

**City of Alexandria, Virginia**  
**FY 2023 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP**  
**Budget Questions & Answers**

**March 28, 2022**

**Question:** Aside from the General Fund impact for non-billable households, are there General Fund resources proposed in the budget to support the costs of trash, recycling, yard waste and leaf collection services? How is the proposed reduction of \$483,853 from the organics expenditure in the Residential Refuse Fund reflected in the services received by residents? What would be the fiscal impact of adding 3-5 additional glass recycling locations in the City? What additional, unfunded, recommendations of the WasteSmart Strategic Plan could be implemented during this fiscal year if additional funding were to be made available? What is the cost to the city to provide paper bags for leaf collection? Do we have any data on the utilization of this program?

**Response:**

For the residential refuse fee, the General Fund is only funding the non-billable households for trash, recycling, yard waste, and leaf collection services.

The reduction of \$483,853 in organics is due to the one-time purchase of two rear loader trucks in FY 2022. The reduction of expenditures does not equate to a reduction of services received by residents.

*Glass Recycling*

Staff does not recommend adding additional glass recycling locations in the City, believing that existing sites are sufficient. At the present time, there are over 40 accessible glass recycling containers in Northern Virginia, with five in the City of Alexandria. City residents can access a purple recycling container within 3 miles, or roughly a ten-minute drive. Glass recycling containers in the City are sited in locations accessible to pedestrians and by transit. Some of these City purple bins are intentionally sited adjacent to other City services including the Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics Recycling Center, Free Mulch Pick-Up Site, Public Recycling Drop-Off Centers, and the MOM's Organic Grocery store so that residents can run multiple errands at once when dropping off glass. Additional glass recycling locations would require additional real estate which possesses enough space to maneuver a roll-off truck, is well-lit, and is not near a residential area due to noise produced. Additional locations would also require an additional roll-off truck and driver. A recent waste sort audit from the recycling facility also showed that the City's glass in the blue recycling bins has steadily decreased to 7.5% in 2021. Glass tonnages at the purple centers have also plateaued over the past year. Both datapoints seem to indicate the sufficiency of existing glass container capacity.

If five additional 40-yd glass purple containers were added to the City, in year 1, the cost would be approximately \$445,000 to hire a Heavy Equipment Operator; purchase a roll-off truck and

five 40-yd roll-off containers; account for truck depreciation, maintenance, and fuel; and communicate the new locations to the public (mailers, labels, signs, etc.). The annual costs following would be approximately \$150,000 a year starting year 2 for the salary of the Heavy Equipment Operator, container maintenance costs, and truck related costs (depreciation, maintenance, and fuel). This does not account for costs related to siting that may be included, for example, acquiring the site, paving, adding electric with sufficient lighting (given drop-off centers are 24/7 and for safety reasons site should be well-lit), street striping, and potentially security cameras for illegal dumping.

*WasteSmart Strategic Plan*

The WasteSmart plan includes short, mid, and long-term action items. The City has implemented multiple short and mid-term items already including a plastic bag tax, glass drop-off centers, and development of an online waste sorting tool and reuse directory. If additional funding were available, staff would recommend expanding a new program offered in the FY 2023 Proposed Budget – food waste curbside collection.

The FY 2023 refuse fee proposes a new, curbside food waste collection pilot program to expand existing composting options. This proposal would implement a WasteSmart mid-term goal of exploring curbside composting to customers and can be implemented for up to 600 customers without a fee increase by using \$50,000 from fund balance. The proposal would match a similar program in Falls Church. The City would pay for the initial start-up fee and the first six months of the service. After the initial six months, the resident would assume the cost (~\$10/month) if they decide to stay with the program. Residents would receive a 5-gallon bucket that is picked up weekly, and every program participant would be collected on a single, designated day each week (e.g. Wednesdays).

**Proposed Option: No Fee Increase, 600 Customers for 6 Months**

Customers	600
x Monthly Fee	\$9.25
x 6 Months	\$33,300
Set-up Cost (\$18/customer)	\$10,800
Communications	\$5,900
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TOTAL	\$50,000

The program is scalable and, based on budget and interest, the City could decrease/increase the costs for the number of months subsidized, number of customers, or start-up fees. For example, if \$10 were added to the refuse fee, the pilot could expand to 2,500 households and cover the first 6 months of curbside composting and start-up fees. The City could also opt to lower the number of customers in the pilot (from 2,500 to 1,500 households) and provide a 12-month subsidy instead of 6 months. Both options include funds dedicated for communications to market the program (e.g. flyers, decals).

**Option 2: \$10 Fee Increase, 2,500 Customers for 6 Months**

Customers	2,500
x Monthly Fee	\$7.82*
x 6 Months	\$117,249
Set-up Cost (\$18/customer)	\$45,000
Communications	\$26,101
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TOTAL	\$188,350

**Option 3: \$10 Fee Increase, 1,500 Customers for 1 Year**

Customers	1,500
x Monthly Fee	\$7.82*
x 12 Months	\$140,699
Set-up Cost (\$18/customer)	\$27,000
Communications	\$20,651
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TOTAL	\$188,350

*\*Monthly fee decreases with higher levels of participation*

*Leaf Collection*

The Leaf Bags purchased in FY 21 were approximately \$32K for a total of 72,000 bags at .445 per bag. Quotes for FY 22 have already been received, and the price of paper has increased making the total closer to \$40K at .5484 per bag. In past years, the number of bags utilized by customers during leaf season typically does not exceed 40% of those purchased and distributed.