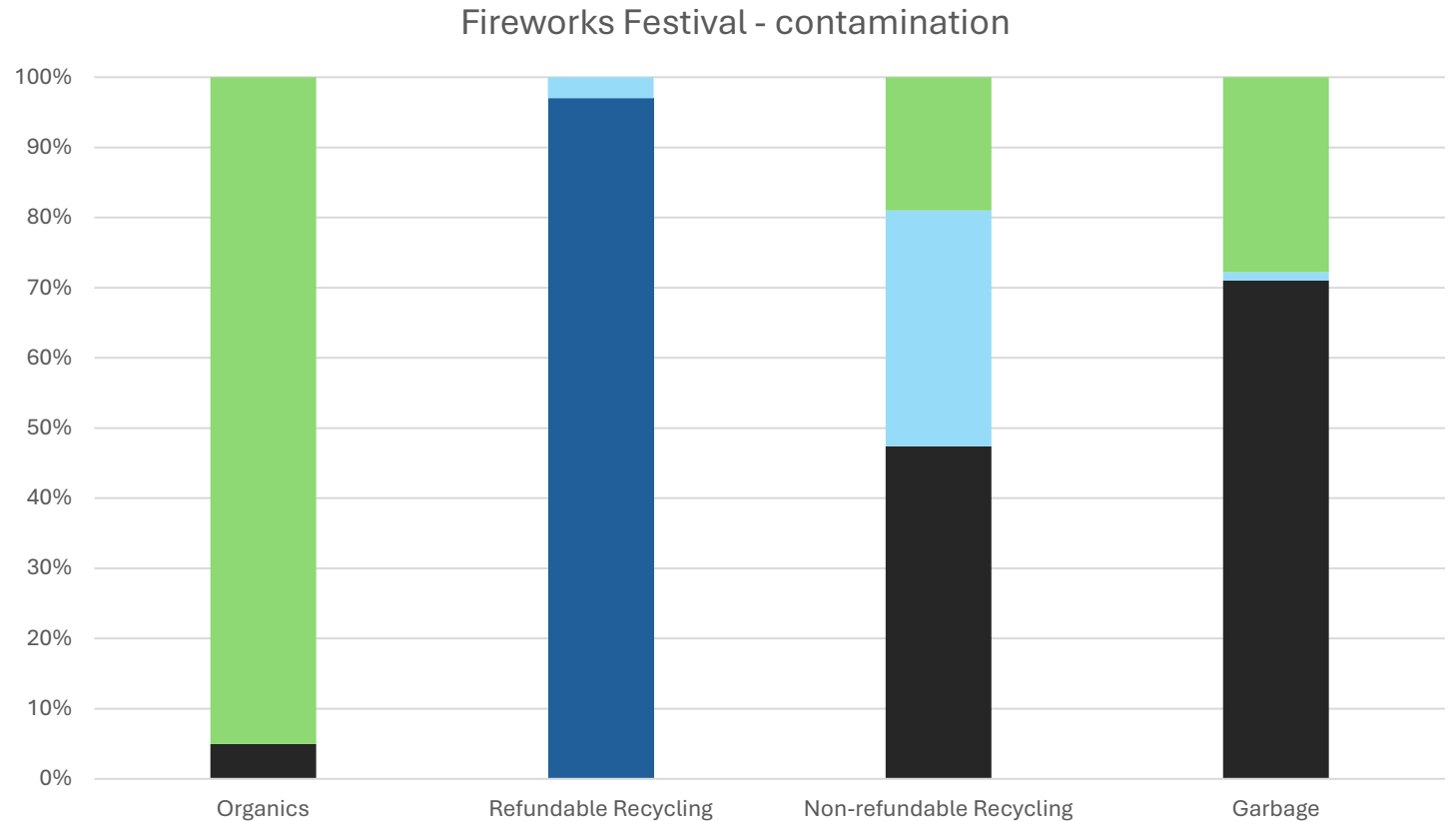
Sample multi-stream waste pilot waste data collection:
August 29-30th 2025, Nutrien Fireworks Festival event



Pilot: Multi-stream Waste Management

Organics and refundable recycling typically had lower contamination than non-refundable recycling and garbage

Most public space and events garbage waste was non-compostable **food soiled foodware**.



