



February 3, 2025

The Honorable Donna Deegan, Mayor of the City of Jacksonville
City Hall at St. James Building
117 West Duval Street., Suite 400
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Honorable Randy White, City Council President
Honorable City Council Members
117 West Duval Street, Suite 425
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Subject: Jacksonville Civic Council Urges Bold Action on Solid Waste Fee Reform

Dear Mayor Deegan, Council President White and Honorable City Council members,

The Jacksonville Civic Council urges the City Council to take immediate and decisive action to address the long-overdue issue of solid waste fee reform. With Jacksonville facing mounting fiscal headwinds, the Civic Council strongly supports a solid waste fee increase to cover actual costs, accompanied by provisions to protect our most vulnerable residents.

The current garbage fee of \$12.65 per month, unchanged since 2010, is far below what residents in comparable municipalities pay for similar services, and it comes nowhere near covering actual costs. In Tampa, for example, residents pay \$38.23. Other cities in Florida also charge at least twice as much. Jacksonville's fee is less than half the actual cost of service, which has risen to \$30.40 per month, creating a \$40 million annual deficit.

This fiscal shortfall has forced the City to rely on internal loans funded by property tax revenues, which now total nearly \$100 million and are projected to reach an unsustainable \$500 million by 2030 if no action is taken. Meanwhile, residents of the Beaches and Baldwin, who already pay higher solid waste fees for their own services, effectively subsidize this deficit through their property taxes—a clear inequity that further underscores the urgent need for reform.

The Civic Council recognizes the challenges inherent in increasing fees, but it views this adjustment as both fiscally prudent and morally necessary. By aligning Jacksonville's solid waste fee with the actual cost of service, we can prevent further financial deterioration while ensuring high-quality service delivery. The adjustment should include a low-income exemption program to protect our most vulnerable residents from undue financial strain.



This reform is part of a larger conversation about Jacksonville’s overall underinvestment in public services compared to peer cities. Recent analysis shows that Jacksonville has the lowest revenues and expenditures per capita among major Florida cities. As a result, essential services—such as public safety, transportation, and cultural amenities—remain significantly underfunded. We have recently made progress on increasing funding for public safety, and we need to follow that with enhanced funding for other city services. Investments in quality-of-life services like parks, libraries, and recreational facilities lag far behind those of comparable cities such as Tampa and Orlando, limiting Jacksonville’s ability to attract and retain talent or provide residents with a vibrant community experience. Addressing the solid waste fee is a necessary step toward reversing this trend of underinvestment.

The Civic Council also emphasizes the importance of public accountability and transparency in implementing these changes. The proposed annual review of the solid waste fee must be reinstated to ensure adjustments that reflect actual costs.

More broadly, we need to do a deep dive on the programming and delivery of all services to ensure they are well targeted and efficiently delivered. Experience with other cities indicates that we will be able to find savings that we can reallocate to better uses. While this will not eliminate the need to raise more revenue, it is an important first step to demonstrate to citizens that the city can use its funds effectively.

This decision is about more than trash collection; it is an opportunity to demonstrate bold leadership and commitment to Jacksonville’s future. By approving this proposal, the City Council can take a decisive step toward addressing decades of fiscal imbalance, investing in infrastructure, and laying the groundwork for a city that provides a higher quality of life for all its residents.

The Civic Council urges the City Council to act with vision and courage. Let us seize this opportunity to chart a new course for Jacksonville, ensuring our city remains a vibrant, sustainable, and equitable place for generations to come.

The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Chartrand".

Gary Chartrand,
Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Whittle".

Dennis Whittle,
CEO & President



**JACKSONVILLE
CIVIC
COUNCIL**

Cc:

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The Honorable Mike Gay
The Honorable Will Lahnen
The Honorable Kevin Carrico
The Honorable Joe Carlucci
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