



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

FAIRFAX COUNTY ZERO WASTE SURVEY OVERVIEW AND KEY POINTS

Background

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requires that Fairfax County maintain a 20-year integrated solid waste management plan (SWMP). The SWMP must include ways to implement and track the management of waste, including the amount of waste created and the amount of material reused, recycled, composted, or sent to the waste-to-energy facility or landfill.

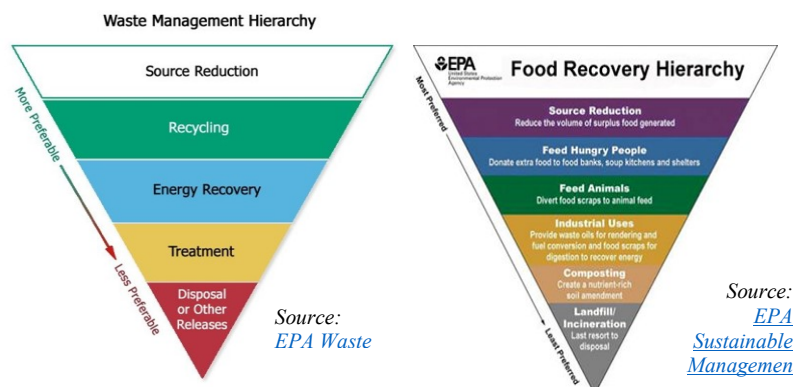
In 2022, Fairfax County published the [Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan \(CECAP\)](#) that set a goal to reach zero waste by 2040 by diverting 90% of waste away from trash disposal. Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services is updating the SWMP to include actions that will help us to reach our zero-waste goal.

The county is inviting you to complete a survey to provide feedback on your current trash and recycling practices and the proposed countywide zero-waste strategies. Your input will help the Board of Supervisors as they review the draft SWMP and proposed zero-waste strategies.

What is Zero Waste?

Zero waste is the practice of minimizing waste as close to zero as possible with a focus on making changes to everyday actions, including reducing waste at the source, reusing and repairing items, donating unwanted items, recycling materials, composting food scraps, and other sustainable practices. Zero-waste practices reduce pollution, save valuable resources, lessen the effects of climate change, and improve public health.

The United States Environment Protection Agency's Waste Management Hierarchy and Wasted Food Scale graphics illustrate these actions.



Proposed Key Strategies

The Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services has identified the following proposed countywide waste management strategies that can help us meet the 90% diversion goal by 2040. Ultimately, for us to succeed and reach 90%, all residents and businesses need to be involved. County staff are working to establish plans to ensure necessary resources are available that will enable equitable access and participation for all who live, work, and visit our county.

Countywide Service Model (Unified Sanitation District)

Fairfax County is considering transitioning to a county-managed waste service (Unified Sanitation District (USD)) model for residential and commercial waste collection. In this model, the county would engage and manage waste hauling contracts directly with the hauler instead of the current system where each residential household, property, or homeowners association makes individual arrangements. The county would handle negotiating collection fees and manage any billing or service issues.

Pay As You Throw

Fairfax County is considering transitioning to a pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) cost model. Currently, waste haulers charge households fixed rates for trash, recycling, and organics waste collection. Under a pay-as-you-throw model, residents would pay based on the amount of trash thrown away—the more you throw away as trash, the more you pay; the less you



throw away as trash, the less you pay. Recycling and organics collections would have fixed rates regardless of the amount placed out for recycling. Part of this strategy would include implementing actions to reduce financial burdens from this strategy on low-income individuals.

Mandatory Recycling and Organics Recycling

Under this proposed strategy, all residents in Fairfax County would be required to separate their recycling and organics (i.e., yard waste and food scraps) from general trash.

Zero-Waste Fee

A Zero-Waste Fee is being considered for households and businesses. The fee would assist in providing essential support for new waste processing facilities, zero-waste centers, resident education, and enforcement. Part of this strategy would include implementing actions to reduce financial burdens from this fee on low-income individuals.



Updating the County's Required List of Recyclables

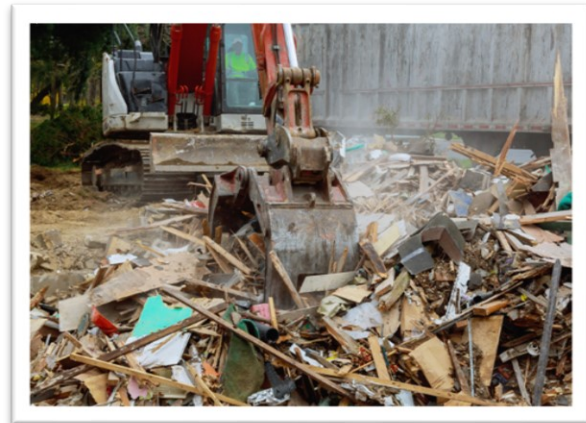
The county is considering expanding the list of items that residents must recycle in curbside collection carts and at drop-off sites.

Comprehensive Commercial and Multifamily Recycling Program

Fairfax is considering reviewing and expanding recycling requirements for multi-family residential and commercial properties, as 60% of Fairfax County's waste is generated from these sectors. The county is committed to ensuring that adequate infrastructure supports this strategy. Special consideration will be given to areas currently lacking proper infrastructure.

Construction & Demolition Debris

Construction and demolition debris is a major component in the county's generated waste, whether it is construction debris from small home projects or large development projects. This strategy aims to improve the recovery and recycling of this waste stream.



Education, Engagement, Evaluation and Enforcement

Many items that could be diverted through existing solid waste management programs are still being thrown away. To realize the full potential of existing waste diversion measures, the county would enhance current education, engagement, evaluation, and enforcement efforts for resource recovery.

Source Reduction Programs & Zero-Waste Centers

The county is exploring programming and services that reduce waste at the source and establish convenient Zero-Waste Centers throughout the county. These Zero-Waste Centers may include the recovery of household hazardous waste, electronics, textiles, plastic film, scrap metal, glass, batteries, and other items not taken in curbside recycling bins and carts.

Extended Producer Responsibility & New Technologies

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is an environmental policy that holds companies responsible for their products or packaging even after consumers have used them. This strategy would support legislative efforts to increase waste reduction and diversion strategies, such as EPR. The county would also monitor and implement new technologies to support the county's goal of reaching zero waste.

Fairfax County SWMP Timeline

The planning team began working on this project at the end of 2023 and will submit the plan to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in early 2025.