

FCSG Statement on Proposed Community Recycling Ordinance

Statement updated on June 29, 2016

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) has reviewed the Work Session Item on the Community Recycling Ordinance (CRO) to be considered by City Council on June 28th. The Work Session Item is available [here](#). We have six concerns about the current version of the CRO. In descending order of importance, those concerns are as follow:

1. Restaurant food scrap composting has been removed from the draft CRO. This component of the ordinance would have contributed 10.1% of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions needed to meet the 2020 Climate Action Plan (CAP) goal and 41% of the tons needed to meet the 2020 Road to Zero Waste (RTZW) waste diversion goal. Staff recommends that this component be considered “in the future.” Council should require staff to set a date in the near future – well before 2020 – for presenting a proposal for restaurant food scrap composting. Doing so is critical if this component of the CRO is to contribute to the CAP and RTZW goals as intended by Council.
2. Single family home yard waste and food scrap composting has also been removed from the draft CRO. This component of the ordinance would have contributed another 7.7% of the GHG emissions reductions needed to meet the 2020 CAP goal and another 41% of the tons needed to meet the 2020 RTZW waste diversion goal. As with the previous item, staff recommends that this component be considered “in the future.” Council should require staff to set a near-term date for presenting a proposal for single family organics composting as well.
3. In connection with the composting of organic materials, staff mentions potential “increased anaerobic digestion capacity at the Drake Water Reclamation Facility.” From a sustainability perspective, this approach would only be acceptable if the organic material generated by restaurants and single family residences were kept separate from the general sewage stream. Otherwise, the new stream of organic material would be contaminated with industrial and other wastes, and would not be suitable for agricultural use.
4. Full implementation of multi-family and commercial recycling has been postponed to 2022. Although these components of the CRO do not impact CAP goals, they do contribute 4.7% of the 2020 RTZW waste diversion goal. Council should require full implementation of multi-family and commercial recycling by 2020.
5. The “incline rate” between trash cart sizes has been reduced from 100% to 75%. Staff expects this change to decrease the residential recycling rate by 1,500 to 2,500 tons per year. While this is relatively small reduction, it is not clear what public purpose is served by making this rate change. Council should direct staff to leave the 100% incline rate in place, while allowing the new “service surcharge” to compensate haulers for variable costs outside of their control.

6. Finally, there appear to be math errors in calculating the “estimated diversion impact” percentages in Attachment 1 for the incline rate change, optional yard trimmings collection, and grocery compost collection. Council should ask staff to check their work and provide corrected percentages where appropriate.

The FCSG appreciates the work staff has put into communicating with Fort Collins trash haulers to gain their input into the new CRO. We support reducing burdens on haulers whenever possible. However, goals set by City Council for the CAP and RTZW programs cannot be compromised to minimize those burdens. We ask that council direct staff to come back with a revised CRO and timeline for additional initiatives that will ensure that the CAP and RTZW goals are not imperiled, and that achievement of those goals can be accomplished in accordance with best sustainability practices.

June 29 update: During its work session on 6/28, council directed staff to:

- a. Provide an update in one year on progress toward finding ways to ensure that restaurant food scraps, residential food scraps, and residential yard waste are all composted.
- b. Require incremental implementation of multi-family and commercial recycling, with full implementation by 2020 (if at all possible) in a revised draft CRO.
- c. Leave the 100% nominal residential trash cart incline rate in place, while allowing for a surcharge to cover haulers’ variable costs in a revised draft CRO.

Staff will revise the CRO as directed and bring it to council for a vote later this year.