

Fund 40130: Leaf Collection

Mission To provide curbside vacuum leaf collection service for customers within designated sanitary leaf districts on three separate occasions during the leaf collection season (November through January). Curbside vacuum leaf collection conveniently clears leaves from residential neighborhoods.

Focus The Solid Waste Management Program (SWMP) provides curbside vacuum leaf collection within Leaf Districts served through Fund 40130, Leaf Collection. Leaf Districts are created through a petition process established by the Code of Virginia, Section 21-118.2. Section 15.2-935 allows local jurisdictions to prohibit the placement of leaves and grass in landfills and other disposal facilities. To that end, leaf and other yard waste recycling was established in 1994 by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. The Board approved the amendment to the County's solid waste ordinance, Chapter 109.1, to require residents to separate yard waste from trash and other recyclables for placement at the curb separately to allow for collection and delivery to a yard waste recycling facility.

Residents move leaves to the street where they are vacuumed using specialized equipment into trucks, which is hauled to SWMP facilities for either onsite shredding into leaf mulch or for transfer to a compost facility outside of Fairfax County. SWMP has divided vacuum leaf residences into ten service areas. Email updates are sent to customers who have subscribed for advance notice of collection dates, and signs containing QR codes linked to the schedule online are posted in neighborhoods. Each residence receives three rounds of leaf collection each season to ensure sufficient time passes for leaf accumulation and collection at the curb.

Because of the seasonal nature of vacuum leaf collection, SWMP relies on existing solid waste collection employees, limited term employees, and outside contractors for this service. The majority of SWMP vacuum leaf collection equipment is only used for leaf season and is idle for the remainder of the year. Vacuum equipment cannot be used when leaves are frozen.

There were major service delays during the FY 2023 season caused by early leaf volumes that were higher than normal, 50 percent higher total leaf volumes, as well as staffing, equipment, and contractor issues. Throughout the service delay, SWMP received many concerns from customers about the public safety impacts of uncollected leaves including blocked storm drainages creating flooding concerns, pedestrian, and vehicle conflicts when pedestrians are forced to walk in streets, fire hazards from vehicles parking on leaves, slip and fall hazards from walking on slippery leaves, and reduced on-street parking.

The current service model also conflicts with the Board of Supervisors' environmental directives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards zero waste outcomes. Carbon is expended to move leaves to the curb, to collect leaves, to transport leaves to the processing facility, and to transport the compost back into the landscape from which it was generated. On-site composting of leaves is a more sustainable model for managing leaves.

SWMP remains concerned about its ability to guarantee timely service due to unpredictable leaf drop timing. Because of prioritizing public safety and vacuum leaf service conflicts with Board of Supervisor sustainability goals, SWMP developed a proposal to discontinue Vacuum Leaf Service after the FY 2024 season. SWMP underwent a public opinion survey in early FY 2024 to receive customer feedback regarding the staff proposal. 53 percent of respondents believe the service is convenient and 86.5 percent did not support the staff proposal.

Fund 40130: Leaf Collection



Upon reviewing the result of the public opinion survey, SWMP staff are postponing the proposal to discontinue vacuum leaf service after the FY 2024 season. Although the rationale for discontinuing the service permanently persists, the strong negative reaction of current customers indicates that additional outreach to educate customers is needed as is more time for customers to identify alternative leaf management methods.

Revenue is derived from a collection levy (service fee) that is charged to homeowners within the leaf districts. The FY 2025 levy of \$0.019 per \$100 of assessed real estate value represents an increase from the FY 2024 rate of \$0.012 per \$100 of assessed real estate value. This rate increase reflects the additional cost of providing the service through County and contract employees, and the need to replace aging capital equipment. SWMP will continue to ensure an adequate balance between real estate tax revenues dedicated to leaf collection operations and usage of accumulated operational surpluses to sustain operations. However, additional rate increases are projected in future fiscal years to meet the operational and aging capital equipment needs of this program. A preliminary rate of \$0.024 per \$100 of assessed real estate value is estimated for FY 2026 and subject to further review with an outside rate consultant.

Performance Measures for Solid Waste are displayed at a program-wide level. Please refer to the Solid Waste Management Program Overview in Volume 2 of the [FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan](#) for those items.

