

WASTE AUDIT

Characterisation of Residential Waste 2026 Report



VILLE DE | CITY OF
WESTMOUNT

WHAT IS IN OUR WASTE?

The City is committed to helping all of Westmount produce less waste and adopt smarter habits in regards to our environmental impact. As part of this commitment, a waste audit was carried out in the spring of 2026 to establish local benchmarks for waste sent to landfill.

The objective was twofold:

- Gain insight into the composition of materials disposed of in household garbage
- Identify materials that could be diverted through local recovery programmes

By determining the proportion of materials found in household garbage bins that truly consist of landfill waste, the City is able to **identify opportunities to improve waste sorting and participation in existing collection programmes**. These opportunities will help steer municipal activities such as awareness campaigns, community events and waste management services.

Methodology

A waste audit involves **sorting and weighing materials found in a sample of waste** in order to determine its composition. This methodology is commonly used to evaluate the performance of waste management programmes and guide public education efforts.

This audit took place from **May 7 to 29, 2026**. Garbage was collected from a random selection of **single-family homes and buildings of 8 or fewer units** across Westmount's collection sectors.

- One collection per **randomly selected household**
- On the usual garbage collection day for each sector
- Materials transported to the Public Works yard for analysis



168 households
2,542 kg of waste

Methodology

The City contracted **Enuf**, a certified B corporation, to carry out the audit. An experienced team sorted and weighed the collected materials, and presented the results of their analysis to the City’s Environment Division.

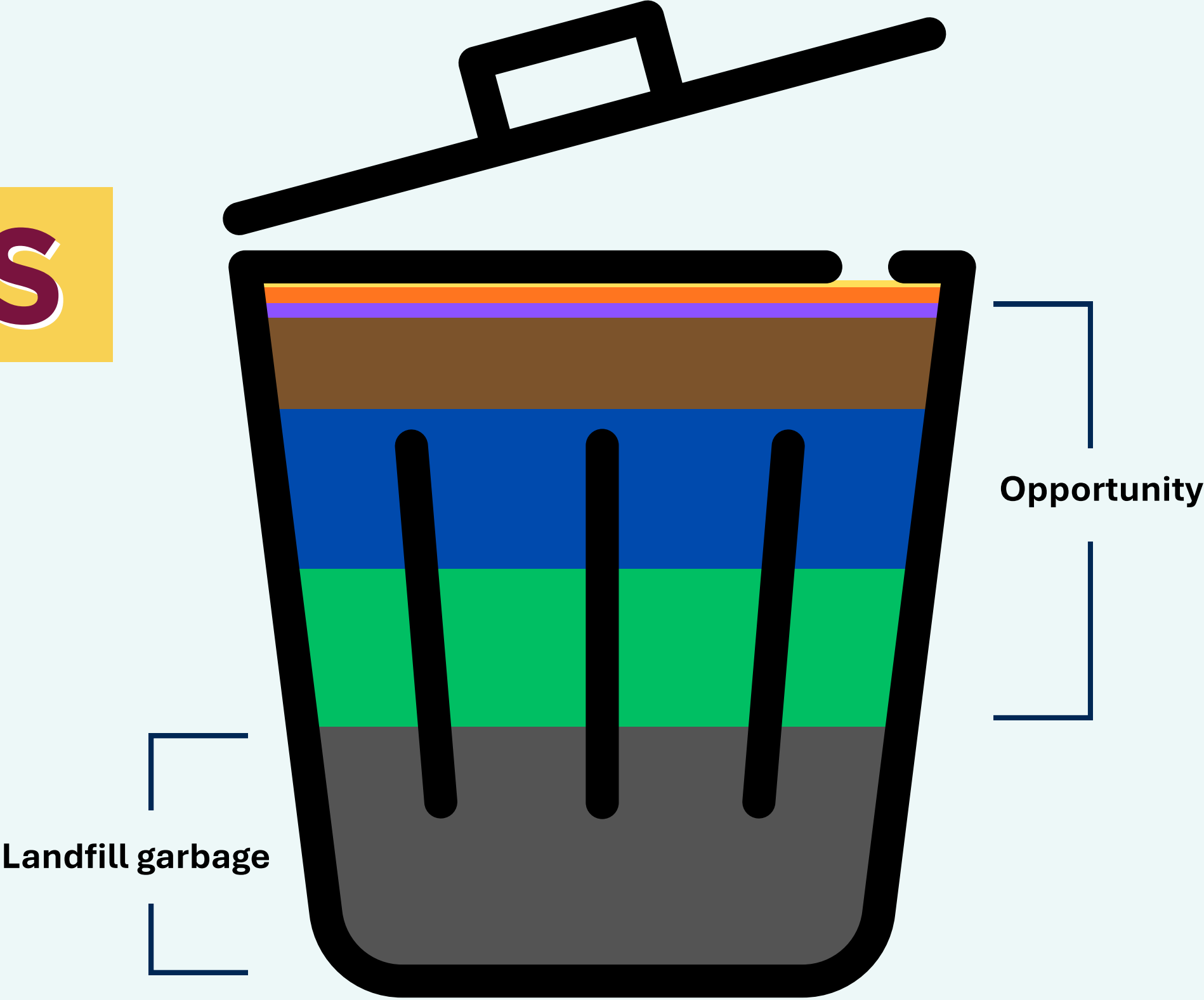
Materials were classified into the following categories:

