

Accommodation Strata In-Unit Toolkit Pilot

Summary of Findings

Pilot Background:

A 2012 RMOW audit of Whistler's waste found that of the waste from the commercial and multi-unit accommodation strata properties garbage, 54% of the garbage stream could have been diverted for composting, and an additional 13% could have been recycled. Only 22% of the total waste sent to landfill was actually classified as garbage. These results highlighted that targeted support was needed for this sector of the community if Whistler is to be successful on its journey to become a zero waste community.

Pilot Overview:

The aim of the Accommodation Strata In-Unit Toolkit Pilot was to support improvements to waste diversion rates in the accommodation sector by testing practical tools that could subsequently be utilized in other properties. The pilot goals were to demonstrate increases in recycling in mixed-use properties and to identify the barriers and benefits to occupants diverting waste from landfill. The pilot took a multi-pronged approach:

- Engaging unit owners and occupants on: the need for change within accommodation unit waste systems, the benefits of diverting waste and how changes to the RMOW's Solid Waste Bylaw would create long-term changes to waste management;
- Providing unit occupants with toolkits to support waste segregation within an accommodation unit;
- Outfitting garbage rooms with educational, colour-coded signage, mirroring the new regional approach to signage seen in Metro Vancouver and throughout the SLRD.

Through this project three different toolkits were developed to test in the properties:



**Low Intervention
(Snowberry)**

'Literature Toolkit':
Print materials: education flyer, organics collection mini-poster and information about streams collected on-site.

Guide cost: \$5.00/unit*



**Medium Intervention
(Wintergreen)**

'Labels and Literature Toolkit':
'Literature Toolkit' plus stickers for labeling collection bins. Labels were color coded, pictorial and aligned with garbage room signage.

Guide cost: \$10.00-15.00/unit*



**High Intervention
(Foxglove)**

'Full Bin Toolkit':
'Literature Toolkit' plus pre-labeled bins for garbage, organics and recycling. A high-end organics bin meant it could be on a countertop for ease of access/visibility.

Guide cost: \$20.00-60.00/unit*

*All guide pricing is based on print and production costs and time taken to prepare kits. The variable ranges illustrate that there are a range of options for each toolkit. For example, organics bins range in price from \$7 - \$30 depending on the model selected and supplier.

The Villas accommodations complex consists of three properties, Foxglove, Wintergreen and Snowberry. Each property houses the same number of units with varying property use, including short and long-term rentals, as well as permanent and part-time residents. Each site has its own independent garbage room, which allowed for separate audits of each property and comparative results between the properties.

The three different toolkits were delivered in-person to give unit occupants the chance to ask questions. All toolkits were provided to all units and installed in the properties in a timely manner to create momentum. Once everything had been distributed and installed, bi-monthly waste audits were conducted over the three months pilot (peak season of December – February) to determine the effectiveness of each toolkit by monitoring correctly segregated waste and contamination in each waste stream. Additionally, a survey was conducted towards the end of the pilot project to gain insight into the usage and perceptions of the toolkits from unit occupants.

Summary of Pilot Findings:

Key Outputs – Garbage Room Waste Audit Data

- Waste audits showed that 730Kg of organic food waste was diverted for composting across all properties during the pilot period. The lack of collection facilities for food scraps and organics prior to the pilot would imply this is all new diversion. Continuation of the collection program on this property (with allowance made for slow seasons) should see annual diversion of over 1,866Kg of organic waste from landfill per year.
- Across all three properties there was minimal contamination seen in the food scraps and organics bin, for the entirety of the pilot.
- Across all three properties audits showed there were still high levels of food waste and recycling in the garbage to landfill.
- A 20-30% increase in organics diversion was seen in the properties outfitted with the medium and high intervention toolkits, compared to Snowberry that received the literature toolkit.

Key Outputs – Survey Results

- In the Foxglove property where full bin kits were provided, there was a 100% success rate in installation of the toolkit. All surveyed occupants (visitors or otherwise) recognizing the presence of recycling bins and/or waste segregation information.
- In the Wintergreen property (provided with bin labels and print information) the success rates were also high with 71% of survey respondents highlighting the labels and information were installed in the unit and 75% recognizing the presence of the labeling and waste segregation information.
- Of the occupants who highlighted that recycling and organics bins or information existed within their unit the type of toolkit used impacts how useful people found them.
 - In Snowberry (low intervention toolkit) - only 38% of survey respondents in this property perceived the toolkit provided to them as 'helpful'
 - In Wintergreen (medium intervention toolkit) - 57% of survey respondents in this property perceived the toolkit provided to them as 'helpful'
 - In Foxglove (high intervention toolkit) - 86% of survey respondents in this property perceived the toolkit provided to them as 'helpful'
- Interestingly the proportion of respondents affirming that they were collecting organics was the same for both the high and medium intervention properties, at 86%. In the low intervention property 78% of respondents highlighted they were collecting organics.
- Appendix 1 provides an overview of potential challenges to successful implementation of organics collection. These challenges were discussed during survey and in interviews with pilot stakeholders (property management companies and front line maintenance staff). Each challenge is accompanied by a solution.

