

BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to Council's request for Administration to investigate Beverage Container Drop-Off Depots, or bottle depots, and explore opportunities to increase the number of land use districts in the land use bylaw (LUB) where bottle depots are listed. Bottle Depots are important because they support recycling, but they can also cause an increase in local vehicle traffic, impact the operation of other uses due to loading needs, and create aesthetic issues due to outdoor storage.

The standards established by the Beverage Container Management Board (BCMB) suggest there is a shortage in the number of bottle depots in Calgary. A consultant's report, just recently received by Administration, proposes that Council consider increasing the number of land use districts that list bottle depots and providing for alternative service models.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Planning and Urban Development recommend that Council direct Administration to bring forward a report with amendments to the LUB that may include:

1. Listing Beverage Container Drop-Off Depot in the Commercial - Corridor 2 (C-COR2) and Commercial – Community 2 (C-C2) districts;
2. Listing Beverage Container Drop-Off Depots as permitted uses in districts where they are currently discretionary;
3. Rules concerning bottle storage and management of Beverage Container Drop-Off Depots;
4. New Use definitions to accommodate emerging service models;
5. Bring forward any required land use bylaw amendments to Calgary Planning Commission by 2014 October.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2014 MAY 07:

That the Administration Recommendations contained in Report PUD2014-0333 be approved.

Opposition to Recommendations:

Opposed: R. Pootmans

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2013 January 04, Council directed Administration through NM 2013-04 "to work with representatives from the Beverage Container Management Board (BCMB) to bring forward recommendations to Council on potential amendments to the Land Use Bylaw through Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development with a goal of increasing the number of districts that allow beverage container drop-off depots to more closely align with the Municipal Development Plan".

BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING

On 2013 March 03, Council received PUD 2013-0264, which stated the direction in NM 2013-04 would return to the SPC on Planning and Urban Development in 2014 May.

BACKGROUND

Alberta's bottle container recycling system is managed by the BCMB. When a consumer purchases certain types of beverages, e.g. pop, milk, liquor etc., a recycling deposit is charged to the consumer at the point of purchase. The empty containers can be returned to a bottle depot where they will be counted, sorted and packaged for transport, and the deposit then reimbursed to the consumer. The system provides a financial incentive for consumers to return empty beverage containers.

Bottle depots are located throughout Calgary. The LUB defines a Use called "Beverage Container Drop-off Depots", which accommodates the activities of returning, collecting, storing and shipping empty beverage containers.

One goal of the BCMB is to improve the rate of bottle container returns throughout Alberta. The beverage container return rate for Alberta in 2013 was 82 per cent; 76.3 per cent for Edmonton, and 69.7 per cent for Calgary (Attachment 2). While this return rate is generally acceptable, the BCMB has expressed a desire to increase the return rate in Calgary. Expanding opportunities for locating bottle depots in the city, along with exploring other potential models for the return of empty beverage containers may help to increase the return rate.

INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

The Notice of Motion requested Administration bring recommendations to Council for potential amendments to the LUB that increase the number of districts where beverage container drop-off depots are listed uses. A consultant was hired to undertake the majority of the research, and their report and recommendations are in Attachment 2. There are four issues that Administration investigated:

1. The role of BCMB in location, management and operation of bottle depots;
2. The locations and characteristics of existing bottle depots in Calgary;
3. The land use districts where bottle depots are allowed, as well as opportunities to modify or expand on these districts; and
4. If there is an alternative model that could be used to increase the return rate of beverage containers.

1. The role of BCMB in the location, management and operation of bottle depots

The BCMB is a non-profit association responsible for the management of the collection and recycling of beverage containers in Alberta. The scope of their mandate is wide: they are responsible for registering all beverage containers in Alberta; they set criteria for establishing new depots and operating standards of those depots such as the issuance, suspension and cancellation of permits; and they monitor service quality and operating standards.

The BCMB has been delegated authority by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to impose requirements on recycling program stakeholders, and to govern and administer the beverage container recycling and reuse system. The general

BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING

mandate of the BCMB is to optimize beverage container recycling and reuse by diverting material from landfills, reducing the environmental impacts of beverage container use and providing manufacturers with a source of clean, recyclable materials or containers. The BCMB operates one of the most effective beverage container recycling systems in North America in terms of recovery, recycling rates, and the different types of beverage containers that can be recycled. As an example, there are more containers recycled in Alberta than in British Columbia and Saskatchewan combined (Attachment 2).

