

From: ["van Dyk, Donny"](#)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council"](#)

Date: 10/28/2025 2:01:53 PM

Subject: Memo to Mayor & Council - Report Back on Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling - RTS 016314 - October 28, 2024

Attachments: Memo to Mayor & Council - Report Back on Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling in Vancouver.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Josh White and Corrie Okell. The memo is summarized below:

- This memo provides an update to the "Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling in Vancouver" March 13 2024 Council Motion, and the January 21, 2025 Memo titled "Update on Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling in Vancouver."
- Recycling Depots are currently permitted in 31 district schedules, and allowed in commercial, industrial, and heritage zones.
- Staff have convened with Return-It / Encorp Pacific (Encorp) throughout the year to understand their goals, operations, and facilities. In collaboration with Encorp, a conditional Development Permit approach with a standardized operational letter is recommended for Express Plus facilities. It offers a pathway to support Encorp's interest in increased beverage container recycling and after two years, if operations are running smoothly and any associated impacts are well managed, staff would be able to remove the time limit on the development permit on a case-by-case basis.
- This approach meets Encorp's intent for expansion and provides a more certain, streamlined and simplified approval process for these facilities. Staff will also continue to offer Encorp early feedback when assessing new locations during their leasing and acquisition stage.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Josh White
(604.877.5159 | Josh.White@vancouver.ca) and Corrie Okell(604.873.7160
| corrie.okell@vancouver.ca

Thanks,

Donny

Donny van Dyk (he/him)

City Manager

City of Vancouver



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x m ̑k ̑ y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s lilw ̑ ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

October 28, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Donny van Dyk, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Doug Smith, Deputy General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
Chris Robertson, Director, City-wide & Regional Planning, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
Saul Schwebs, Chief Building Official and Director, Inspections & By-law Services

FROM: Corrie Okell, General Manager, Development, Buildings & Licensing
Josh White, General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Report Back on Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling in Vancouver

RTS #: 016314

This memo provides updates on the March 13, 2024 Council motion "Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling in Vancouver", and the January 21, 2025 Memo titled "Update on Improving Access to Beverage Container Recycling in Vancouver."

BACKGROUND

- In March 2024, Council passed a [motion](#) directing staff to prepare Zoning By-law amendments to allow empty beverage container return centres in commercial, retail, and industrial zones in order to improve access to these facilities.
- On January 21, 2025, staff prepared a [memo](#) updating Council on activities undertaken, including a tour of Encorp Return-it facilities where staff were able to learn more about Return-It / Encorp Pacific (Encorp) operations and to explore with Encorp possible options to simplify approvals.

DISCUSSION

Zoning and Development By-law: Considerations and Analysis

“Recycling Depot” in the Zoning and Development By-law is defined as “the use of premises for the collection and sorting of garbage, and the packaging of paper, newspapers, clothing, cans, bottles and similar domestic or commercial garbage, but does not include Animal Products Processing, Junk Yard or Shop, or Waste Disposal Facility”.

There are a range of recycling facilities in Vancouver which are allowed in most commercial and industrial zones and they are all considered “Recycling Depot” under the Zoning By-law. For example, larger scale facilities allow for various items to be recycled from bottles, and household goods such as clothing, electronics, and disposable materials, while other facilities are smaller scale and focus solely on beverage containers.

Recycling Depot use is a conditional use in the Zoning and Development By-law because of the range of materials that can be recycled, potential impacts to neighbours related to smell, noise, garbage dumping, exterior cleanliness and use of loading and parking spaces.

The development permitting stream for conditional uses often includes a review of business operation letters, public notification, conditions of approval and the use of time limited development permits to monitor, evaluate and mitigate complaints. The conditional review helps to anticipate business operation impacts and mitigate for any impact. All of the conditional review tools enable collaboration and dialogue between businesses and the city.

As part of the motion response, staff reviewed potential zoning changes before landing on the recommended approach described in the section below. Initially, staff considered allowing recycling depots as an outright use in the Zoning and Development By-law to simplify permit processing. However, enabling all recycling depots (i.e. “the use of premises for the collection and sorting of garbage, and the packaging of paper, newspapers, clothing, cans, bottles and similar domestic or commercial garbage, but does not include Animal Products Processing, Junk Yard or Shop, or Waste Disposal Facility”) to be outright would mean any recycling facility would receive an approval.

Based on further discussions with Encorp, staff explored creating a new outright use and regulations specific to Encorp’s Express Plus operational model that Encorp is interested in expanding in Vancouver. The Express Plus model is focused on beverage container collection and a similar facility has been operating in Yaletown since 2014. The Express Plus is a simple, fast way to drop off pre-bagged beverage containers with the refund deposited into an online account and no on-site sorting. As staff explored this option, it was determined that while the type of recyclables could be regulated in zoning (i.e. beverage containers only and facility size), other aspects of this operational model could not be regulated through the Zoning and Development By-law. For example, an outright use would not involve notification, and the City could not legally regulate many of the beneficial/positive elements specific to the Express Plus operation such as pre-bagging, sorting by staff only, and online deposits. In general, the City is unable to regulate parameters around users and operations in zoning and seeks to ensure balance and fairness for businesses. As a result, staff could not exclusively allow the Express

Plus model as an outright use as any facility that only allows beverage containers and limited to a certain size would then be allowed outright.

Recommended Approach – Express Plus Facilities

For future Express Plus facilities, a conditional Development Permit approach is still recommended for this land use. The City would continue to use existing processes and accept a standardized operational letter similar to the existing Yaletown Express Plus facility, with minor adjustments to the conditions on a site-by-site basis. The City can also assess and notify neighbours if there are anticipated residential adjacency impacts. The Development Permit approach will have a time limit of two years which gives the City the ability to mitigate impacts (if any) in collaboration with Encorp. This approach meets Encorp's intent for expansion and provides a more certain, streamlined and simplified approval process for these facilities.

A Development Permit approach with a standardized operational letter for Express Plus facilities offers a pathway to support Encorp's interest in increased beverage container recycling and after two years, if operations are running smoothly and any associated impacts are well managed, staff would be able to remove the time limit on the development permit on a case-by-case basis.

Furthermore, staff will continue to offer Encorp early feedback when assessing new locations during their leasing and acquisition stage.

If you have any questions, please contact us directly.



Corrie Okell
General Manager,
Development, Buildings & Licensing
604.873.7160 | corrie.okell@vancouver.ca



Josh White
General Manager,
Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability
604.877.5159 | josh.white@vancouver.ca