Key Recommendations for Replication In Other Properties

- When preparing to launch organics (and possibly recycling for those complexes not already collecting recyclables) be sure to provide all unit owners and occupants with information on the changes being implemented ahead of time. As well as details specific to launch (dates, collection locations, changes people will need to be aware of) provide information on why changing the way waste is managed is important, and provide guidance on materials that will and will not be collected.
! The tools used in the pilot were designed to be non-property specific so they can be used by strata companies and councils looking to implement organics collection.!
- For rental accommodation properties communications of changes will need to include not just owners and strata management companies, but also property rental companies and cleaning contractors.

- At launch, provide a reminder to all stakeholders and ensure there are systems in place to have any supporting tools installed into units and to ensure they are maintained in good condition (e.g. if laminated organics posters are being used in unit they may need to be replaced from time-to-time).
- Adopt the new regional approach to waste signage. Efforts are underway to regionalize signage so that there is consistency from Metro Vancouver all the way to Lillooet. This would mean that a person stood would see the same color coded signage, with pictorial icons, whether they are at a depot, strata complex or in their place of work.
! Signage is available in a range of formats (garbage room / bin labels / etc) for free download !
- Creating consistency in signage from the garbage room into accommodation units supports increased understanding of the streams that are collected in the garbage room and makes it easy to identify 'what goes where'.
- In the context of short-term rentals where visitors may not need to locate the garbage room for the first few days of their stay it is very important that there are clear systems in place in the unit to encourage diversion. In the case of short-term rental results from the pilot survey highlighted that providing the full suite of labeled bins was perceived as being very helpful. In cases where properties are managed as rentals, where owners are remote, or where there is a mix of uses in the property – encouraging a blanket system throughout the property will be important and providing the full labeled bin system means there is consistency for all service staff and unit users.
- Ask your hauler whether bags are acceptable in the organics. There is a lot of confusion around bags, with biodegradable bags being sold as an eco-friendly alternative to plastic. Neither of these can go in the organics bin. If it is determined to allow bags avoid confusion and contamination by providing compostable bags. Bags are available in bulk and with dispenser units.

**All tools from the pilot
 Flyers | Signage | Posters | Information
 are free to download via
www.awarewhistler.org/accommodationwastetools/**

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Additionally, we would like to thank Gateway Property Management for supporting the pilot in the Villas property which they manage, dedicating both staff time and funds to adding organics collection services and changing garbage room infrastructure.

Appendix 1 - Challenges and Solutions To Consider When Implementing In Other Properties

The following is a list of challenges/concerns raised by stakeholders in the pilot and potential solutions to each.

	Challenges	Solution
Housekeeping Protocols	In short term rental properties, cleaning service providers are critical to a successful waste management system. With cleaning companies operating within rapid time frames, segregated waste is sometimes grouped into one bag for ease of transport and not re-separated once it reaches the garbage room. This translates into high levels of recycling and organics contamination in the garbage to landfill that could have otherwise been diverted.	Create a contractual obligation by including a waste segregation amendment in the cleaning contract mandating diversion.
		Potential future support: Develop a waste certification course where companies can send staff to be trained on waste segregation protocols to ensure they understand how to separate waste correctly.
Shared Accountability	The proposed changes to the bylaw focus on ensuring the basic infrastructure required for segregation is in place and that properties are controlling contamination. However, in order for the infrastructure to serve its purpose a behavioral shift at the individual level is also required. The accountability that is prompted in users at the local depots by the depot attendee is absent in the commercial and strata property sector, and instead relies solely on the user to properly sort and segregate waste in the garbage room.	To comply with health and safety regulations and maximize resource recovery, the use of clear garbage bags could be considered by properties. Studies across Canada have shown that switching to clear bags can significantly increase diversion levels. If this route was pursued these bags could also be dispensed in the garbage room.
Limited Space	Limited space and minimal opportunities for expansion of garbage rooms will affect properties in Whistler wishing to expand the number of waste streams collected.	A “Good, the Bad, the Ugly Garbage Room Tour” was organized in the Fall of 2016 to bring this to the attention of community decision makers. The tour resulted in a commitment to streamlining the municipal planning and building process regarding garbage rooms in addition to a lowered cost associated with the development of a parking stall. Information available on whistler.ca
Short Term Renters	Property owners were most concerned with expecting short-term renters to adhere to stricter waste diversion regulations and being left to pay a penalty when they didn't.	Outfitting properties with any of the toolkits tested will help visitors recognize waste streams collected in the property. To maximize likelihood of success the high-intervention toolkit is recommended for short-term accommodations.
		Potential future support: Create an “If your Property is a Rental” Guide
“ick” factor	Concerns surrounding the associated grossness of dealing with organic waste.	Many haulers use liners in garbage room bins to reduce the “ick” factor. Haulers also offer bin-cleaning service for a fee. In-unit Food Scraps and Organics bins can also be lined with certified compostable bags (ASTM D6400), paper--based products, newspaper or alternatively go liner free and use bins that can go in the dishwasher.