

Imagine...

A Dumpster-free Downtown

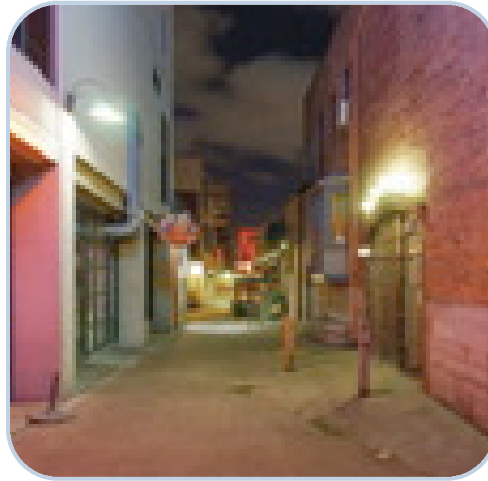
THE VANCOUVER SOLUTION 'SACS' - STREETS & ALLEYS CLEANUP STRATEGIES

Dumpster Facts

Did you know...

- ▶ There are more than 450 dumpsters on city property in back lanes in downtown Vancouver.
- ▶ Fourteen waste management companies' trucks make pick-ups in lanes each day.
- ▶ 85% of areas under and around dumpsters are filthy.*
- ▶ 75% of dumpsters have been vandalized with graffiti.*
- ▶ 25% of the "cardboard only" dumpsters are contaminated by other waste and cannot be recycled.
- ▶ Many dumpsters are only partially full when dumped.
- ▶ Many dumpsters are used by businesses that have not purchased them.
- ▶ Many dumpsters are filled up by residents dumping their excess home garbage en route to and from work.
- ▶ There is a close, proven association between dumpster clusters and public disorder.

* Based on 671 dumpster audits conducted in February 2007.



Post Alley, Seattle



Kelowna Lane Patio

Seattle and Kelowna successes

Seeking an Alternative to Waste Management Downtown

A group of Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Associations have been working with City Engineering staff and City Council to find alternatives to the current deplorable situation with dumpsters located in City lanes. The dumpsters have become associated with disorder, vandalism, blockage of lanes, attracting problem behaviour, obstruction of sight lines, as well as filthy unpleasant and unsafe conditions.

Other cities have successfully introduced alternative waste management systems that have reduced problem behaviour, restored lanes to public use, restored sanitary conditions, helped businesses reduce waste and create a more attractive downtown.

For example, in Pioneer Square in Seattle, CleanScapes has been picking up semi transparent colour-coded bags with separated waste for more than two years in place of dumpsters. Seattle's Post Alley is an example of what a dumpster-free lane can be. Just imagine this for Vancouver.

Kelowna's BAGS (Back Alley Garbage Solutions) program has brought back pedestrian use of lanes, reduced waste being generated by businesses and, in many cases, reduced the waste management costs for businesses. In one former filthy lane there is now a restaurant patio. Last summer the first wedding pictures were taken on the patio. Just imagine similar possibilities for downtown Vancouver.

Benefits of Going Dumpster-free

Removing more than 450 dumpsters located on City property and replacing them with an alternative waste management system will:

- ▶ Reduce criminal behaviour in lane ways
- ▶ Increase business recycling
- ▶ Reduce the noise and exhaust from multiple waste management companies' trucks
- ▶ Open up public rights-of-way for retail, service delivery and pedestrian access
- ▶ Create the potential for the development of store-front businesses in lanes
- ▶ Create the potential for the redevelopment of lanes and abutting properties
- ▶ Improve the overall appearance and smell of downtown Vancouver making it a more attractive place to live, work, visit and operate a business
- ▶ Increase tourist interest in walking around downtown Vancouver
- ▶ Provide businesses with alternatives to maintaining a dumpster
- ▶ Open sight lines for pedestrians, businesses and police
- ▶ Improve delivery and customer access to businesses
- ▶ Reduce damage to property created by moving dumpsters during pick-up service

Clusters of Dumpsters = Crime and Disorder

There is a strong association between street disorder and the location of multiple dumpsters or dumpster clusters. More than 90% of incidents the DVBA's Downtown Ambassadors responded to were within 50 meters of dumpsters. Incidents involving panhandling, drug use, problem street person interactions and drug dealers took place entirely within the dumpster clusters.

Inspector Warren Lemcke, the Vancouver Police Inspector for the downtown area, says "There is no question that the elimination of the dumpsters in our lanes will open sight lines and help to reduce crime and disorder."

Typical downtown lanes



Plugged Lanes



Injection Drug Use



Urine & Feces



Overflowing Dumpsters



Open Dumping / Illegal Dumping



Graffiti

City Council Supports Removal of Dumpsters

In January 2007, Vancouver City Council directed City staff to work with one or more BIAs and United We Can to implement a bag pick-up system as an alternative waste management program to dumpsters. Since then, the DVIBA, Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), other BIAs, City Engineering staff and United We Can have been working to design a program that will eliminate dumpsters from City lanes by the end of 2007.