Events Audit

Events waste audit identified plastic lined foodware, waxed paper, foil paper and food soiled plastic foodware as leading contributors to events landfill waste.

Food soiled recyclable foodware was a leading source of recycling contamination since rinsing is not always possible in the public realm.

Tetra Tech YXE Games waste characterization study photos:
July 19th 2025, YXE Games even





ies: Agriculture Bags Packaging Foodservice Resins Components Molded

Initial Findings

- According to the Community Survey, **compostable foodware** is favored by the community as the leading strategy to divert foodware waste.
- Most event waste could be diverted from the landfill by using **compostable** or **reusable foodware**.
- **On-site sorting** and **educational resources** reduced contamination.

SEARCH FOR CERTIFIED COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS

This database has an active keyword search. If you are not finding what you are looking for, try searching without using a category.



Search for certified compostable products

Company or product name, SKU, or keyword

Show results by Product Company

Pilot: Smart Waste Management

Locations: City Hall, Jazz Festival, Midtown Plaza mall food court and SaskTel Centre

Through visual recognition, the Intuitive AI Oscar Sort can guide the user to correctly source separate their waste. This pilot was used to measure and increase waste **diversion rate, reduce contamination, educate the public** and provide **waste characterization data collection**.

<https://intuitiveai.ca/oscar-sort>





Pilot: Smart Waste Management

- Most Oscar Sort trivia participants found it **helpful to sort** their **waste** with Oscar Sort (90% True)
- Oscar Sort waste characterization supported **data collection** to help understand what is being sorted correctly and incorrectly in public space.
- The use of an Artificial Intelligence tool **reduced staff time** for extended on-site monitoring and audits of this behaviour.

Pilot: Smart Waste Management

Intuitive AI Waste Insights

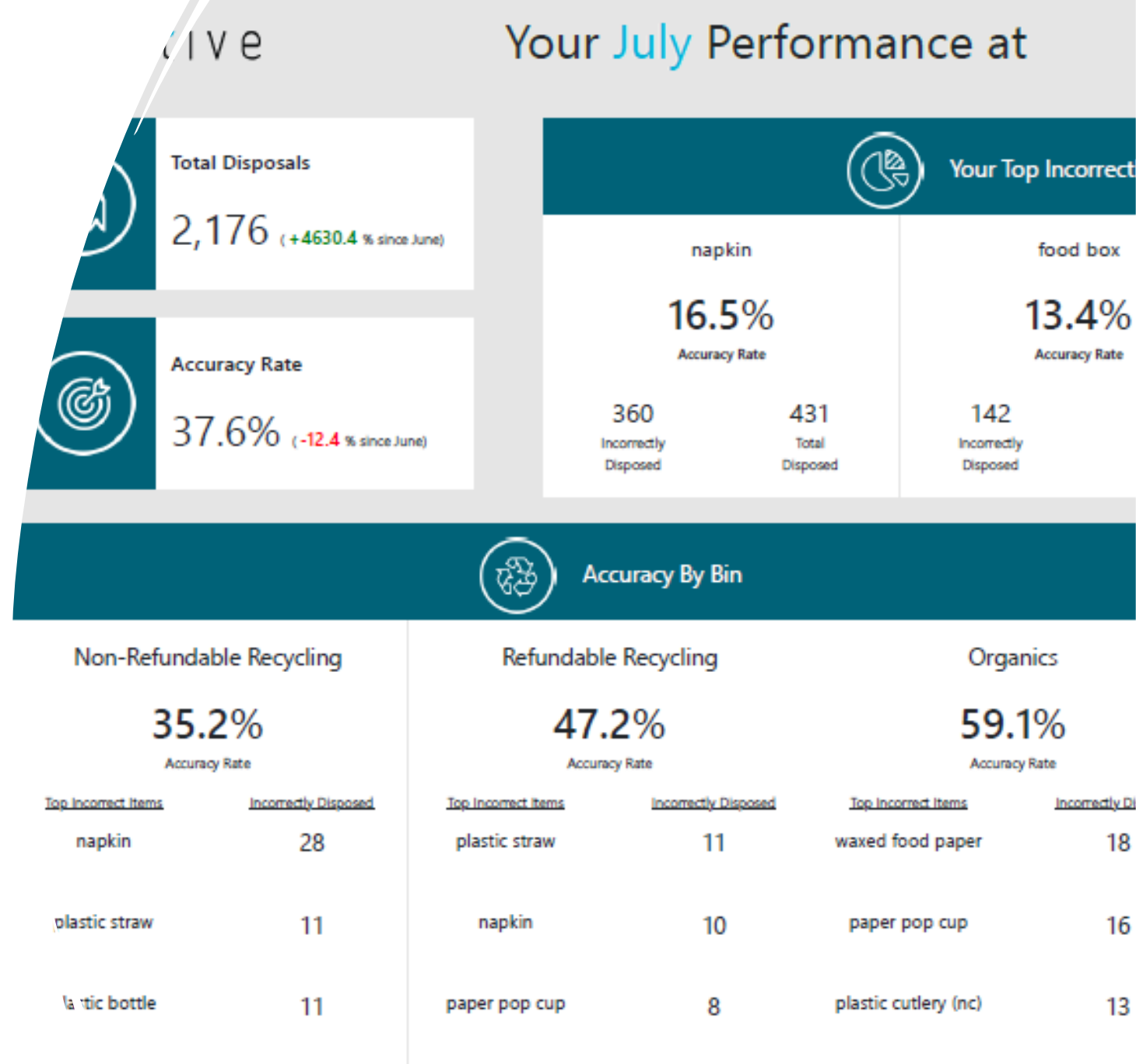
Like other methods of data collection, site observations identified varying degrees of public compliancy and interest in using the tool.