BCMB's service standards reflect two objectives: customer accessibility and the economic viability of bottle depots. The achievement of these objectives is facilitated by a 'full service and facility model', which translates into 500 to 700 square metre bottle return building, customer service space, on-site container sorting, and internal storage of all materials. This model is supported by BCMB's population standards in metropolitan areas which aim to provide one depot per 40,000 residents. In addition, BCMB also requires proximity standards so that a new depot is located a minimum of 3 kilometres from an existing depot.

Calgary's population supports approximately 29 depots based on the BCMB's population standards. There are currently 23 depots in Calgary, and one on the Tsuu T'ina First Nation (Attachment 1). With respect to the 3 kilometre proximity standards, there are overlapping areas in certain areas of Calgary, as a result of legacy depots that were established prior to the current standards. The map in Attachment 1 illustrates that there are gaps in outlying communities and the western side of the city. Based on the last civic census, roughly 102,000 households or 280,000 residents are located further than three kilometres from an existing bottle depot (Attachment 2).

2. The Locations and Characteristics of Existing Bottle Depots in Calgary

According to the 2012 Annual survey by BCMB (Attachment 2), customer use and satisfaction is generally positive; but areas such as depot locations, waiting times, appearance and cleanliness where satisfaction is lower. Public reaction to new depots is mixed; many who do not support new depots cite that the existing depot meets their needs. Negative impacts, such as safety, traffic and neighbourhood fit are not heavily cited as concerns for survey participants.

Calgary's 23 bottle depots range in size from 254 square metres to 806 square metres, with an average size of about 580 square metres. They tend to be located in industrial and large format commercial retail areas, with some depots integrated in commercial shopping centres. All sorting, storage and distribution aspects of the business operation typically occur entirely within a building; however, there are instances where depots store materials outdoors, particularly in smaller and older facilities. Parking is typically sufficient, with parking pressures likely to be faced during peak demand times. Truck and cube van parking can sometimes be a concern with some overflow parking occurring on adjacent streets. Loading typically occurs on-site, with truck access generally occurring from adjacent commercial streets. In some cases, proliferation of signage is also an issue.

The social aspects of bottle depots are more difficult to quantify. Anecdotally, the concerns that are raised typically involve traffic, site appearance, and perceptions of public safety associated

BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING

with the homeless population and activities associated with bottle collection. There is little available data to inform these concerns. (Attachment 2)

3. Land Use Bylaw Provisions and Land Use Districts for Beverage Container Drop-off Depots

The rules specific to Beverage Container Drop-off Depots include that they cannot be combined with a liquor store; must have an internal loading area when next to a residential district; and must have screening for loading areas when they are not completely inside a building. Bottle depots are listed in three industrial districts, I-G, I-C and I-R, three commercial districts, C-COR3, C-R2 and C-R3 and one Special Purpose district, S-URP. They are not listed in any neighbourhood and community scale commercial districts, but some are located in community commercial sites as non-conforming uses. A land use re-designation would be required if a bottle depot was proposed for a parcel outside of these districts.

The most land use districts that accommodate bottle depots are concentrated in the City's industrial land base in the eastern and central areas of the city. Increasing the number of land use districts in which bottle depots are listed, as well as whether they are permitted or discretionary, may facilitate more bottle depot opportunities in underserved and growth areas.

Most jurisdictions outside Alberta do not have an extensive container deposit system (Attachment 2). This is reflected in local land use rules, particularly when the municipality relies on curb side recycling to collect beverage containers. Of the jurisdictions examined, it was found that recycling depots tend not be allowed in residential districts, or local neighbourhood commercial districts. In other cities bottle depots are generally listed as a permitted use in industrial districts with the exception of the few that are listed in larger commercial or shopping center districts.

4. Whether there is an alternative service model that could be accommodated

Discussions with the BCMB yielded some ideas on how to increase the return rates for beverage containers, particularly in multi-residential buildings. The BCMB is exploring general technological improvements, such as a drop-off and swipe-card type operations, that may result in a smaller building than the existing bottle depot, since there would be no need for sorting and storage areas. Currently the focus is to accommodate more of the traditional bottle depot operations to help address the lower return rates in Calgary. Administration is interested in further exploring alternative collection models and whether these could be facilitated with supportive regulations in the LUB.

