

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Corporate Waste Management Strategy

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** April 13, 2026

**Report Number:** CAO 16-26

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

**Submitted by:**

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**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
Chief Administrative Officer**

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#### 1. Recommendation:

1. That Council endorse, in principle, the Corporate Waste Management Strategy;
2. That the Corporate Waste Management Strategy be integrated into departmental work plans; and
3. That Council direct Staff to update the Corporate Waste Management Strategy every five years.

#### 2. Highlights:

- The purpose of this Report is to present to Council the final draft of the Corporate Waste Management Strategy (CWMS) for information and endorsement.
- The CWMS provides a coordinated approach to reduce corporate waste, improve diversion, and support the Town's sustainability and climate action objectives.
- The Strategy aligns with the Zero Carbon Whitby Plan, which targets net-zero corporate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2045 and a zero-waste corporate target by 2040.
- The Town's current waste diversion rate across facilities averages 30%, with key challenges including contamination of diversion streams, inconsistent bin types

and signage, overflowing bins in public spaces, and limited tracking of waste data.

- The Strategy establishes a practical corporate diversion target of 60% by 2040, guided by the waste hierarchy: prevent, reduce, reuse, recycle, recovery, disposal.
- The Strategy includes eight key recommendations covering standardized receptacles and placement, staff and public engagement, policy updates, event guidelines, and conducting regular audits.
- A phased implementation timeline prioritizes infrastructure standardization, training, and policy review between 2026–2029, with later implementation of single-use policies and event guidelines.
- Receptacle design emphasizes color-coded bins, consistent signage, shape-limiting openings, centralized staff sorting stations, and high-visibility placement across facilities and parks.
- Capital funding of \$310,000 has been allocated for phased replacement of facility waste bins, with additional resources considered for public engagement and education.
- The CWMS supports the Town’s Community Strategic Plan Pillar 2: Connected & Resilient Environment, helping to reduce GHG emissions, increase waste diversion, and advance Whitby’s net-zero and zero-waste corporate commitments.

### 3. Background:

The purpose of this report is to present to Council the final draft of the Corporate Waste Management Strategy (CWMS, Strategy) for information and endorsement. The CWMS has been developed using facility waste audit data collected in 2023, together with recommendations from the Zero Carbon Whitby Costing Study, and provides a coordinated approach to reducing corporate waste, improving diversion<sup>1</sup>, and supporting the Town’s sustainability and climate action objectives.

Corporate waste is an important component of the Town’s GHG emissions profile. Waste generated through corporate operations currently contributes approximately 141 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) per year, representing about 2.7% of total corporate GHG emissions. Although this is a relatively small proportion of overall emissions, addressing it is essential to supporting the Town’s broader emissions-reduction efforts and its long-term Zero Carbon goals.

By reducing waste generation, increasing diversion, and improving operational practices, the CWMS directly supports the Town’s efforts to lower corporate GHG emissions and contributes to a more integrated and comprehensive path toward achieving Whitby’s zero-carbon future.

To situate the CWMS within the Town’s broader climate efforts, the next sections outline the overarching commitments that guide corporate GHG emissions reduction.

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<sup>1</sup> Waste diversion refers to the quantity of waste diverted from a landfill or incineration facility.

## **Climate Change Declaration**

In June 2019, Whitby Council became the first Durham municipality to declare climate change an emergency. Through this declaration, Council identified that:

“...to reduce the local and global impacts of climate change Council recognizes the need to strive for a deep reduction in greenhouse gas emissions...Council requests staff to consider climate change as a priority in all activities and works completed across the municipality to strive for a deep reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and to consider the comprehensive and proactive implementation of measures to promote mitigation and resiliency in the face of climate change.”

## **Zero Carbon Whitby Plan**

The Zero Carbon Whitby Plan is intended to serve as the Town's corporate greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation plan and identifies actions to achieve GHG emissions reduction targets. The Plan, which was adopted in March 2021, aims to align capital and operating budgets with GHG emissions reduction targets. The Plan recommends that the Town adopt a net zero corporate GHG emissions target by 2045, with the following interim targets (reductions are to below 2019 levels):

- 20% GHG emissions reduction by 2025;
- 40% GHG emissions reduction by 2030; and,
- 100% GHG emissions reduction by 2045.

