



Materials Management Strategy

NOVEMBER 2025

Background

- 2020 Operational Study (MSW Consultants)
- 2024 Rate Study (SCS Engineers)
- “Cleaner Greener GR” discussions regarding hoarding/illegal dumping and “trash equity”
- Ongoing discussions regarding diversion and flow control with Kent County

On 9/4/2024 Public Works presented results and recommendations of the 2024 Rate Study and were directed by the City Commission to solicit additional public feedback in anticipation of a future discussion of potential Ordinance changes.

Evaluating future strategy

Remain Voluntary or Convert to Exclusive Residential Service: Most U.S. cities exclusively provide residential collection. As shown in this report, Grand Rapids could improve collection efficiency, reduce its cost per customer, reduce its reliance on customer tracking technology, and establish a more equitable rate schedule if it were the exclusive provider of residential curbside collection.

- MSW Consultants, 2020 Financial & Operational Assessment

Evaluating future strategy

*Based upon the results of the study described herein, we recommend the following:
The City become the exclusive hauler of residential waste. This produces both
qualitative and quantitative benefits for the residents and City Staff.*

- *SCS Engineers, 2024 Materials Management Rate Study*

Evaluating future strategy

Ordinance considerations

- Ensure that every residential property has trash service (current licensing model makes this extremely challenging)
- Establish language to specifically address illegal dumping, hoarding or deferring to “dumpster days”
- Establish uniform performance and customer service standards for those providing service in the City
- **Consider a single-hauler alternative for residential collection**

Engagement Process

- Carried out between December 2024 and August 2025 (Nine months)
- Included in-person stakeholder meetings, presentations with neighborhood associations, online surveys, Commission Night Out engagement and City-hosted community meetings
- In all, involved approximately 2,500 individuals in the engagement process

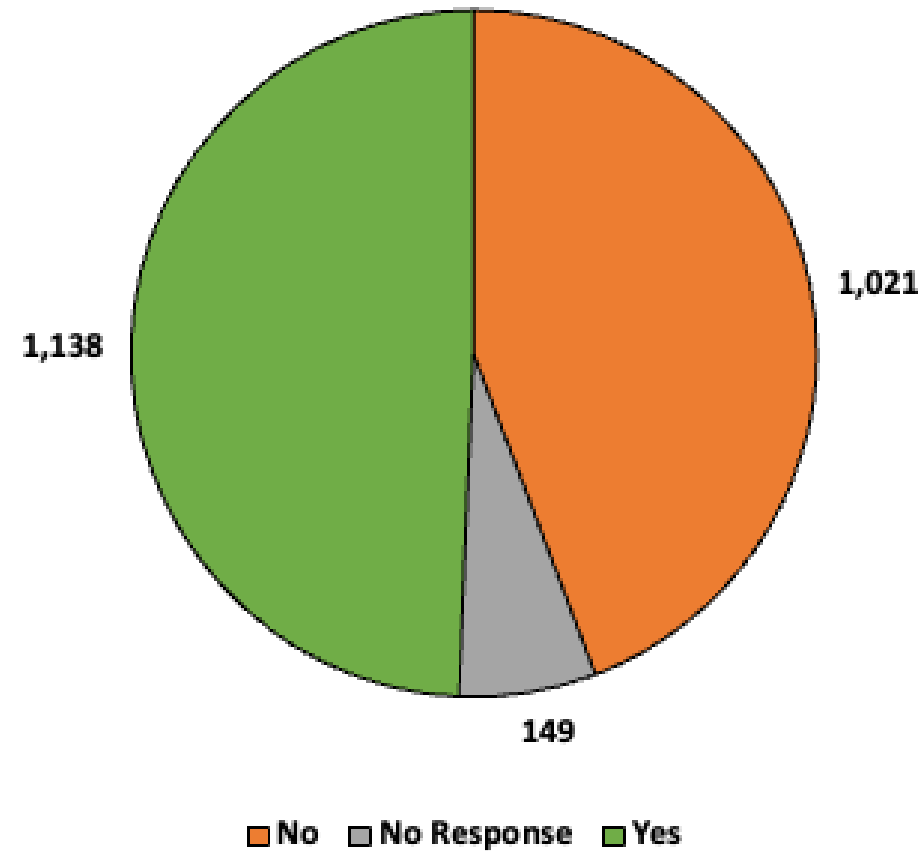
Engagement Results (in person)

- Chamber of Commerce, Rental Property Owners Association, private haulers not supportive
 - Chamber suggested competing a single alternative hauler as an option
- Neighborhood Associations and CNO participants split on support (more positive than negative) with specific reservations around maintaining/increasing customer service levels, maintaining choice and ensuring short-and long-term affordability

Engagement Results (online)