- Landfill garbage
- Recyclable materials
- Food waste (compostable)
- Garden waste (compostable)
- Bulky items
- Household hazardous waste
- Other recoverable materials

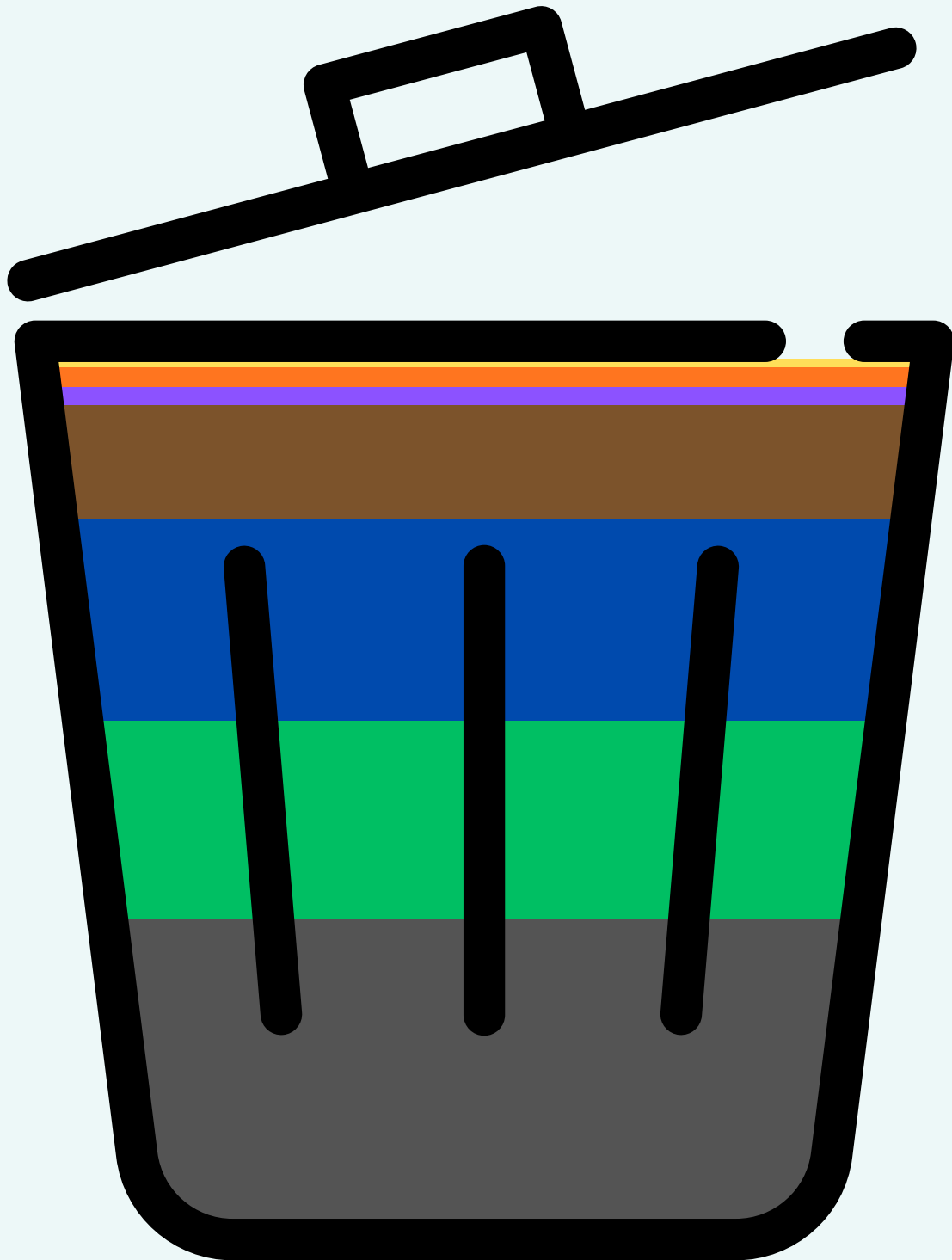
Limitations

This audit is based on materials collected from 168 out of nearly 4,700 eligible households in Westmount, specifically single-family homes and buildings of 2 to 8 units. While **not statistically representative**, this sample presents a current snapshot of the contents of household garbage for these types of households, allowing for the identification of key trends and opportunities for improvement.

