



March 16, 2021

Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan for the Years 2020-2029

Dear Councilmembers:

The Sierra Club Montgomery County Group is pleased to provide our views on the Solid Waste Management Plan.

While we are concerned that the plan does not include a clear path to close the trash incinerator in Dickerson, we hope that the County will update the plan after thoroughly reviewing more environmentally responsible waste reduction strategies.

The plan does contain multiple program changes which we strongly support including:

- adding residential properties in Subdistrict B into the county's overall waste collection system;
- targeting additional materials for recycling, such as textiles, electronics, mattresses and carpets; and
- banning additional materials that are not recyclable, such as single-use plastic bags.

We support the County's plan to redevelop the existing Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Resource Recovery Park. A redesigned MRF will enable the sorting and processing of greater numbers of recycled materials. The Park could bring in job-creating businesses to help process hard-to-recycle materials into new products.

We are pleased to have been consulted by DEP officials about how to shape a residential organics collection program. We support the pilot curbside food scraps collection program being developed. But, to make even greater strides in waste reduction we recommend that the pilot also include a transition to a "Pay-as-you-Throw" payment system. As cities of all sizes all over the country have found, charging the same rate for trash collection to all households does not disincentive waste. Once residents participating in the pilot remove their leftovers, food scraps and non-recyclable food paper like pizza boxes, napkins and paper towels by placing them in their organics bin, they will discover that there is very little trash remaining. Because the pilot would drastically reduce non-organic waste, it should incorporate every-other-week trash collection. Participants should have the option of using one of 3 different sizes of trash carts. For the pilot to gain broad acceptance in the county, residents in the pilot need to see that the less trash they produce, the smaller the cart they will need, and the less they will ultimately pay.



Finally, along with encouraging residents and community groups that want to do backyard composting, the County needs to site an organics processing facility similar to the successful Western Branch composting facility in Prince George's County. This facility will ultimately pay for itself through the sale of Leaf-Gro compost which is highly sought after by landscapers and gardeners alike.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify on this important long-term planning document.

Sincerely,

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