



Montgomery County Food Council Support Testimony  
Adoption of Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan

2020-2029

March 16, 2021

The Montgomery County Food Council has been actively engaged in conversations related to solid waste management throughout the past decade, and members of the Food Council's Environmental Impact Working Group played a critical role in the development of the Strategic Plan to Advance Composting and Compost Use ("Strategic Plan") released in April 2018, as well as the draft Climate Action Plan (CAP), released in November 2020. The Food Council is pleased to see the prominent inclusion of the "Strategic Plan" recommendations in the County's new Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (CSWMP), and we look forward to continuing to support the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and other agencies in implementing these recommendations and other key initiatives that will serve to increase food scraps composting capacity throughout the county.

The CSWMP identifies over 124,000 tons of food scraps that are disposed of each year in Montgomery County. A significant proportion of this preventable food waste can be reduced by increasing food donations and identifying and implementing other strategies to rescue and recover food that is safe for human consumption. Community Food Rescue (CFR), a program of Manna Food Center, has played an essential role in leading this work in the County, and the "matches" that CFR establishes between food producers, be it food producing farms, restaurants, food businesses, or food retailers, and the local food security network will continue to be necessary as we seek to simultaneously reduce food waste and address food security. The remaining food scraps should be composted, ideally locally, and used as a beneficial soil amendment to support local food production, soil health, and climate change solutions.

We encourage the County to continue pursuing the development of a robust and distributed composting infrastructure that encourages food scraps recycling through the establishment of a county-wide food scraps collection program, while reducing the environmental impacts from food waste management. We support increasing resident and commercial access to convenient and

accessible composting options that employ best practices, such as well-managed backyard, community, on-site, and on-farm composting. We also support the efforts of the County to expand opportunities to educate, train, and provide widespread, equitable access to the benefits of composting and finished compost for households, businesses, farms, and community gardens. We applaud the Council for the passage of ZTA 20-04 earlier this year, which will serve as a first step to increasing on-farm capacity for food waste composting and compost production, and we encourage the Council to revisit the other zoning ordinances and County codes identified in the “Strategic Plan” that may need to be addressed in order to expand in-County composting capacity.

The County’s Racial Equity and Social Justice Act requires that the Director of the Office of Legislative Oversight review each proposed bill with a racial equity and social justice lens, and we suggest that the same scrutiny could be applied to the CSWMP.<sup>1</sup> It is critical to consider the implications that each element of the CWSMP might have on communities throughout Montgomery County, and to ensure that *all* residents will stand to benefit from the proposed “Plan of Action.”

The Food Council intends to continue supporting the coordination of County planning processes related to food system sustainability, including the CSWMP, the CAP, and Thrive 2050, as each of these documents offer an opportunity to reinforce the County’s Zero Waste Goals and our shared intents to reduce food waste, increase regional food waste composting capacity, support the establishment of community composting education sites and composting-related educational programs and outreach, and build partnerships and foster collaboration between environmental stakeholders throughout the County.

Thank you for your consideration and ongoing support of fostering a more sustainable, equitable local food system in Montgomery County. Please contact [cnardi@mocofoodcouncil.org](mailto:cnardi@mocofoodcouncil.org) with questions or for more information.

*The Montgomery County Food Council is a non-profit organization formed and led by community members and representatives of local businesses, government, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions that broadly represent the food system both substantively and geographically. Our mission is to bring together a diverse representation of stakeholders to cultivate a vibrant food system in Montgomery County that consciously produces, distributes, and recycles food, making it accessible to all residents while promoting the health of the local food economy, its consumers, and the environment.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/RacialEquity/Bill27-19.pdf>