- **2,308 Participants**
 - Margin of error +/- 5%
 - Focused on residents 18+ (~159,000)
- **Survey circulation (December 2024-August 2025)**
 - Digital with social media outreach and promotion
 - We Are GR and GR Connected
 - Shared at community meetings
- **Online respondents overall were slightly in favor of the City as single hauler (49.3% for vs. 44.2% against)**
 - Those not currently using City service (n=447) were opposed (14% for, 77% against)
 - Those currently using City service (n=1,842) were in favor (58% for, 36% against)

Engagement Results (online)



Engagement Results (online)

Narrative concerns (and response)

- "taking jobs" from private haulers
There may be a migration of jobs, but personnel are still needed to run collection, whether public or private
- "monopoly" would lead to unaccountable cost increases
Rates are set in public, with public comment, and approved by elected representatives
- Existing customers would subsidize new customers
Projections maintain current rate structure
- Concerns about expansion beyond residential collection
The City does not have the footprint, infrastructure or interest in expanding into large commercial or large multifamily service

City-provided refuse service

Rate Funded Services

PAYT- Refuse Collection

Compost/Yard Waste (48%)

Bulk Collection

Dumpsters (Commercial)

Cart Maintenance

Millage Funded Services

Recycling

Compost/Yard Waste (52%)

Dead Animal Collection

Illegal Dumping

Graffiti Abatement

ROW Cleanup

Street Sweeping

Neighborhood Cleanups

Special Events

Closed Superfund Site
(Butterworth Landfill)

Trash Reduction Program

Forestry Support



City-provided refuse service

- Pay as you Throw – Pay for service only when needed
- Route efficiency – City trucks already on every street, every week
- Multiple cart sizes – Adaptable to household needs
- Income-based service through Home Repair Services
- Free assisted service if needed
- Currently covers 85-90% of residential customers (~52,500)

*85% of respondents rate Grand Rapids' service as good to excellent
(2024 National Community Survey)*



City-provided refuse service

Service	Rate	Biweekly	Weekly
City – 32 Gallon	\$3.63/tip	\$7.26/month	\$14.52/month
City – 64 Gallon	\$6.05/tip	\$12.10/month	\$24.20/month
City – 96 Gallon	\$8.47/tip	\$16.94/month	\$33.88/month
Private Contract	\$20-30/month	\$20-30/month	\$20-30/month



- 55% Presentment Rate for City customers
- <0.5% miss rate for City customers

Sustainability considerations

- 11 licensed haulers in the City (Five known residential haulers)
- Consolidating residential collection estimated to remove 6-10 collection vehicles from residential streets daily*
- Estimated GHG reduction of 140-240 tons annually
- Reductions in NO₂, SO₂ and particulate emissions in neighborhoods (air quality, respiratory health considerations)
- City is in the process of fully converting to CNG vehicles for refuse fleet
- Estimated reduction in wear to residential streets equivalent to removing ~13,000 personal vehicles from traveling residential streets

** - It is acknowledged that many of these vehicles are running "pass through" routes and would bypass through the City on arterial roadways or highways*

Cost considerations

- Rate setting overseen by the City Commission
 - Based on cost recovery
 - Developed and approved through a public process
 - Presented to and approved by elected representatives annually
- Rates do not change under a single-hauler model
- Customer base expected to grow by ~8,000-10,000 customers
- Initial ROI estimated in four years if adopted

Cost considerations

Projected Revenue	Amount
Additional tipping revenue (based on current mix/presentment)	\$1,926,525
Startup (one-time) Costs	Amount
Four (4) New Collection Vehicles	\$2,006,730
New cart purchase + technology	\$487,497
Recurring Costs	Amount
Fleet charges & maintenance	\$249,208
Personnel	\$635,548
Other (311, advertising, promotion)	\$112,619

Peer Cities

- Most of the largest cities in the United States provide some form of franchise-limited service to residents
- 2/3 provide single-hauler service using city staff and equipment
- 1/3 provide single-hauler service via a single private contract or multiple (usually geographically defined) contracts
- Ann Arbor and Lansing both currently use single-hauler program
- East Lansing, Kalamazoo both exploring single-hauler option currently

Recommendation/Next Steps

- Staff will bring forward recommended ordinance changes in December (public hearing in January), which could include any of the following:
 - Establish the City as the sole residential hauler (not inclusive of multifamily >4 units)
 - Establish the City as a qualified hauler, along with a single private alternative (would be competed on a three-year cycle)
 - Maintain the current open system, but establish franchise agreements (would allow for required reporting to ensure all homes have service)
- Initial investments (if required) would come forward in FY27 budget, along with a phased plan for outreach and implementation

A photograph of a city skyline at sunset. In the foreground, a river flows under a multi-arched stone bridge. The bridge has several arches, and the water reflects the warm orange and yellow light of the setting sun. Behind the bridge, there are several buildings. On the left, a tall, modern building with a grid-like facade is partially visible. In the center, a large, curved glass skyscraper stands out, reflecting the sunset. To its left is a shorter, brick building with many windows. To the right, there are more skyscrapers of varying heights. The sky is a clear, pale blue, and the overall atmosphere is calm and scenic. The word "Questions?" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Questions?