

January 24, 2025

Councilmember Joy Hollingsworth
Chair, Parks, Public Utilities, and Technology Committee
City of Seattle
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Dear Councilmember Hollingsworth and Committee Members,

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) has carefully reviewed the proposed amendments to section 23.54.040 of Seattle Municipal Code to modernize and improve solid waste storage, access, collection, and safety. Updating this ordinance is timely and necessary as Seattle makes every effort to build more housing and serve more residents and businesses.

SWAC is writing to express our support and encourage Council to consider the proposed legislation for the following reasons:

Safety

Members of this council include the contracted solid waste collection companies that service all city of Seattle residents and businesses. We strongly support that the city codify well-established, national safety standards for truck operation and driver safety. This ordinance provides clarity for the sizes and weights of dumpsters that can and cannot be moved by drivers as well as the type of vehicle required to service containers of different sizes and weights (i.e., front loading truck, rear loading truck, etc.). We are also pleased to see that this update will state the maximum slope on which dumpsters may be staged for service or serviced.

Customer and Contractor Efficiency

Developers will benefit from the definitions this revision will provide, including important distinctions between “staging”, “storage”, and “collection” locations, as well as making it clear that mixed-use buildings may share solid waste rooms, a commonsense practice appreciated by the development community.

We also think that this could improve residential customer experience since more efficient collection could reduce interruptions and keep fees reasonable in support of improving housing affordability in Seattle. In addition, the SWAC committee admired the level of stakeholder engagement that SPU conducted with other architects, developers, and solid waste collectors and city partner departments like SDOT and SDCI, to make much needed improvement to existing code.

Meet waste reduction goals

We are excited to see the code include language requires containers for all three waste streams – compost, recycling, and garbage – be located together in solid waste storage rooms, rather than allowed to be in different places. National studies, in addition to Seattle’s own research, clearly indicate that proximity of and efficient access to containers for residential customers results in

cleaner compost and more recycling, both of which contribute directly to SPU's Strategic Business Plan, which heavily prioritizes zero waste policies, and Seattle's climate goals.

In addition, we strongly support the inclusion of all development zones in 23.54.040. This will contribute to consistency in solid waste storage and access across the city for new developments, which will improve collection efficiency over time. In turn, that efficiency will help the Solid Waste line of business continues to maintain a sustainable rate path for SPU customers as well as continue to provide a high standard of service to all residents and businesses.

Finally, we recognize the need for common sense flexibility for certain development standards and thus we support the continued option to seek a Type 1 decision when necessary to modify the standards of this improved section of Seattle Municipal Code.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and recommendation.

Sincerely,



Aleema Gray, Chair, SWAC

SWAC is one of Seattle Public Utilities' Community Advisory Committees. Its members are appointed by the SPU CEO/General Manager. It is administered and staffed by SPU. This letter reflects the opinions of Committee Members, independent of SPU.

Cc:

Marco Lowe, Chief Operation Officer, Mayor's Office

Andrew Lee, General Manager/CEO, Seattle Public Utilities

Jeff Fowler, SPU Deputy Director, Solid Waste Line of Business

Susan Fife-Ferris, Director, Planning & Program Management Division, SPU Solid Waste Division