July Waste Insights Total Disposals: **2,176**

July Waste Insights Diversion Accuracy:

- Organics **59%**
- Refundable Recycling **47%**
- Non-refundable Recycling **35%**
- Garbage **33%**

Oscar Waste Insights: City of Saskatoon July 2025, Intuitive AI



Pilot: Smart Waste Management Considerations

Procuring AI for the smart waste management pilot required lead time and resources for:

- Privacy Impact Assessment,
- LTE connection, and
- Request for Information from the public.



Financial Incentives – Rebates Pilot

Business Improvement District Rebates

- organics and recycling waste receptacles
- events collection services
- on-site sorting services
- BPI compostable foodware, or
- organics waste reduction or diversion proposal.

Food Service Vendor Rebates

- compostable foodware



Sustainability – Public Space and Event Waste Diversion

Business Improvement Districts – Rebates Application Form

The City of Saskatoon is currently researching, designing, and piloting programs to reduce and divert organic and recyclable waste in public spaces and at events. The Public Space and Event Waste Diversion project is encouraging Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to participate in the organics and recycling waste diversion pilots. During the period of June 10th (retroactive) to December 31st 2025, rebates with a maximum upset value of \$3,000.00 per BID (see Appendix A – BIDs Rebate Eligibility Criteria) will be made available for the following expenditure categories:

- multi-stream waste receptacles,
- events collection services,
- on-site sorting services,
- BPI compostable food ware, or
- another organics waste reduction or diversion proposal.

All rebates will require pre-approval in writing from the project team to ensure compatibility with the project's objectives.

To be considered for the rebate program, please complete and return this form to publicwaste@saskatoon.ca. For eligibility criteria please refer to **Appendix A – BIDs Rebates Eligibility Criteria**. The Public Space and Event Waste Diversion (PSEW) project team is available to support the application process online or in-person. To request further information, discussion or support completing the application please reach out to the PSEW project team at publicwaste@saskatoon.ca.

Business Improvement District:

Broadway

Downtown DTNYXE

33rd

Riversdale

Sutherland

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

Our foodware is **compostable**.

Please dispose of your food scraps,
dishes and cutlery in the **green carts**.



 City of
Saskatoon
> saskatoon.ca/publicwaste



Compostable Foodware Pilot

By reducing the need to separate foodware from food scraps, the compostable food ware pilot aimed to:

- increase organics waste diversion,
- increase awareness and **simplify waste sorting**,
- **reduce contamination**, and
- provide [Biodegradable Products Institute \(BPI\) certified](#) foodware resources to the public and to food service vendors.



What we heard from food service vendors

What are the barriers to using compostable foodware?

