

Recommendation #9

Expand County Waste Reduction and Diversion Efforts

Description:

The county will expand and enhance exist programs for waste reduction, organics composting, and materials recovery. New legislation will address the growing problem of single-use plastics. Public education and outreach efforts and data sharing will increase public engagement in the circular economy while more robust systems for extended producer responsibility and materials recovery are developed. ² Residential curbside collection of food scraps will be expanded County-wide by the end of Fiscal Year 2022. In partnership with its' operator of the Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility (OCF), the County is also working to increase the commercial food scrap and food waste tonnages from being diverted from landfills to being composted. Both efforts should increase participation and partnerships, particularly with businesses and institutions that generate significant food waste.

Additionally, the County should first update, then adopt, and implement its' Zero Waste and Implementation plan, including establishing a collection and drop-off program and operating a ReUse Center for gently used bulk material. The Reuse Centers will repurpose furniture, appliances, and house de-packaging equipment to enable the OCF to accept packaged expired food. Legislative efforts by the County Council for a county-wide ban of plastic bags and passing appropriate and mandatory business/commercial food waste/scrap diversion to composting, Paint Care, and other Extended Producer Responsibility legislation. The County must prepare to partner with the State and the bottle industry to establish robust and profitable glass recycling opportunities for long-term waste reduction success.

Proposed Measurement & Tracking

On annual basis, track and quantify the following:

- Number of visitors to convenience drop-off sites and ReUse Center.
- Tons of food scraps diverted.
- Tons of bulk material (furniture) diverted from being landfilled.
- Community awareness & participation (via survey).

Co-Benefits



● Within County Control

● Alignment with Existing Initiatives

● Technical Feasibility

● Cost-Effectiveness

Time Frame

0-5 years

- Reduction of small (shopping type) plastic bags being landfilled or received unintentionally at the Materials Recycling Facility via Waste Sort Study.

Capacity and Funding:

What capacity and funding are necessary to implement this recommendation?

1. Allocate and budget ongoing funding for ReUse Center, including building, staffing, and collection program (specialized trucks).
2. Allocate an additional budget for de-packaging equipment for OCF.
3. Increase funding level for outreach and community engagement, including providing reusable bags as promotional items.
4. Allocate and budget ongoing funding to develop and institute a Pay-as You-Throw(PAYT) program to pay for every bag or can of waste to motivate and prevent waste.
5. Support the County Council and County Executive in adopting and implementing the PAYT fee system and Zero Waste program.

Implementation Steps

Step 1. Conduct a feasibility study to assess and provide implementation recommendations for carbon emissions analysis of landfill operations. This should include possible timetable requiring haulers to phase out diesel trucks and use low emission vehicles. In addition, provide analysis and recommendations for eliminating leaks and minimizing the landfill’s overall methane footprint. As part of analysis of impacts for new Area C of the landfill, perform assessment to identify more efficient repurposing of excess methane for Renewable Natural Gas(RNG) or biogas¹ as may be generated by future operations in tandem with improving current repurposing operations.

Step 2. Community Survey. Survey the community to understand better current awareness of composting and other waste diversion programs. Gather information on the need and potential for implementing a ReUse Center.

Step 3. Rollout of the countywide curbside composting program. Residential curbside collection of food scraps will be expanded County-wide by end of June in 2022. In partnership with its' operator of the Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility (OCF), the County will increase the commercial food scrap and food waste tonnages from being diverted from landfills to being composted.

Step 4: Enable residents to properly dispose of hazardous wastes encountered during climate resiliency and energy efficiency retrofits. Older buildings and housing stock in the County have asbestos (shingles, siding, flooring, etc.), lead, and other harmful building materials. Residents or contractors will encounter legacy hazardous materials during energy efficacy retrofits, floodproofing, and climate resilience-related improvements. Unfortunately, county residents and businesses currently do not have access to local safe disposal of legacy hazardous waste materials.

Step 5. Expand and promote community-wide recycling and waste diversion programs.