ONLY $\frac{1}{3}$
OF MATERIALS
WAS TRULY
TRASH

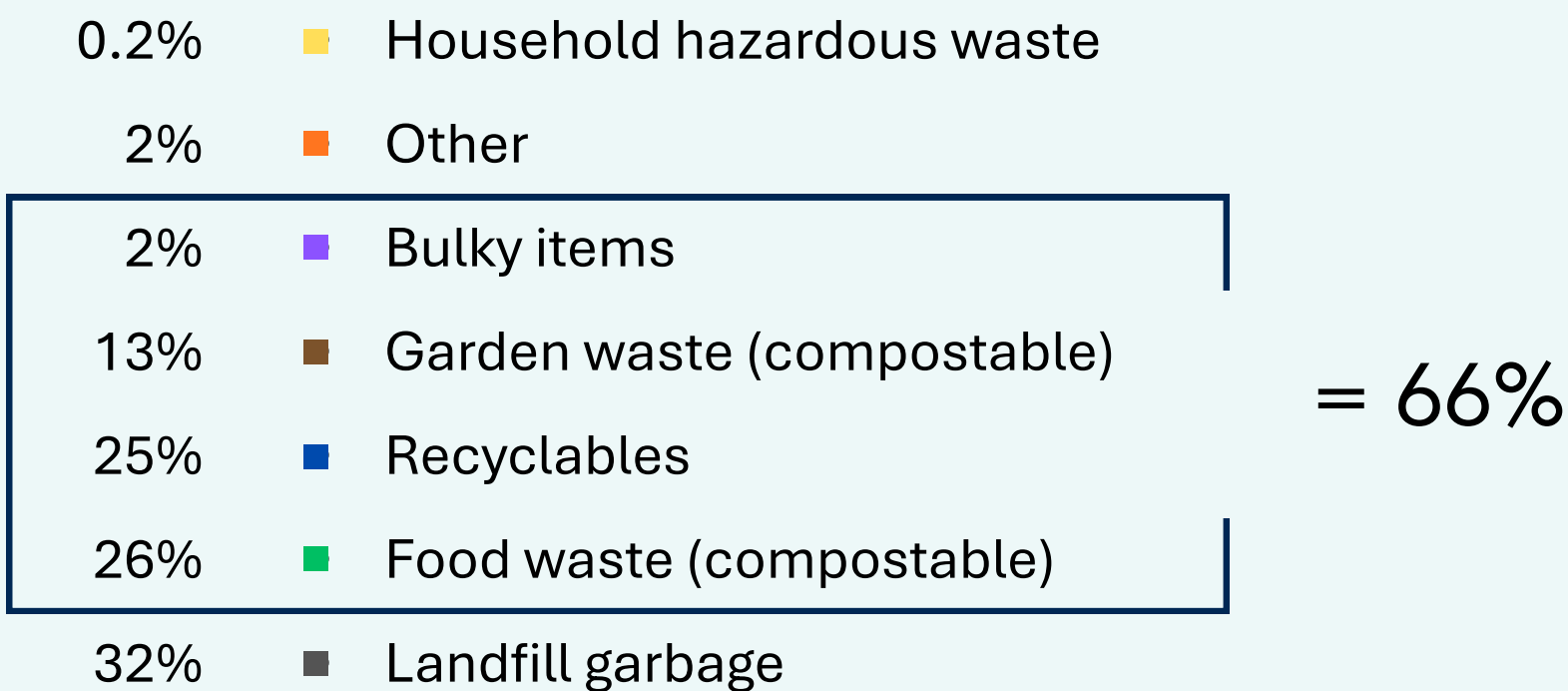


Results & Analysis



2/3 of materials found in household garbage bins could have been diverted from landfill through existing City programmes!

Composition of Westmount Households' Garbage (kg)



Results & Analysis

Type of Waste	Most Common Items Found
Household hazardous waste	Aerosol cans (flammable), leaky batteries, propane tanks, gas tanks
Other	Cables, light bulbs, electronics, concrete, construction waste (sheetrock, plaster), space heaters
Bulky items	Ceramics, wooden frames, decor items, melamine boards
Garden waste (compostable)	Leaves, thin branches, wood
Recyclables	Plastics (soft plastics, containers, wrappers), cardboard boxes, metal lids, glass, soiled paper
Food waste (compostable)	Unused food and produce, leftovers, table scraps, soiled paper towels, dirty pizza boxes
Landfill garbage	Cat litter, clothes and shoes, carpets, faeces, styrofoam, air filters, wet wipes, camping equipment

Key Findings

Compostable Materials

Food waste and garden waste account for **39%** of materials found in household garbage, despite there being dedicated door-to-door collections for both of these organic, compostable materials.

This suggests there is **significant room to improve participation in these programmes.**

Garden waste is collected weekly from spring until late fall. These materials are processed and returned as free compost for residents the following spring.

Food waste is collected weekly.

Recyclable Materials

A quarter of the audited waste could have been recycled, suggesting a **lack of awareness of which materials can be recycled.**

The province-wide change in January 2025 to simplify recycling programmes, allowing for more materials to be recycled, may contribute to residents’ uncertainty when sorting their waste.

Hazardous & Recoverable Materials

Door-to-door collection is not available for these items, which are present in smaller quantities in household garbage. However, dedicated recovery pathways exist and allow for their reuse, recycling or recovery.

The presence of these materials in household garbage bins may suggest a **lack of awareness of depot locations, or a lack of motivation or accessibility.**