- source supply dictates foodware purchase
- desired branding
- lack of knowledge of BPI Compostable foodware and suppliers
- patron complaints about compostable products
- cost
- time to prepare and order supplies
- non-standardized labeling of materials

C O M M U N I T Y

ROUND DANCE & FEAST

For the FEAST ceremony any leftover or uneaten Feast food will **NOT** be put in the garbage or composted. It will be taken out to the land by one of the male helpers.

Surplus Feast Food will be packaged and distributed for future consumption.

Please sort all other waste in the waste receptacles provided according to the following waste streams:

Compostables



Refundable
Recyclables



Non-Refundable
Recyclables



Garbage



City of
Saskatoon



greener
TOGETHER

Reusable Foodware Pilot

Inspired by traditional Indigenous Feast Kits, **100 reusable foodware kits** and containers were used to facilitate uneaten food being distributed for future consumption and returned to the land through ceremony.

This pilot was an example of how waste reduction and diversion solutions not only need to be culturally appropriate, but can be inspired by Saskatoon's many First Nations and Metis peoples.

The reusable foodware was well received by the event participants, with demand exceeding supply of containers.



Public Space Challenges

Right sizing and adaptability

From weather to waste types, there is not a one-sized-fits-all solution for public space waste.

Public Space Challenges



Consistency

Inconsistent receptacles standards, including terminology, colours, and design.

Differences across jurisdictions of what is acceptable in different waste streams.

Non-standardized labelling of materials for composability and recyclability.



Public Space Challenges

Health and safety

Many events and public spaces have a lack of physical boundaries.

Pet waste and illegal dumping are typical in public waste. This can be a public health and safety risk for the community as well as collections service providers.

Higher rates of scavenging when bins are not secured.



Public Space Challenges

Designing in public for the public

Public space fosters a wide range of demographics with varying degrees of waste management awareness, compliancy, ability and need.

Design standards and regulations need to support all without restricting cultural expression.

Consideration for aesthetics, cleanliness and affordability.



Potential Paths Forward

Education and Resources

- Design standards and best practices for public sorting receptacles
- Events and waste management guides and training
- Signage, foodware resources and leading by example