To achieve these targets, the Town has identified key areas of focus, including Facilities, Fleet, and Waste.

## **Zero Carbon Whitby Costing Study**

The Town's Zero Carbon Whitby Costing Study, completed in 2022, provides a schedule for projects to be undertaken to complete the Zero Carbon Whitby Plan. The Study set a long-term zero waste target for corporate operations by 2040. It also highlighted the need for a comprehensive waste strategy, supported by annual waste audits and an enhanced diversion program. Through this Study, the actions identified to achieve the target of zero corporate waste by 2040 included:

- Tracking corporate waste volumes by category (e.g., organic waste, recyclables, paper, landfill, etc.). It was noted that each category can be dealt with differently, so gathering basic data about the types and quantities of waste is fundamental to developing an effective waste reduction plan;
- Complete comprehensive waste audits at all major Town-operated facilities and selected smaller facilities to understand types and proportions of waste by facility; and
- Educate staff on waste reduction broadly and support small-scale, continuous improvement initiatives throughout the organization.

## **Facilities Waste Audit 2023**

In 2023, Waste Reduction Group (WRG) was retained by the Town to conduct a waste audit for the following five Town facilities:

- Brooklin Community Centre and Library
- Iroquois Park Sports Centre
- Whitby Operations Centre
- Whitby Municipal Building
- Fire Hall Headquarters

These buildings were selected because, together, they represent a cross-section of the Town's facility types and functions. By including sites that vary in age, building design, service delivery, user groups, and waste-generating activities, the Town was able to develop a comprehensive understanding of waste patterns across multiple facility categories. This strategic sampling approach ensures the findings are broadly applicable and can inform corporate-wide waste reduction and diversion improvements.

Waste materials sampled from the audit included various functional areas, such as hallways and common areas, washrooms, offices, outdoor, and gyms/recreational areas.

### **Current Waste Infrastructure**

The Town currently manages waste across 26 Town-owned and operated facilities, each equipped with a variety of indoor waste, recycling, and organics receptacles that reflect the operational needs and user volumes of each site. The number and types of containers vary significantly by facility with a combined total of several hundred receptacles across the system. For example, major facilities such as Iroquois Park Sports Centre with 135 receptacles, Town Hall with 364 receptacles, the Operations Centre with 212 receptacles, and the Whitby Central Library with 151 receptacles illustrate the scale and diversity of waste infrastructure across the Town's indoor spaces.

Beyond municipally owned buildings, the Town also manages an extensive network of waste receptacles in parks and public spaces. This includes 362 waste bins across local parks and trails, comprising 98 in-ground containers and 264 wire baskets, 134 of which are seasonal. Additionally, in the downtowns of Whitby and Brooklin, the Town maintains 79 streetside waste receptacles.

## **4. Discussion:**

The Town's Corporate Waste Management Strategy (CWMS) serves as an operational blueprint for enhancing waste reduction and diversion across all municipal facilities, Town-managed public spaces, including parks, trails, and areas surrounding Town buildings, as well as at Town-led events.

### **4.1. Key Findings and Current State Review**

The Town's current waste diversion performance across its facilities averages 30%, based on historical waste quantities and waste audit data from 2023.

The current state review identified key gaps in corporate waste management, including contamination of diversion streams, non-standardized bins and signage, and limited diversion options in public spaces:

- Contamination and Lost Diversion: Recyclables and organics, such as food waste and paper towels, are frequently disposed of in the garbage stream.
- Inconsistent Infrastructure: Varied bin types and unclear signage create confusion and reduce proper sorting.
- Staff and Public Skepticism: Concerns about whether separated materials are truly diverted reduce participation.

#### **4.2. Surveys, Staff Consultation, and Jurisdictional Scan**

Consultation with Town staff identified several key areas for improvement in waste management. High contamination in recycling streams was attributed to inconsistent signage and general uncertainty among staff and the public regarding proper sorting. Staff also emphasized the importance of mandatory training and educational campaigns to promote a culture of sustainability among both employees and the public. Section 6 provides a detailed discussion of staff and public consultation feedback and insights.

