

Challenges of Managing Waste in Downtown Areas

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Deanna Dakin

Project Manager, Waste Management



Region of Waterloo

Why are we reviewing our downtown services?

- Responsibility transferred in 2000
 - program remained status quo
 - New curbside collection contract (carts) starts March 2026
 - New regulations
 - Interest from relevant partners
 - Corporate Strategic Plan
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Existing Downtown Service

- Ten distinct downtown areas (1,500 downtown businesses):
 - Cities: six day a week garbage (10 bags) and weekly recycling with enhanced cardboard collection.
 - Townships (except Wellesley) and Belmont Village (Kitchener), receive weekly garbage (10 bags) and weekly recycling.
- No organic collection.
- Material handled regionally.



Challenges

- Service inequity
 - Not all businesses have access to Region service
 - Downtown versus BIA
 - Non-standardized service
- Navigating the two-tier government
- Duplication of services / staff resources
 - 1,500 downtown stops vs 160,000 residential
- Lack of knowledge
 - Program knowledge by participants
 - Volume / frequency / composition of waste
 - Ownership of waste



Service Level Review

- Consultant driven
- Gather data / feedback
 - Online and written surveys, and in-person and virtual meetings
- Complete jurisdictional scan of similar municipalities
- Analyze "typical" waste set-out through surveys
- Draft options for future service provision

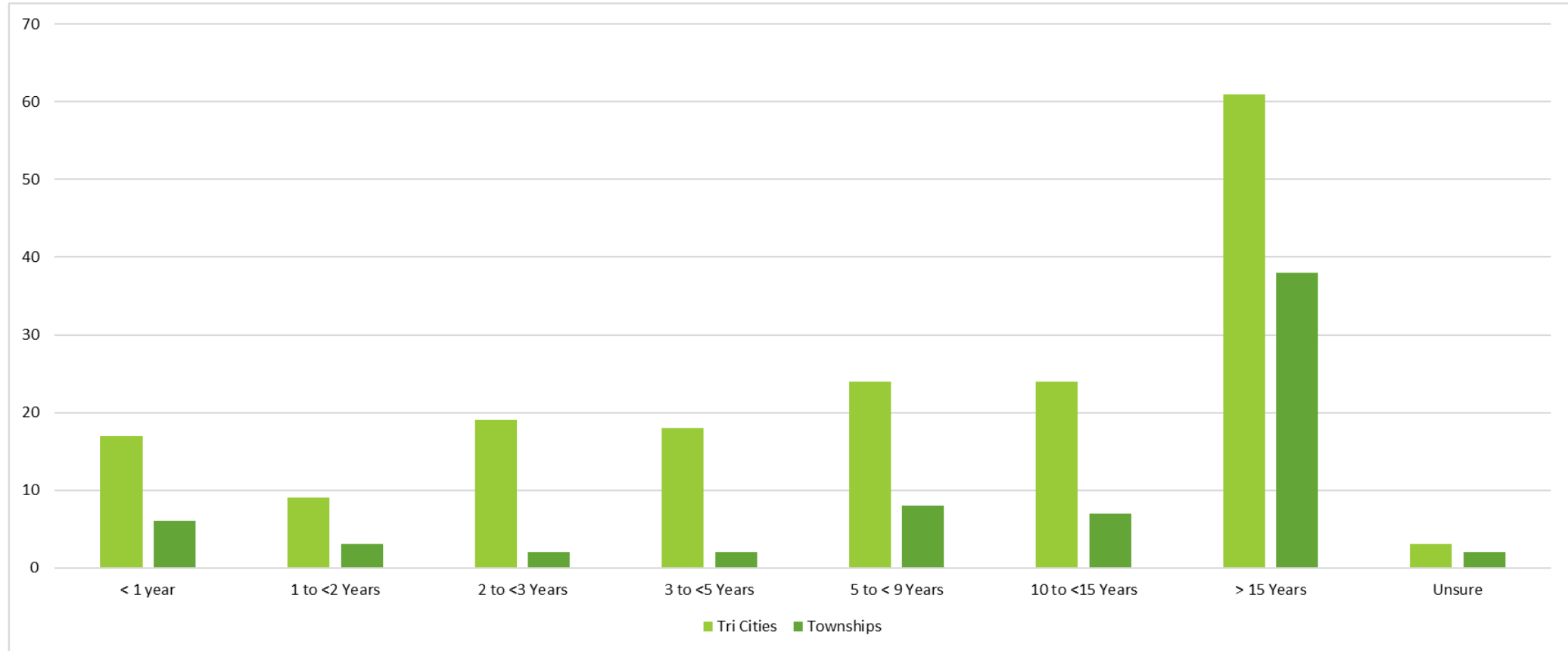


What have we discovered?