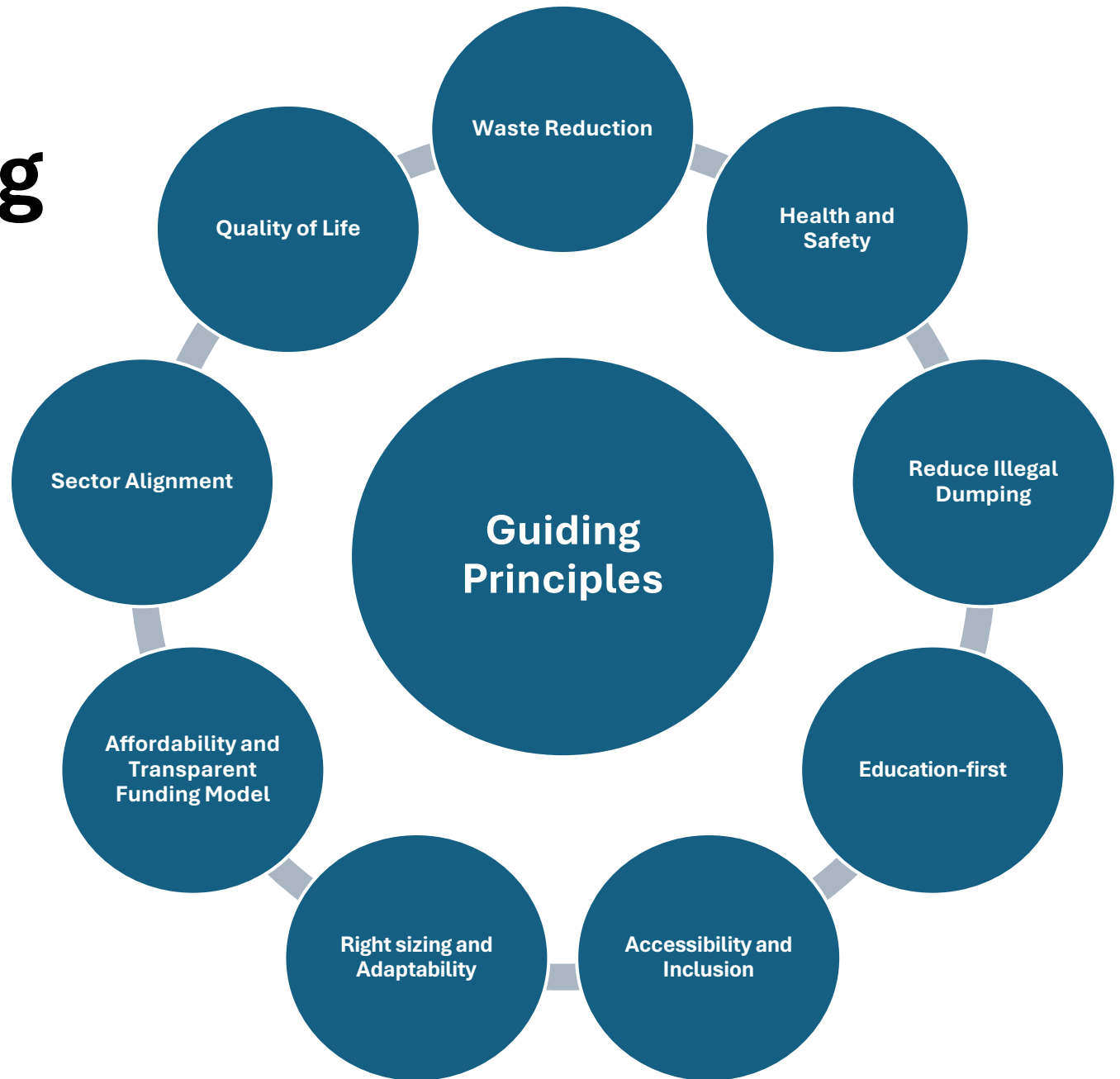
Services and Support

- Trial multi-stream receptacles in high impact locations
- Streamline collections services
- Waste Management task force – for monitoring and awareness

Requirements and Regulations

- Enforcement of illegal dumping
- Update ICI regulations to include public spaces
- Organics and recyclables waste diversion for events
- Foodware regulations

Next Step Guiding Principles



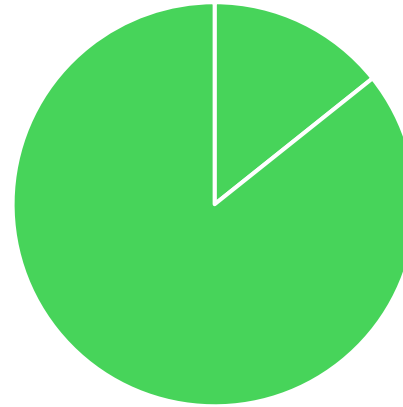
Potential Next Steps

Remove non-divertible waste from the public realm with a focus on food service ware

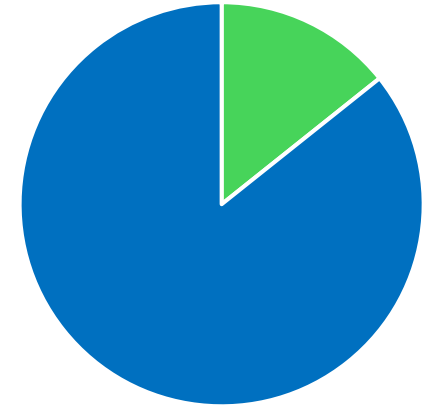
- reusables produce the least waste, and
- compostables simplify waste sorting.



