

In July 2015, County Council asked the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) to review the Quarterly Brush and Bulk Item Collection Program. The program was criticized for causing unsightliness, potential health and safety concerns for materials such as freezers or refrigerators, large heaps that attracted rodents and other vectors, the brush was often mixed with bulk items causing contamination of the brush material, and the cost of the program was \$294K annually.

The ESB gathered public comment and conducted two residential waste sorts which concluded, 14% of the trash generated by a resident is yard trimmings. This data is consistent with the national average at 13.5%. The ESB considered this to be an opportunity to maximize diversion of yard trimmings from the landfill. This would help avoid the costs incurred by hauling and disposing of yard trimmings to the Rio Rancho landfill which is approximately ~90 miles away from Los Alamos.

The ESB recommended to “Collect brush only, utilizing an organic Yard Trimming roll cart and offer a paid scheduled collection for bulk items.” This approach would maximize diversion of organic yard trimmings, reduce curbside unsightliness, and be the most cost effective option, as it is estimated to be revenue neutral after an initial investment and could perhaps create savings in later years. On February 14, 2017, County Council accepted and approved this recommendation.

The Yard Trimming roll cart program will keep approximately 14% of waste from being sent to the landfill, extending landfill life, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The yard trimmings will be composted into high quality garden and landscaping materials that will be made available at no cost to residents.

To further conserve resources, improve efficiency and maintain operational costs, the ESB approved alternating the collection of recycle and yard trimming materials. An open forum survey was recently conducted and residents were asked: “Would your household be able to continue to recycle the maximum amount of plastic, aluminum, paper and cardboard and have curbside pick-up for these materials reduced to every other week to accommodate for yard trimmings collection?” Approximately, 76.3% of participants responded “Yes.” The ESB hosted a public meeting on March 15, 2018, to discuss [the results](#). On April 19, 2018 the ESB approved an alternating collection schedule for Recycle and Yard Trimming roll carts.