Issues

Overall, the consultant's report (Attachment 2) cited the following main issues with bottle depot locations in Calgary:

a) *Recovery rates and opportunities*

Calgary has a lower return rate than Edmonton and the Provincial average. There are service area gaps in Calgary that could be filled that may assist with increasing bottle return rates. Calgary's population warrants an additional 6 depots based on BCMB

BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING

standards. These gaps could be addressed with additional bottle depot locations in outer areas and in west Calgary. The location opportunities and permitting process are handled through the BCMB, so there is nothing specifically that council could do other than list bottle depots in more land use districts.

b) Land Use Bylaw rules

The districts where bottle depots are listed may not be located in or near underserved areas, which may result in situations where bottle depots cannot be located where the need is highest. The BCMB rule that depots locate a minimum of three kilometres from another depot adds a further restriction that may make it difficult to find a suitable location for a new depot.

c) Site Management Issues

Despite the number of operational standards required by the BCMB, bottle depots continue to experience demand for outdoor storage areas, create overflow parking and sometimes have shopping carts dispersed at or near the bottle depot. These management issues may create barriers to widespread acceptance of bottle depots in residential neighbourhood commercial locations.

d) Alternative Collection Methods

Changing development patterns may lead to the implementation of new collection methods and use of technology to increase bottle returns. It is possible that the smaller scale bottle depots that are not full service facilities (i.e. they do not process or sort on-site) and are more similar to dry-cleaner drop-off services will be implemented in the future. BCMB is currently exploring this alternative.

In conclusion, Administration recommends that Council direct Administration to investigate land use bylaw amendments to improve opportunities for locating full service bottle depots. This may mean listing bottle depots in more land use districts, such as the Community – Commercial 2 (C-C2) or Commercial – Corridor 2 (C-COR2) districts, and also listing bottle depots as permitted uses in some or all of the districts where they are now discretionary. This may also mean new rules surrounding off-site storage, and other site and use management issues. Feedback received from communities as a result of consultation would be considered and it is possible that other LUB amendments may be proposed.

Administration also recommends that Council direct Administration to investigate alternative service models for bottle depots, such as a neighbourhood or community scale drop-off facility, which could be defined through a new use definition in the LUB. More information about this is contained in the consultant's report (Attachment 2).

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Administration has not conducted any formal engagement with community groups, citizens or other community stakeholders as part of the response to the Notice of Motion. The BCMB, the Alberta Bottle Depot Association, and Waste and Recycling Services were consulted during the preparation of the consultant report and provided background data and other information. If Council accepts the recommendations in this report, Administration will undertake a more

BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING

extensive consultation to discuss the findings of the report and engage with communities to address any additional concerns or opportunities that have not been investigated thus far.

Strategic Alignment

MDP Alignment

There are no specific policies in the MDP concerning bottle recycling. There are policies and goals which concern the general protection of ecosystems that are applicable.

Increasing the opportunities for bottle depot locations helps to implement the following policies in the Municipal Development Plan:

- Section 2.6(a)(viii) – All land use and transportation planning and development should seek to conserve and protect ecosystems by minimizing waste.
- Section 2.6.6 – Support the City's goals for the "80/20 by 2020 Waste Diversion Goal", in order to recycle 80 percent of waste and divert 20 percent to landfills by 2020.
- Section 2.6.6(a)(iii) – considering the location of access points for the removal of waste in neighbourhoods, commercial and industrial areas.
- Section 2.2 – Support the development of complete communities....that support transit viability, local commercial and other services.
- Section 2.2 – Neighbourhood stores, services and public facilities that meet day-to-day needs, within walking distance for most residents.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

Increasing the opportunity for bottle depots in Calgary, particularly those underserved communities, supports the sustainment of communities where residents are able to meet their daily needs by having amenities and services closer to where they live.

Environmental

Increasing the rates of return for empty beverage containers has a direct impact on the environment since these empty containers are recycled and put to other uses. The more empty bottles that stay out of the general waste system, the more successful Calgary will be in achieving its waste reduction goals.

Economic

Bottle depots facilitate the return of empty beverage containers, but also provide jobs directly and indirectly in the recycling industry. Providing additional and alternative opportunities for bottle depots facilitates future growth in the recycling industry.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

No impact

Current and Future Capital Budget:

No impact

BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING

Risk Assessment

There is a risk that if no further work is directed, opportunities for future bottle depots sites will remain as they are today and some areas of the city will not be within an acceptable distance to a depot. A more comprehensive risk assessment would be conducted at the next phase of this project and would be reported, along with any specific LUB amendments, to the Calgary Planning Commission and City Council.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The rules for bottle depots and the concentration of the industrial land use districts where they are primarily developed in the east and central part of Calgary has resulted in an uneven distribution of bottle depots. In addition, new opportunities should be explored outside of the traditional BCMB bottle depot model in order to increase bottle return rates to satisfy the City's environmental goals.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Map of Bottle Depot Locations as of 2013 November
2. Consultant report