Reusables



Compostables



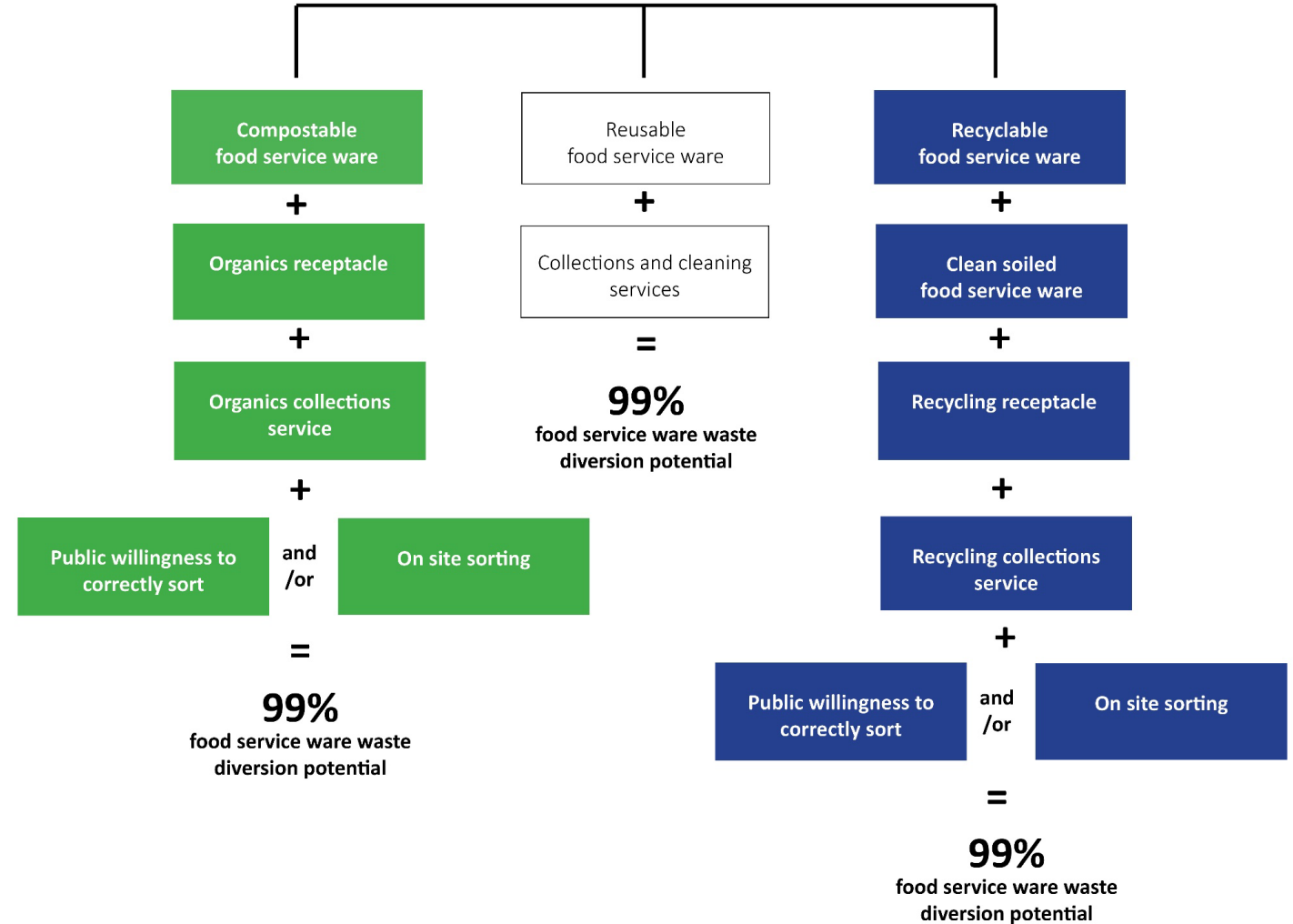
Recyclables

Potential Next Steps

Education and Resources

- Events guides, multi-stream signage and food service ware resources
- Waste management training
- Design standards and best practices guidelines
- Waste characterization data collection

Food Service Ware: Paths to Public Waste Diversion



Potential Next Steps

Services and Supports

- Design for waste streams generated and provide collections and services in high impact locations
- Financial incentives
- Waste management task force

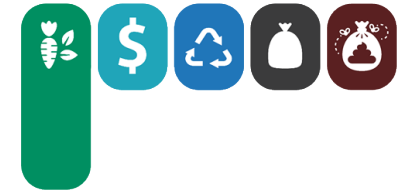
Event using
compostable
foodware



Cityscape Trails
and Dog Parks



Mall using
reusable foodware





Potential Next Steps

Requirements and Regulations

- Update bylaw to include public space waste.
- Update ICI regulations to include public spaces
- Organics and recyclables waste diversion for events
- Foodware regulations

Thank you!

Further reporting on a phased implementation plan for public space and event waste diversion is planned for Q2 2026.



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