



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 16, 2021

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Bryan J. Hill
County Executive

SUBJECT: Zero Waste Plan for County and FCPS

Background

The Zero Waste Team, which includes the Department of Procurement and Material Management, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services' Solid Waste Management Program, Facilities Management Department, Park Authority, and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), has prepared a Zero Waste Plan (Plan) for County government and FCPS operations. The request to develop a plan for County government and FCPS operations to achieve Zero Waste by 2030 was made by the Joint Environmental Task Force (JET) in support of the goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040.

The Plan's executive summary is attached to this memorandum and the Plan will be presented at the September 28, 2021 Environmental Committee meeting.

The Zero Waste Plan

The Plan includes the following elements:

- Background information
 - Includes our goals and priorities
- Where we are now
 - Includes operational waste trends and relevant existing programs
- Where others are now
- Zero Waste strategies
 - Includes prioritization of recommendations, timeline, and COVID-19 considerations
- How we will achieve Zero Waste
 - Includes initial implementation structure
- Next steps

Stakeholder Involvement

The County and FCPS worked closely together to develop one Plan that is applicable to both organizations and intend to continue to collaborate throughout Plan implementation. In addition to the core departments named above who developed the Plan, many others were consulted for input especially in the development of strategies, implementation structure, and analysis of current conditions.

Collaboration will become even more important during the implementation of the Plan. As such, the Plan proposes an implementation structure aimed at consistently supporting departments and FCPS in their respective Zero Waste journeys.

Contact

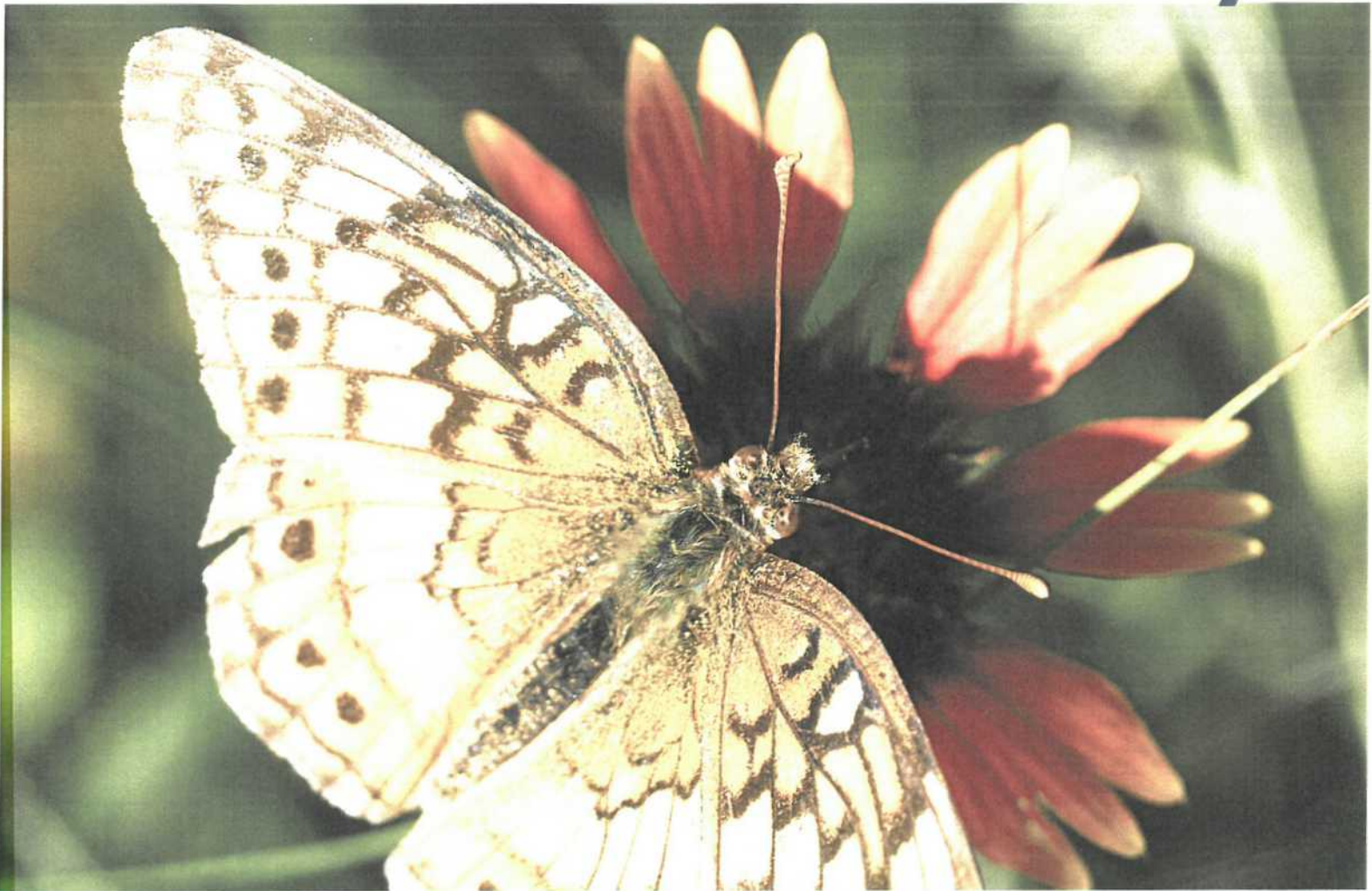
For questions or comments regarding this memo, contact Nathalie Owen (DPMM) at Nathalie.Owen@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Cc: Christina Jackson, Chief Financial Officer
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive
Kambiz Agazi, Director, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination
Jose Comayagua, Director, Facilities Management Department
Christopher Herrington, Director, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES)
Cathy Muse, Director, Department of Procurement and Material Management
Jai Cole, Director, Park Authority
Justin Moss, Director, Facilities Management, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)
Chris McGough, Department of Procurement and Material Management
Nathalie Owen, Department of Procurement and Material Management
Eric Forbes, Solid Waste Management Program, DPWES
Emmanuel Waleola, Facilities Management Department
Keith Snyder, Park Authority
Ali Culhane, Get2Green, FCPS
Scott Larson, Facilities Management, FCPS