Conclusion

This audit provided a useful snapshot of the materials found in garbage from a sample of Westmount households, and identified several opportunities to reduce landfilling. Although the results are not statistically representative of all households in the city, they demonstrate that **significant quantities of recyclable, compostable and recoverable materials continue to be disposed of as garbage despite the availability of municipal recovery programs**.

The main opportunities identified through this exercise include:

- **Increasing the adoption of composting**

Food waste and garden waste are made up of organic materials. They are a main source of methane emissions from landfills, due to decomposing in a low-oxygen environment. By composting, we cut harmful emissions while also producing a beneficial soil amendment for the community.

- **Building knowledge around waste sorting**

Awareness campaigns around waste sorting are always relevant to maximize the benefit of all available programmes by reducing contamination. This is especially relevant as collection programmes and guidelines evolve.

- **Promoting the benefits of proper disposal of hazardous or recoverable materials**

Items such as aerosols and batteries pose a risk to collection workers, equipment and processing facilities, as well as being harmful to the environment when disposed of incorrectly. Information and motivation are key tools that encourage residents to use the available recovery pathways and depots.

Conclusion

Beyond these opportunities, it is important to remember that the most effective way to reduce the environmental impacts associated with waste management is to generate less waste in the first place. Source reduction, reuse, repair, and mindful consumption remain the most effective strategies for reducing waste generation and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

**THE BEST WASTE
IS THE WASTE
WE DON'T PRODUCE.**



Produced by the Public Works Department, Environment Division,
and the Communications Department of the City of Westmount
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