

# 2026 Proposed Budget Change

## Yard Waste Management Program Modification Options After FAC Feedback

Financial Affairs Committee  
October 21, 2025





# Current Yard Waste Management Program | Curbside Collection & Drop-off

- Curbside Collection Services
  - Mid-April through mid-October
    - Every other week collection
    - Average of 13 collections per year
  - 10 bags or bundles each collection day
  - 50-pound weight limit
  - Approximately 1,400 tons collected annually
- Drop-off Center
  - Users pay an annual (\$20) or single use (\$5) fee
  - Approximately 1,500 tons of yard waste dropped off annually



# Yard Waste Collection Program Changes| Why Now?



## Funding

Budget challenges continue to push our team to look for opportunities to reduce expenditures. Changes to yard waste collection has been discussed for many years as a potential levy reduction opportunity.



## Productivity

Current collection program utilizes multiple full time public works employees that could be reassigned to more critical work.



## Safety

The yard waste collection program exposes employees to activities that have a greater risk of injury vs. many other public works functions.



## Equipment

Current refuse trucks used for this operation are past the end of their useful life and equipment reserve funds are not available for replacement.

# Yard Waste Collection Program Changes| Alternatives & Process

- A detailed alternatives analysis was presented to the Community Affairs Committee (CAC) on May 13, 2025. CAC and Community comments were utilized to prepare the final proposed alternative that is now included in the 2026 Budget Proposal.
  - Alternatives Presented to CAC in May:
    - No changes to current program
    - Shortened bi-weekly collection (May through August)
    - Spring and Fall collections
    - Spring collection plus optional subscription service
    - No curbside collection program
- At the October 7th Financial Affairs Committee discussion was had regarding possible alternatives to what is included in the 2026 proposed Budget.
  - This presentation includes three alternatives:
    - 2026 Budget Option
    - Financial Affairs Committee Proposed Option
    - Modified Free Collection and Subscription Model



## **Yard Waste Collection Program|** Comparable Program Service Levels

A survey was completed of the following 23 communities, which have similar populations and/or are located in the metro area:

Appleton

Beloit

Brookfield

Butler

Eu Claire

Elm Grove

Fond Du Lac

Green Bay

Greenfield

Janesville

Kenosha

Madison

Manitowoc

Menomonee Falls

Milwaukee

New Berlin

Oshkosh

Racine

Shorewood

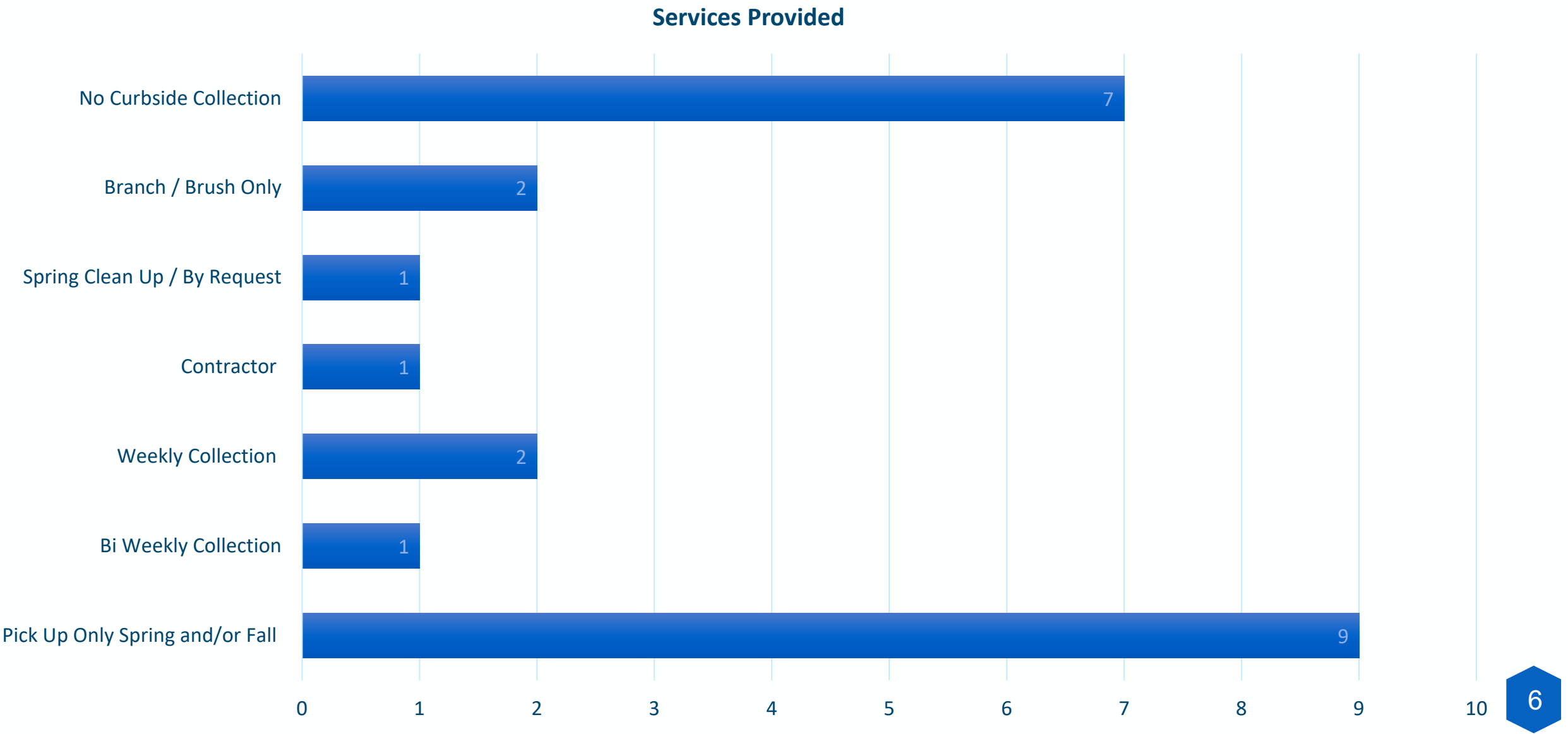
Waukesha

Wausau

West Allis

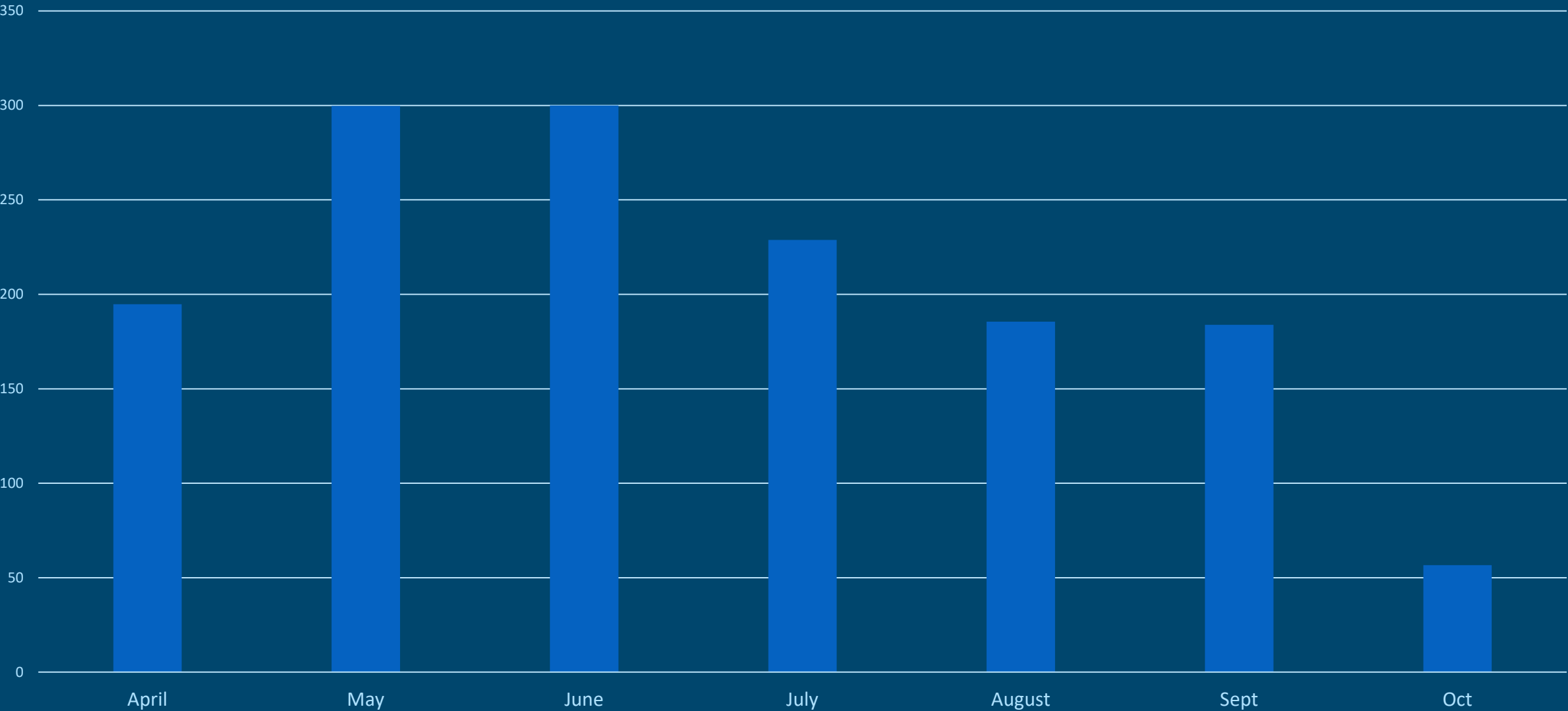
Whitefish Bay

# Yard Waste Collection Program| Comparable Program Service Levels



# Current Yard Waste Collection Program| Collection Volume

Five Year Average Monthly Tons Collected





# Yard Waste Management Program | Continued Challenge

- Age of rear load refuse trucks continues to be a significant challenge
  - The City's fleet consists of five rear load refuse trucks ranging from 18-20 years old
  - Trucks are used for yard waste collection, leaf collection, and large debris removal such as the flood debris cleanup this summer
  - These trucks are not budgeted in the fleet reserve so other funds are needed to replace them
  - Equipment repair costs continue to climb
    - Significant repairs are being made to two packers after the flood debris pick-up
    - The ejector blades, braces, and hydraulic cylinders are wearing out after many years of service
    - May not be able to compact effectively going forward
  - Replacement trucks will likely cost as much as \$400,000 and we recommend replacement very soon





# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Curbside Collection & Drop-off

## Option #1- Contained in 2026 Budget

- Curbside Collection Services
  - Mid-April through end of September
    - Once a month collection
    - Six collections per household per year
      - This was selected following Committee and Senior Commission feedback that a longer season with fewer collections would be preferred over a shortened season.
  - Offer 96-gallon option to purchase yard waste carts for a one time fee of \$85.00
    - More capacity and increased weight limit (200 lbs vs. 50 lbs for bags/bundles)
    - No need to bundle brush inside the cart
    - Easier set out with wheeled carts
    - No container labeling required
    - Cleaner curbside appearance
    - Similar to current refuse and recycling carts, the City will repair lids and wheels for no cost and replacement carts will be available for purchase
    - Reduced likelihood for workplace injuries because the truck will lift the carts utilizing hydraulics instead of employees having to manually lift debris into the truck.
  - 12 bags/bundles/cart each collection day
- Drop-off Center
  - Users will no longer be charged a fee for yard waste disposal at the drop-off center

# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Positive Outcomes

## Option #1- Contained in 2026 Budget

- Positive Outcomes of Proposed Program Changes
  - Yard waste disposal at Drop-off Center will now be free for residents
  - Yard waste carts will now be available for purchase and maintained by the City
  - Reduction in annual truck distance driven by approximately 3,000 miles
    - This will reduce fuel consumption by nearly 1,100 gallons annually
    - Annual greenhouse gas emissions from City trucks will be reduced by approximately 24,400 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)
    - Reduced truck usage may lead to reduced breakdowns/repairs
  - Increased number of allowable items set out to twelve (12)
  - Increased likelihood of resident on-site composting
  - Reduced likelihood for workplace injuries due to reduced number of collection cycles and increased cart utilization
  - General Levy Reduction of \$67,171 in total annual program costs
    - \$3,000 reduction in diesel fuel costs
    - \$64,171 reduction in general levy salary and benefits
      - Moving these expenses to the Stormwater Utility will allow staff to focus on storm water management activities such as street sweeping, catch basing cleaning, green alley maintenance, and storm sewer televising, all of which improve water quality and help reduce likelihood of localized flooding.

# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Challenges


## Option #1- Contained in 2026 Budget

- Program Modification Challenges
  - Once a month collection will result in some residents having to store, compost, and/or remove their yard waste via another option
  - Limited additional revenue means truck replacements will still need to be funded via capital program and/or general levy support



# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Curbside Collection & Drop-off

## Option #2- Financial Affairs Committee Proposed Option

- Curbside Collection Services
  - May through end of August
    - Bi-weekly collection (opposite of recycling weeks)
    - Eight collections per year
  - Require purchase of a 96-gallon yard waste cart for a one time fee to cover cost of new trucks
    - All material must be placed in the cart/s, nothing will be picked up outside of a cart
      - City would offer repair of these carts but replacements would be at the property owner's expense
    - Cost of carts would vary depending on number of households opting into program
      - Goal is to pay for initial allocated truck replacement cost of \$800,000 (plus interest) through cart sales
        -  If we assume 5,000 carts are sold, we would have to charge a one-time fee of \$300.76
        - If we assume 2,500 carts are sold, we would have to charge a one-time fee of \$516.52
        - If we assume 1,000 carts are sold, we would have to charge a one-time fee of \$1,163.79
      - This approach would not be a continued source of revenue so we would need to fund future truck replacements with the general tax levy
    - Same cart benefits mentioned in Option #1 plus substantially less likelihood of employee injury because no items would be collected outside of the carts.
- Drop-off Center
  - Users will no longer be charged a fee for yard waste disposal at the drop-off center

# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Positive Outcomes

## Option #2- Financial Affairs Committee Proposed Option

- Positive Outcomes of Proposed Program Changes
  - Yard waste disposal at Drop-off Center will now be free for residents
  - Yard waste carts will now be available for purchase and maintained by the City
  - Cart sales would offset purchase price of new rear loader trucks (though not future replacements)
  - Reduction in annual truck distance driven by approximately 2,100 miles
    - This will reduce fuel consumption by nearly 775 gallons annually
    - Annual greenhouse gas emissions from City trucks will be reduced by approximately 17,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>
    - Reduced truck usage may lead to reduced breakdowns/repairs
  - Increased likelihood of resident on-site composting
  - Reduced likelihood for workplace injuries due to reduced number of collection cycles and cart utilization
  - General Levy Reduction of \$40,300 in total annual program costs
    - \$2,300 reduction in diesel fuel costs
    - \$38,000 reduction in general levy salary and benefits
      - Moving these expenses to the Stormwater Utility will allow staff to focus on storm water management activities such as street sweeping, catch basing cleaning, green alley maintenance, and storm sewer televising, all of which improve water quality and help reduce likelihood of localized flooding.

# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Challenges

## Option #2- Financial Affairs Committee Proposed Option

- Program Modification Challenges
  - Reduced collection duration will result in some residents having to store, compost, and/or remove their yard waste via another option
  - Requiring a cart will be a burden on those who have space constraints on their property and/or only want to set out once or twice per year
  - Limiting residents to items that only fit in their cart will significantly reduce the volume they can put out at one time. This will result in less seasonal volume set out than Option #1
  - One time revenue from cart purchases means only initial truck replacement will be funded. We would still need to be fund future trucks via capital program and/or general levy support
  - Cart cost is high due to truck replacements being funded through program
  - Will not be able to implement until 2027 given lead time on resident communication, cart sign-up, and cart ordering and delivery
  - Start of levy reduction will be delayed



# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Curbside Collection & Drop-off

## Option #3- Modified Free Collection and Subscription Model

- Free Curbside Collection Service
  - Offer free curbside collection once in May and once in mid/late Summer
    - All residential properties that currently receive service would be allowed to set out items like they do now for one collection in May and one collection in mid/late Summer and increase number of items to twelve
    - Remaining items can be placed in the street once leaf collection begins in October
    - No cost to residents who elect to only use this option
- Subscription Service Offered
  - Offer a fee based additional service June through end of September
    - Cart provided by the City as part of annual fee
    - Bi-weekly collection (opposite of recycling weeks)
    - Eight collections per year
    - More details on next slide
- Drop-off Center
  - Users will no longer be charged a fee for yard waste disposal at the drop-off center

# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Curbside Collection & Drop-off

## Option #3- Modified Free Collection and Subscription Model (continued)

- Subscription Service Offered (continued)
  - Require use of a 96-gallon yard waste cart for an annual fee
  - Material would be placed in the cart/s plus an addition five bags or bundles outside the cart
  - Utilize subscription fees to pay for annual subscription program costs totaling \$231,953
    - Pay for initial allocated truck replacement cost of \$800,000 plus interest
    - Pay for annual depreciated costs so trucks can be replaced in perpetuity without general fund support
    - Pay for staff costs and fuel to further reduce general levy support
    - Pay for the cost of the carts, including repair and replacements
  - Cost of annual subscription would vary depending on number of households opting into program
    - If we assume 5,000 homes opt in we would have to charge an annual fee of \$52.06
    - If we assume 2,500 homes opt in we would have to charge an annual fee of \$98.45
    - If we assume 1,000 homes opt in we would have to charge an annual fee of \$237.62
    - This approach would be a continued source of revenue so we would permanently reduce the tax levy support needed for the program
- Same benefits mentioned in Option #1 plus less pressure on the general levy



# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Positive Outcomes

## Option #3- Modified Free Collection and Subscription Model

- Positive Outcomes of Proposed Program Changes
  - Yard waste disposal at Drop-off Center will now be free for residents
  - Subscription is optional so no additional cost to those who don't want the service
  - Subscribers would have yard waste carts that would be maintained by the City
  - Subscription fees would perpetually pay for carts and replacement of allocated costs of trucks, labor, & fuel
  - Reduction in annual truck distance driven by approximately 3,750 miles (assumes 5,000 subscribers)
    - This will reduce fuel consumption by nearly 1,375 gallons annually
    - Annual greenhouse gas emissions from City trucks will be reduced by approximately 30,500 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>
    - Reduced truck usage may lead to reduced breakdowns/repairs
    - Calculations above will vary based on the number and location of subscribers
  - Increased likelihood of resident on-site composting
  - Reduced likelihood for workplace injuries due to reduced number of collection cycles and increased cart utilization
  - **Annual General Levy Savings of \$272,703**
    - Reduction of \$117,000 in general levy salary and benefits now paid by Storm Utility or Subscribers
    - Allocated truck replacement cost of \$71,953 avoided being added to levy (principal and interest on 15 year loan)
    - Allocated truck depreciation cost of \$80,000 avoided being added to the levy
    - \$3,750 reduction in diesel fuel costs
      - All assumes subscribers pay for all fees allocated to subscription program, it's difficult to predict number of participants



# Proposed Yard Waste Management Program | Challenges

## Option #3- Modified Free Collection and Subscription Model

- Program Modification Challenges
  - Reduced free collection options will result in some residents having to store, compost, and/or remove their yard waste via another option if they decide not to opt in to subscription model
  - Requiring a cart for subscription portion will be a burden on those who have space constraints on their property
  - Administratively challenging, will require perpetual office support beyond current program
  - Will not be able to implement until 2027 given lead time on resident communication, subscription sign-up, and cart ordering and delivery
  - Start of levy reduction will be delayed