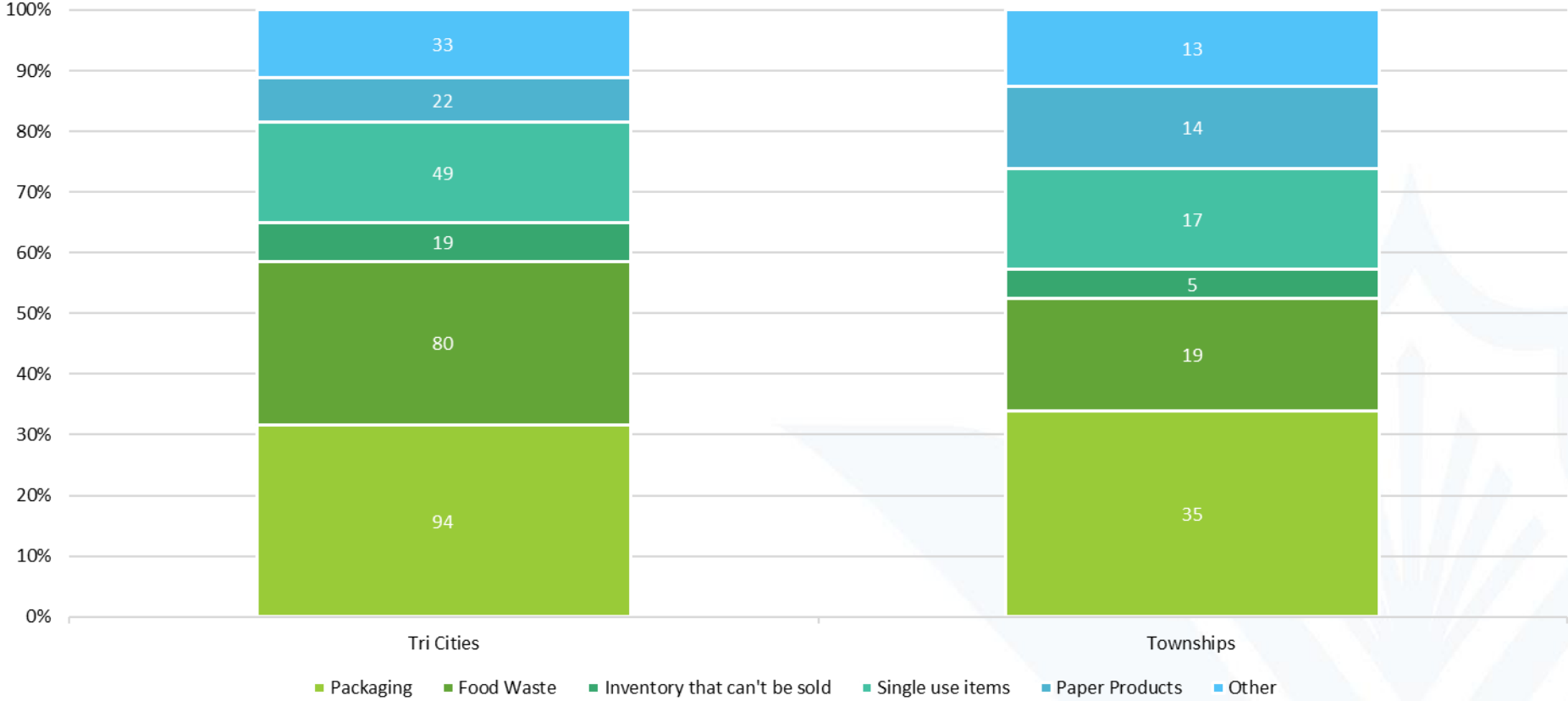
- Top five businesses in downtown areas



Downtown Service – Years of Operation

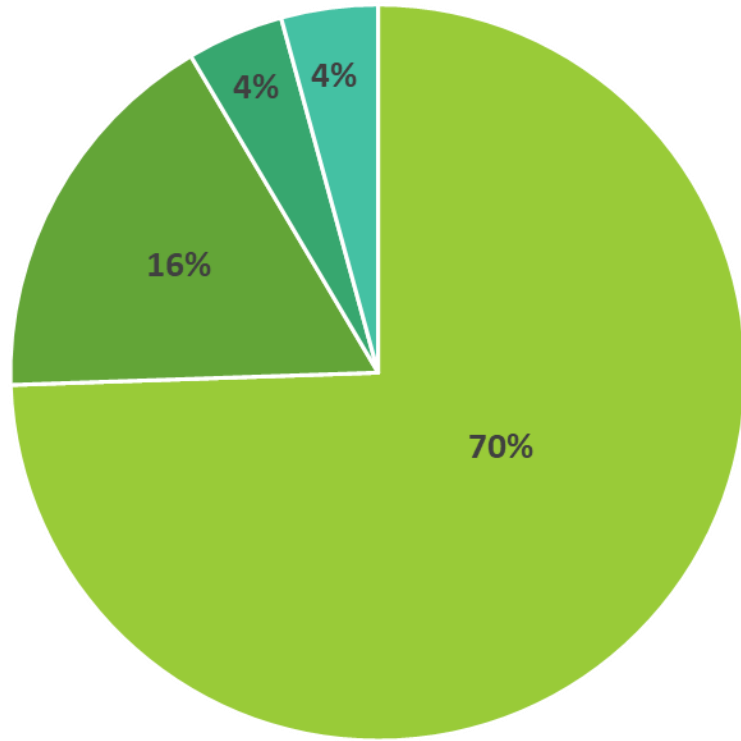


Downtown Waste Composition



Garbage Set out

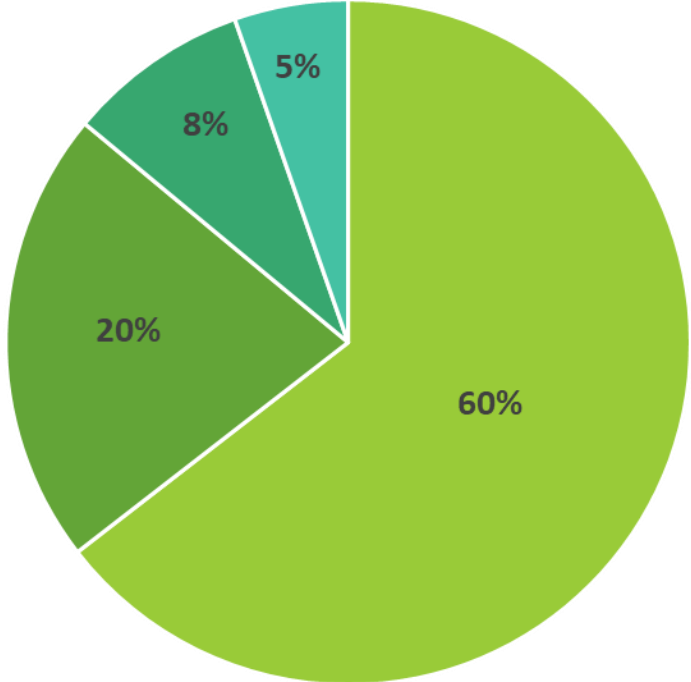
89% of businesses place 3 bags of garbage or less on collection day in the tri-city and townships.



■ 1 Garbage Bag ■ 2 Garbage Bags ■ 3 Garbage Bags ■ 4 Garbage Bags

Recycling Set out

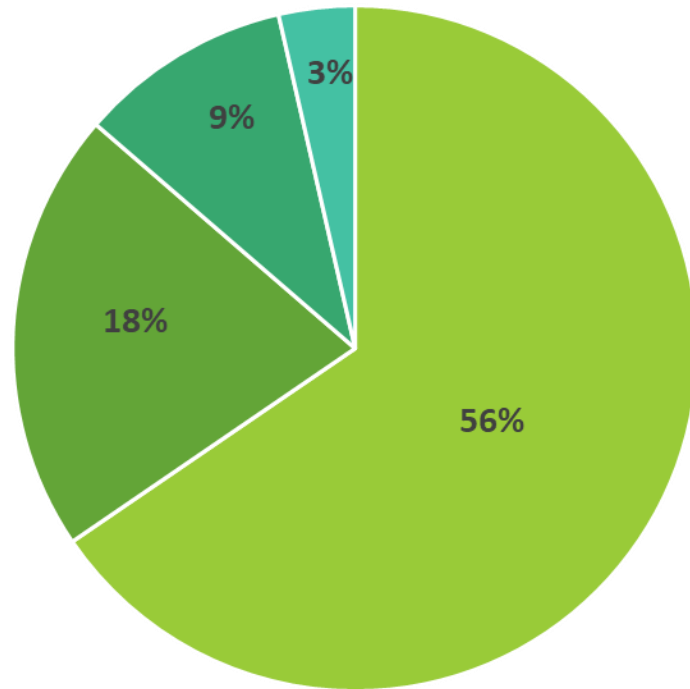
89% of businesses place 3 recycling boxes or less on collection day in the tri-city and townships.



- 1 Recycling box
- 2 Recycling Boxes
- 3 Recycling Boxes
- 4 Recycling Boxes

Cardboard Set Out

83% of businesses place 3 cardboard bundles or less on collection day in the tri-city and townships.



■ 1 Cardboard Bundle ■ 2 Cardboard Bundles
■ 3 Cardboard Bundles ■ 4 Cardboard Bundles

Feedback from interested parties

- Different wants and needs
 - Time of collection
 - Frequency and bag limits
 - Space limitations
- Difficult determining source/volume of waste
- Challenges with compliance / enforcement
- Significant overlap in service provision between Region, Area Municipality, BIA
- Inconsistent communication regarding collection delays or changes due to special events



Opportunities for Improvement

- New collection methodology (carts vs bags) to address some existing concerns (pests, litter, storage)
- Support for waste diversion (recycling AND organics)
- Create a consistent policy for Downtown / BIA collection
 - Expand collection areas to better match BIAs
- Collection days and timing revised to best match set-out/activity patterns (specifically for City BIAs)
- Improved communication to support participation
- Support by-law coordination and enforcement by area municipal by-law groups



Next Steps for the Region of Waterloo

- Develop draft future service level options that may include:
 - Region administered and funded downtown collection
 - Area municipality (BIA) administered service provision with some level of funding provided by Region
 - Shared Region/Area municipality (BIA) administered service provision and funding
- Follow up meetings with interested parties to discuss draft options and obtain feedback
- Report back to Regional Council by mid 2024 for endorsement of future service level in order to plan/implement by January / March 2026