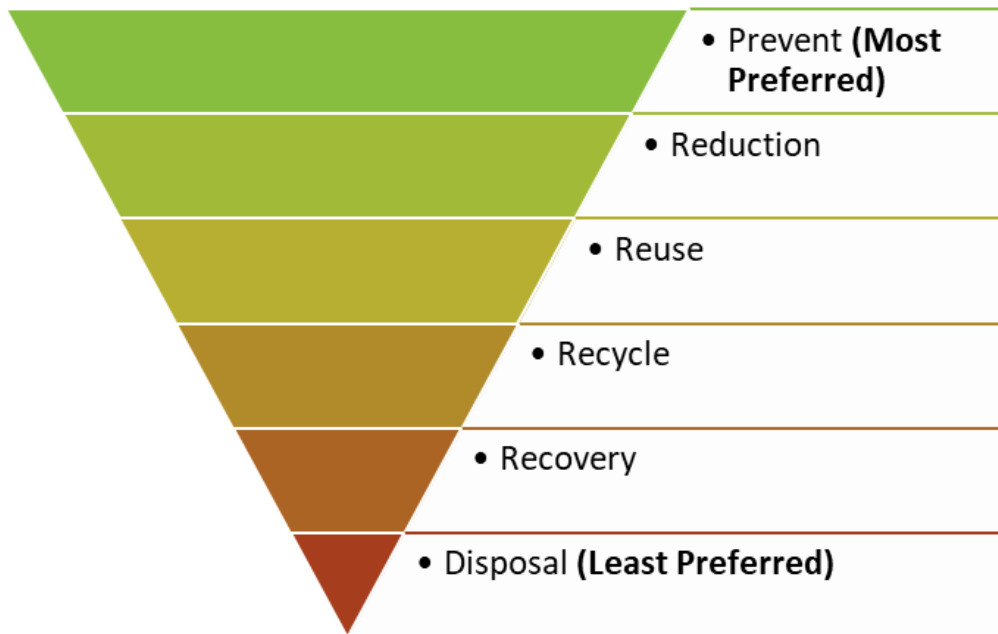
A jurisdictional scan of municipalities across Ontario and Canada highlighted best practices in corporate and public space waste management, including standardized multi-stream receptacles, clear signage, centralized bin placement, staff training, and phased implementation. Leading municipalities also emphasize regular waste audits, targeted diversion of high-volume streams such as organics and dog waste, and pilot programs to test innovative approaches. These insights helped inform the CWMS by providing proven, practical actions to improve diversion, reduce contamination, and support the Town's broader sustainability and climate objectives.

#### **4.3. Strategy Goals and Recommendations**

The Town's "zero waste by 2040" Council-adopted target serves as a guiding principle for environmental leadership, driving the transition toward a circular economy. However, zero waste is meant to guide our decisions, not serve as a literal measure. Even though it suggests eliminating all garbage, it's really an aspiration that helps steer continuous improvement. It would require 100% recovery of all divertible materials with markets to reuse and recycle and 100% diversion from disposal (i.e., zero waste disposal).

To translate this vision into a functional operational plan, the Strategy establishes a practical goal of a 60% diversion rate by 2040. This target is grounded in the Town's current baseline and starting point of the Strategy. It considers existing infrastructure, budgetary limits, resource and staff capacity and the Town's current diversion rate. This practical approach provides an ambitious yet fiscally responsible and achievable pathway, enabling measurable progress while remaining within the Town's operational capacity and budget constraints.

The CWMS presents a series of recommendations organized according to the waste reduction hierarchy, listed in order of preferred action as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 - Waste Reduction Hierarchy**

The recommendations were evaluated based on their potential impacts on waste diversion, to ensure alignment with the targeted diversion rate of 60% by 2040, as well as their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction potential, operational implications (e.g., staffing requirements), and financial considerations. Based on this evaluation, eight priority recommendations were identified, and a phased implementation timeline was developed to support their rollout.