Our timeline:

February – April

Audit of dumpster contents, conditions and locations and assessment of results (completed)

May – July

Inform DVBIA and BOMA members about the program through open houses and information sessions.

Work with the City to establish the legal framework for the DVBIA to contract for waste management services in DVBIA lanes.

Meet with individual businesses and property owners.

July – Aug

With the support of property owners and businesses, develop an RFP for waste management companies to undertake creative alternatives to dumpsters.

City of Vancouver conducts a survey of interest among property owners and businesses in the DVBIA area.

September

By the end of September, enter into an agreement for alternative waste management services and establish a start date for the new system.

September – December

Create and implement the program, effective December 31, 2007.

How the program works

Basically, in a dumpster-free system, garbage is separated and picked up frequently. Specifically:

- ▶ Cardboard is bundled in twine and left out for free collection.
- ▶ Refundable items are separated into clear plastic bags and businesses can leave them out for free collection by the waste management contractor or separate them and place them in a location for social enterprise operations to collect or a regular, local binner. Businesses can also connect with service clubs, such as Boy Scouts or Girl Guides, to do pick up from time to time.
- ▶ Used cooking grease is returned into the original five gallon pails and they are collected more frequently.
- ▶ Paper is separated out and recycled.
- ▶ General garbage goes into semi-transparent bags. In time, these will be colour-coded to separate organic waste, from non-organic and e-waste. The bags are purchased from the waste management contractor for a fee. The fee covers not only the bags, but micro cleaning, such as graffiti paint-out and sweeping.
- ▶ Garbage bag pick up takes place several times a day. Businesses set out their waste anticipating the scheduled pick up times so garbage is never left out overnight.

What the program costs

- ▶ In Seattle and Kelowna, the models Vancouver is using to guide its program development, some businesses have seen a decrease in their costs as they learn to separate waste more efficiently and stop paying to dispose of other businesses' or residents' garbage or paying to dump only partially full dumpsters.
- ▶ Some businesses do not currently have waste disposal contracts and have been using other businesses' dumpsters. In Seattle, for example, this amounted to 30% of businesses on each block. Obviously, these businesses will now have to pay for waste removal.
- ▶ Some businesses will have seasonal variations such as restaurants where, at times, costs will be higher, at other times lower.
- ▶ Some businesses that have dumpsters on their property versus City property are keen to participate because they have systems designed that will reduce cleaning costs inside the building (more efficient waste separation and handling) and exterior costs associated with picking up debris around dumpsters.

The role of Social Enterprise and Bidders in Dumpster-free Alleys

Bidders, or men and women who retrieve items from dumpsters or garbage bins, are fiercely independent individuals who make their living by retrieving refundable bottles and cans. The City of Vancouver has a strong interest in continuing to provide policy that enables bidders to earn income and take refundable items out of the waste stream.

Part of the direction of City Council is to engage United We Can in the process of finding alternative waste management systems. There are several ways that a bag and/ or tote system can work in a positive way to support bidders.



Social Enterprise at work

Few refundables in garbage now

The dumpster audit conducted in February 2007 found few refundable items visible in dumpsters that were open. Many Vancouver businesses already have internal processes to remove refundable items before they are thrown into dumpsters. Under a bag or tote system, businesses will still have the option to cash their own refundables or set them outside with their other separated garbage bags. Bidders can simply take the now consolidated items away en masse. Similarly, some businesses already have a favourite bidder who comes knocking and takes away its bottles and cans. This could continue.

In another variation, social enterprises could enter into agreements with multiple businesses to make scheduled visits to remove the refundable items. Some buildings also make these items available to cleaners, sporting, service or charitable groups. This could continue.

Part of the plan is to attach a fee to each garbage bag to allow for funding social enterprise groups to conduct follow-up micro cleaning after the main garbage pick up. Depending on the funding available, this could include painting out graffiti and sweeping. The experience in other cities has been that few bags are broken open, but occasionally a vehicle will run over a bag and burst it.

How Existing Waste Haulers Will Adapt

In Kelowna, there were only a few different waste hauling companies and one stepped up to take on the challenge of an alternative waste management system. In Vancouver, there are 14 companies along with grease removal companies, paper pick up services and others. The local waste management companies have a significant investment in their current dumpsters and trucks.

An alternative waste management system in downtown Vancouver will require one company to re-tool their equipment to handle the job. There are more than 3,000 dumpsters in the City of Vancouver (commercial and residential) and the dumpsters in BIA area represent a relatively small portion of their business.

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