Attachment: Fairfax County Zero Waste Plan Executive Summary

Fairfax County Government and Schools Zero Waste Plan

Executive Summary



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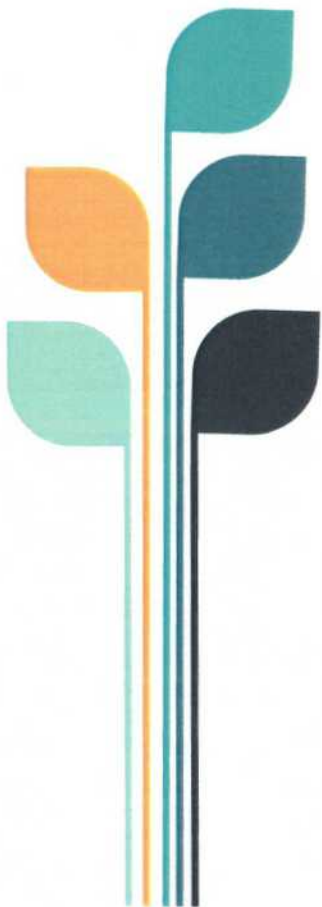
September 2021



How the Plan Came to Be

In late 2018, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors called upon Fairfax County staff to identify potential environmental collaboration areas with Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). As a result of that effort, the County established the Joint Environmental Task Force (JET), comprised of County and School staff and community partners, to proactively and equitably address climate change and environmental sustainability.

In 2019, the JET worked to establish its mission and determine focus areas for further development by subcommittees for energy, transportation, waste management and recycling, and workforce development. The JET's Waste Management and Recycling Subcommittee set a bold goal for Fairfax County government and schools: **Zero Waste by 2030**. With just nine years to eliminate waste production by the area's government and schools, a Zero Waste Planning team was assembled to begin developing this Zero Waste Plan at the onset of 2021.



**Together, we can
help create a more
sustainable future.**

Waste by the Numbers

GOVERNMENT

13,000

Staff

252

County Facilities*

14 million

Park visitors

Receive weekly municipal solid waste and single-stream recycling collection services by the County Agency Route program.

SCHOOLS

180,000

Students

25,000

Staff

207

Locations including 198 schools

Receive weekly municipal solid waste and single-stream recycling collection services from contracted third party vendors.

CURRENT DIVERSION

15%

County government

18.5%

County schools

Estimated percentage of material currently being diverted from the trash. For more detailed information on diversion rates, see Overall Diversion Performance section.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSION

57%

County government

71%

County schools

Estimated percentage of material currently in the trash that could be diverted.

*Government offices, public safety buildings, operational/maintenance facilities, public places, social services facilities.

What Zero Waste Means to Us

Zero Waste is a philosophy, commitment, and design principle seeking to minimize waste to close to nothing by adopting a holistic and climate-conscious approach to the vast flow of resources and waste that move through society.

Working toward Zero Waste in our government and school operations involves four essential strategies – Reach out, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

The 4 R's



REACH OUT



REDUCE



REUSE



RECYCLE



**Zero Waste is much more than
a waste diversion effort.**

Addressing waste at its source by systematically reducing and reusing materials holds the greatest promise for preventing waste, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and protecting the environment.

The goals and strategies in this Plan aim to reflect this.