The recommendations focus on standardizing infrastructure, implementing source reduction policies, and increasing engagement and transparency. The eight priority recommendations are as follows:

- **Recommendation #1: Procure and Implement Standardized Receptacles** - This recommendation calls for the Town to adopt standardized, three-stream waste receptacles across all facilities, featuring consistent colours and signage aligned with North American and Town household waste standards. This ensures users can easily identify recycling, organics, and garbage streams, improving sorting accuracy and overall diversion.
- **Recommendation #2: Adopt Standardized Receptacle Placement Guidelines** - This involves developing clear placement guidelines for where receptacles should be located to support proper waste sorting, such as replacing deskside garbage bins with centralized sorting stations.
- **Recommendation #3: Review the Corporate Procurement Policy** - This recommendation focuses on strengthening the procurement policy to prioritize waste prevention, reuse, and diversion. Updates may include encouraging reuse of existing assets, requiring durable and repairable products, and incorporating recycled content or recyclability criteria into procurement decisions.
- **Recommendation #4: Develop and Implement a Corporate Single Use Policy** - This policy would limit the use and purchase of single-use items—such

as bottled water, disposable cutlery, and single-use coffee pods—by switching to reusable or bulk alternatives. The policy would also outline processes and facility adjustments needed to support the transition to low-waste operations.

- **Recommendation #5: Implement a Staff Engagement Waste Training Program** - This includes developing staff training modules and internal engagement campaigns grounded in behavioural insights and community-based social marketing. Activities may include educational workshops, recognition programs, internal swaps, tours of waste facilities, and ongoing communication to build a culture of zero waste.
- **Recommendation #6: Implement Enhanced Public Engagement and Education** - This recommendation emphasizes creating a public outreach campaign using consistent signage, social media messaging, events, contests, and tools like the Waste Buddy App. Public-facing facilities offer opportunities to model and encourage good sorting practices, such as hosting “Book Swaps” or “Sports Equipment Swaps.”
- **Recommendation #7: Enhance Event Waste Management Guidelines** - This involves strengthening the Special Event User Guide to include clear waste diversion requirements - such as mandatory three-stream sorting stations and guidance on acceptable food service ware. The Town would also develop consistent guidelines for internal Town events and explore opportunities to elevate guidelines into requirements.
- **Recommendation #8: Conduct Regular Waste Audits and Monitoring** - Regular audits will help identify common sorting issues, track progress, and guide refinement of education and engagement initiatives. While annual audits are ideal, audits may be conducted on a rotating schedule to balance staff workload. The Town can also train staff to perform visual or formal audits to support ongoing monitoring.

#### 4.4. Strategy Implementation and Next Steps

The Strategy’s phased approach for the first five years of implementation, outlined in Table 1, prioritizes the standardization of waste infrastructure, the development of training and engagement programs (Recommendations #1, #2 #5, and #6), and the review of an existing Town policy (Recommendation #3) for implementation between 2026 and 2029. Subsequent actions, including the development of a Corporate Single-Use Policy (Recommendation #4), enhancements to Event Guidelines (Recommendation #7), and ongoing waste audits (Recommendation #8), are scheduled for 2028–2029.

**Table 1. Phased Implementation of Priority Recommendations**

**Legend:**

PP: Planning Period	PP+IP: Planning & Implementation
IP: Implementation Period	M+M: Maintenance & Monitoring

Recommendations Name	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>R1:</b> Procure and Implement Standardized Receptacles	PP + IP	PP+IP	IP	IP	IP
<b>R2:</b> Adopt Standardized Receptacle Placement Guidelines	PP+IP	IP	IP	M+M	M+M
<b>R3:</b> Review the Corporate Procurement Policy	PP + IP	M+M	M+M	M+M	M+M
<b>R4:</b> Develop and Implement a Corporate Single Use Policy		PP + IP	IP	IP	M+M
<b>R5:</b> Implement a Staff Engagement and Training Program	PP	IP	IP	M+M	M+M
<b>R6:</b> Implement Enhanced Public Engagement and Education	PP	IP	IP	IP	M+M
<b>R7:</b> Enhance Event Waste Management Guidelines			PP + IP	IP	M+M
<b>R8:</b> Conduct Regular Waste Audits and Monitoring		PP + IP	IP	IP	M+M

**5. Financial Considerations:**

One of the most significant cost drivers identified in the Strategy is the standardization of waste receptacles across all municipal facilities. Annual capital funding has been allocated through the Asset Management Reserve Fund since 2023 under Project #55237610 – ALL – Facilities Waste Container Replacement. To date, a total budget of \$310,000 has been approved for this initiative.

Approximately a third of these funds have been utilized to procure and install new waste bins at the Fieldgate Sports Complex. The remaining balance will be used to initiate the phased replacement of existing facility waste bins to align with the standardized bin design adopted at the Fieldgate Sports Complex, ensuring consistency in waste management infrastructure across all municipal sites.