- Adoption by County Council for Zero Waste goal with an implementation plan incorporated into the Ten-Year Solid Waste Management Plan.²
- Perform periodic waste characterization studies (every 3 years) to monitor progress of waste diversion efforts. Use local consumption data and an embodied-carbon emissions inventory³ to educate the public about impacts of various consumer choices on greenhouse gas emissions and the waste stream
- Develop and implement a Pay-as-You-Throw(PAYT) fee program⁴ to encourage waste reduction and encourage recycling. This program will track the average annual quantity of trash/ recyclables generated per household and savings. Information from tracking both waste and savings will help educate the public and create community-wide goals and benchmarks.
- Advertise and ensure citizens know to take back plastic bags to the grocery stores for recycling or, better yet, don't utilize plastic bags. Teach and promote the use of reusable, washable bags.
- Intensify education and enforcement of the recycling mandates, including the Expanded Polystyrene Ban and Multifamily and Commercial/ Business Recycling Laws.
- Ban or require a fee for Single-Use Disposable Bags.
- Promote source reduction and reuse programs by providing additional county staff to serve as Waste Stream Diversion Advisors. These advisors will work and educate communities and municipalities on the proper handling and disposal of hazardous materials encountered during renovation projects, repurposing building materials and salvaging household items, recycling, and other waste diversion efforts at a community-wide scale.

Step 6. Build Partnerships. Promote and build both business and institutional waste diversion programs for schools, corporations, and community businesses.

- Pilot reverse vending machines at public gathering places to test behavioral and financial incentives to increase recycling of plastic, decrease litter and trash along roads, streams, and communities.
 - Form a study group to determine the "how," "who," "source of funding," and all of the resources needed to implement a reverse vending machine.
 - Identify equipment technicians, locations of machines, and delivery of the collected bottles to the Materials Recycling Facility.
 - Publicize the pilot program to help support statewide container deposit legislation efforts and plastic bag ban efforts.
- Partner with businesses, restaurants, and County institutions to participate in scaled-up waste diversion efforts and composting food waste through Green Business certification, promoting success stories, and educating on the cost savings of a waste reduction program.
- Provide financing, grants, or subsidies to individuals and businesses to develop the County's businesses for reuse and donation of materials.
- Develop public online clearinghouse for information about reuse programs, repair services, and donation centers in the County, so residents and businesses have easy one-stop access to

opportunities to extend the lives of their materials. Businesses and residents could use the database through the County Click 311 information center or the County's website.

¹<https://washingtongasdcclimatebusinessplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200316-WGL-RNG-Report-FINAL.pdf>

²<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/21910/Zero-Waste-Initiative-Final-April-5-2018a?bidId=>

³ <https://www.futureofconstruction.org/solution/embodied-energy-accounting-for-building-products/>

⁴ <https://archive.epa.gov/wastes/consERVE/tools/payt/web/html/index-5.html>

Equity considerations

Equity Concern:

Increased waste diversion and repurposing operations may negatively impact the community's adjacent new satellite (ReUSE or Convenience Drop-off) locations and communities near the existing landfill.

How can this recommendation be implemented to lead to equitable outcomes?

- Ensure waste management education materials are provided in multiple languages and intentionally engage with the trusted community voices of local community-based organizations to understand needs and solutions.
- Require that the County reduces negative impacts such as noise, smell, increased traffic, and illegal dumping near the facility when locating new convenience drop-off locations or service centers.

Helpful Resources

- **Resource:** Zero Waste Initiatives for Prince George's County, Maryland.
 - Link: <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/21910/Zero-Waste-Initiative-Final-April-5-2018a?bidId=>
- **Resource:** [Residential Recycling Program](#)
 - Organization: Prince George's County
 - Description: Prince George's County's Residential Recycling program providing information on curbside collection, convenience centers, bulky trash, organics composting facility, brown station road sanitary landfill, and household hazardous waste and electronics recycling acceptance sites.
- **Resource:** [Climate Change and Municipal Solid Waste](#)
 - Organization: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - Description: Fact sheet explaining the link between climate change and municipal solid waste.