Goals and Strategies

2 Goals

Fairfax County's aspirational goal for its government and schools is two-fold. By 2030, we will:



Divert 90% of waste from disposal.



Reduce the overall waste generated by 25% from 2018 levels.

% as based on tonnage/weight

Note: Data on both waste and recycling generation for each facility is necessary so the reduction efforts can be measured and managed.

24 Strategies

To achieve these goals, 50 possible options were identified and 24 optimal strategies were selected. These options and selections were the result of:

- Analyses of the County's existing Zero-Waste related programs, waste and recycling audits, a review of strategies utilized in other similar jurisdictions and by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the Zero Waste Employee Survey conducted in May 2021
- Analyses of each strategy's potential impact toward our Zero Waste goal and its feasibility and suitability for implementation in Fairfax County's unique operations

The following tables describe the 24 optimal strategies and how they tie to the 4R's. The complete Plan also includes cost and timeline information as well as a discussion of health and safety.

Theme 1: Culture: Education and Outreach



Reach out



Reduce



Reuse



Recycle

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|-----|---|---|--|--|--|
| 1.1 | Designate Zero Waste Champions | • | | | |
| 1.2 | Develop Strategies to Recognize, Motivate, and Compensate Staff | • | | | |
| 1.3 | Develop Educational Resources, Signage and Training | • | | | |
| 1.4 | Facilitate Action through Campaigns, Toolkits and Guides | • | | | |
| 1.5 | Maximize Opportunities for Student Engagement | • | | | |

Theme 2: Program Establishment



Reach out



Reduce



Reuse



Recycle

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | Establish Zero Waste Team | • | • | • | • |
| 2.2 | Expand Sustainable Purchasing Program | | • | • | • |
| 2.3 | Establish Commitments by all County Departments and Schools to Participate in Zero Waste Efforts | • | | | |
| 2.4 | Establish Programmatic Reporting of Activities by County Departments and Schools | • | | | |
| 2.5 | Measure Success: Waste Audits, Reporting, Facility Assessments | • | | | |
| 2.6 | Establish or Expand Alternate Recycling, Reuse, and Recovery Program Partnerships | | • | • | • |
| 2.7 | Launch a Reusable Packaging Program | | • | • | |
| 2.8 | Establish or Expand Edible Food Rescue and Donation Program | | • | • | |

Theme 3: Facility Upgrades



Reach out



Reduce



Reuse



Recycle

3.1 Design and Retrofit for Zero Waste

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3.2 Standardize and Increase Waste Receptacles and Signage

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3.3 Implement Reusable Food Service Ware

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3.4 Install Additional Air Hand Dryers

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3.5 Install Additional Bottle Filling Stations

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Theme 4: Policy Implementation/ Board Directives



Reach out



Reduce



Reuse



Recycle

4.1 Establish a Zero Waste Policy

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4.2 Establish Funding and Allocate Resources Appropriate to Meet Zero Waste Goals

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4.3 Establish Board Directive/Policy for Organics or a Food Disposal Ban

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4.4 Establish Board Directive/Policy to Ban Single-use Plastics

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4.5 Support Legislative Actions at the State and Federal Levels

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4.6 Use Events as a Catalyst to Minimize or Eliminate Waste

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How We Will Achieve Zero Waste

Achieving Zero Waste by 2030 is no small task. It will require participation from every employee, student, and user of government and school facilities, as well as County and FCPS leadership and business partners. For Fairfax County's complex and diverse operations to reach this goal, building a strong, foundational implementation structure and network is essential.

The Zero Waste Plan describes the necessary participation, resources, and mechanisms for ensuring and measuring progress, and short-term priorities for 2022 to set up a successful implementation.



Commencement

While this Plan marks an important milestone in Fairfax County's Zero Waste journey, this journey has been underway for years. Government and school operations have built a strong foundation for achieving Zero Waste as demonstrated by the waste diversion and reduction programs in the Where We Are Now section.

Successful implementation of this Plan will depend on changing thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes related to consumption and waste. The four essential strategies - Reach Out, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (the 4Rs) - are key drivers to achieve this goal, especially as the County and FCPS shift to an approach prioritizing upstream waste reduction rather than downstream waste management. The focus on engaging staff, students, and facility users will help lead the way in achieving Zero Waste.

Waste audits conducted during the development of this Plan emphasized the opportunity for improvement in waste reduction. The size and complexity of Fairfax County's government and school operations present substantial challenges in changing current practices around waste. The strategies and actions recommended in this Plan will require significant financial investment and the dedication of all facility users to succeed. However, overcoming these challenges will bring meaningful long-term environmental, economic, and societal benefits.



**Now that we have the
roadmap to achieve Zero
Waste, let's roll up our
sleeves and get started.
There's Zero time to Waste!**

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