Additional funding of \$50,000 annually to support the continued replacement of waste bins across all facilities has been incorporated into the 10-Year Capital Forecast until all facilities are equipped with the standardized design adopted.

While the majority of the remaining recommendations identified in the Strategy are anticipated to be completed by existing staff - potentially leveraging Waste Services staff requiring modified duties to support implementation - it is recommended that Waste Services explore the opportunity to hire a co-op student to enhance public engagement and education efforts. This option will be further reviewed as part of the 2027 budget planning process.

## **6. Communication and Public Engagement:**

To inform the development of the Corporate Waste Management Strategy, the Town undertook a comprehensive consultation process with both the public and internal staff.

### **6.1. Public Engagement**

An online public survey was available on the Town's website from July 15 to August 8, 2025, receiving over 1,300 responses. The survey assessed residents' awareness of waste prevention, reduction, and diversion, and gathered feedback on waste management practices in Town facilities, parks, and public spaces. Responses related exclusively to the residential waste stream were excluded from this Strategy.

Key themes from the public consultation included:

- **Strong Public Interest in Diversion:** Residents expressed a clear willingness to support improved diversion efforts. Many indicated they already recycle, compost, and participate in litter clean-ups.
- **Desire for Improved Infrastructure:** Residents expect multi-stream (garbage, recycling, compost) options wherever garbage bins are provided and identified gaps in bin availability, maintenance, and placement.
- **Concerns Regarding Contamination and Trust:** There is significant skepticism about whether separated waste is properly diverted. Confusion due to inconsistent rules across municipalities and limited transparency regarding post-collection processing were also noted.
- **Education and Communication Gaps:** Respondents identified the need for clearer, more visual, and standardized signage, as well as broader outreach through schools, community events, and digital platforms.
- **Policy and Enforcement Opportunities:** Suggestions included stronger enforcement against littering and illegal dumping, requirements for waste diversion at public events and commercial properties, and reduction of single-use materials.

## 6.2. General Staff Engagement

An online survey of Town and Library staff identified both strengths and challenges in corporate waste management. Strengths included multi-stream bins in facilities, hazardous waste drop-off options, dedicated operational staff, and sustainability-conscious policies. Key challenges were high contamination in recycling and compost streams, inconsistent bin types and signage, overflowing receptacles, limited tracking of bin data, and reliance on single-use items. Opportunities highlighted included standardized bin systems, enhanced staff training, updated policies, improved infrastructure (e.g., bottle-filling stations, pet waste pilots), stronger event waste requirements, and formalized data monitoring. Overall, contamination and misuse of public bins were consistent and significant concerns.

## 7. Input from Departments/Sources:

In addition to the general staff survey, targeted interviews were conducted with the following departments, providing insight into current operational practices, strengths of the existing system, and key barriers to improved diversion performance:

- Parks
- Facilities
- Creative Communities (Events)

## 8. Strategic Priorities:

The Corporate Waste Management Strategy directly advances Pillar 2 of the Community Strategic Plan, “Whitby’s Natural & Built Environment – Connected & Resilient,” particularly Objective 2.1: Demonstrate environmental leadership in sustainability and addressing climate change. Through the implementation of this Strategy, the Town will increase overall waste diversion and reduce GHG emissions associated with waste, ensuring that Whitby continues to lead in sustainability and climate mitigation.

Specifically, the Strategy supports the implementation of the Zero Carbon Whitby Plan and the Town’s net-zero corporate emissions target by 2045. Achieving net-zero carbon will require emissions reductions across all operational areas, including waste. The Zero Carbon Whitby Costing Study further highlights the need for comprehensive waste audits, improved tracking of waste streams, and enhanced diversion programming.

The Corporate Waste Management Strategy directly advances these recommendations by establishing a realistic corporate diversion target of 60% by 2040, supported through phased implementation and ongoing performance monitoring. By aligning infrastructure replacement and operational practices with climate objectives and measurable diversion targets, the Strategy positions waste reduction as a critical and practical component of Whitby’s pathway toward achieving its net-zero and zero waste commitments.

**9. Attachments:**

**Attachment 1 – Corporate Waste Management Strategy**