Organizational Chart



Budget and Staff Resources

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Adopted	FY 2024 Revised	FY 2025 Advertised	FY 2025 Adopted
FUNDING					
Expenditures:					
Personnel Services	\$578,914	\$441,926	\$641,926	\$872,141	\$872,141
Operating Expenses	2,495,818	1,899,736	2,459,736	2,938,323	2,938,323
Capital Equipment	73,749	630,000	737,308	1,000,000	1,000,000
Total Expenditures	\$3,148,481	\$2,971,662	\$3,838,970	\$4,810,464	\$4,810,464

**FY 2025
Funding
Adjustments**

The following funding adjustments from the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2025 program. Included are all adjustments recommended by the County Executive that were approved by the Board of Supervisors, as well as any additional Board of Supervisors' actions, as approved in the adoption of the Budget on May 7, 2024.

Employee Compensation \$430,215

An increase of \$430,215 in Personnel Services includes \$9,201 for a 2.00 percent market rate adjustment (MRA) for all employees, effective July 2024. The increase of \$17,618 is included to support employee retention and recruitment efforts that will reduce pay compression and align the County's pay structures with the market based on benchmark data. The remaining increase of \$403,396 is due to the realignment of payroll cost allocations and additional staffing levels required to operate the program.

Operating Expenses \$1,038,587

An increase of \$1,038,587 in Operating Expenses is mainly due to increases in costs for contracted hauling and employment services, leaf disposal fees at non-County composting facilities, and fuel.

Capital Equipment \$370,000

Funding of \$1,000,000 in Capital Equipment reflects an increase of \$370,000 over the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan, including \$930,000 to replace three Leaf Trucks and \$70,000 to replace one Leaf Tag Trailer. The replacement equipment has exceeded its useful life and is required to be replaced based on age, mileage, frequency of costly repairs, excessive downtime, and overall condition of the equipment. There has been a substantial increase in steel prices, which has increased the cost of new equipment along with the program capital equipment reinvestment.

**Changes to
FY 2024
Adopted
Budget Plan**

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2024 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2023 Carryover Review, FY 2024 Third Quarter Review, and all other approved changes through April 30, 2024.

Carryover Adjustments \$197,308

As part of the *FY 2023 Carryover Review*, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of \$197,308 due to encumbered carryover in Capital Equipment for the purchase of two leaf tag trailers and a new hoist and truck body.

Third Quarter Adjustments \$670,000

As part of the *FY 2024 Third Quarter Review*, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of \$670,000, including an increase of \$200,000 in Personnel Services to cover increased overtime costs associated with staffing shortages, and an increase of \$470,000 in Operating Expenses due to higher than anticipated contract collection costs.

FUND STATEMENT

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan	FY 2024 Revised Budget Plan	FY 2025 Advertised Budget Plan	FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan
Beginning Balance	\$5,069,996	\$3,765,140	\$4,324,673	\$3,821,778	\$3,152,184
Revenue:					
Interest on Investments	\$85,057	\$14,839	\$14,839	\$44,697	\$44,697
Sale of Equipment	0	0	0	35,000	35,000
Leaf Collection Levy/Fee	2,372,101	2,705,642	2,705,642	4,223,359	4,223,359
Total Revenue	\$2,457,158	\$2,720,481	\$2,720,481	\$4,303,056	\$4,303,056
Total Available	\$7,527,154	\$6,485,621	\$7,045,154	\$8,124,834	\$7,455,240
Expenditures:					
Personnel Services	\$578,914	\$441,926	\$641,926	\$872,141	\$872,141
Operating Expenses ¹	2,495,818	1,899,736	2,459,736	2,938,323	2,938,323
Capital Equipment	73,749	630,000	737,308	1,000,000	1,000,000
Total Expenditures	\$3,148,481	\$2,971,662	\$3,838,970	\$4,810,464	\$4,810,464
Transfers Out:					
General Fund (10001) ²	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$44,193	\$44,193
Total Transfers Out	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$44,193	\$44,193
Total Disbursements	\$3,202,481	\$3,025,662	\$3,892,970	\$4,854,657	\$4,854,657
Ending Balance	\$4,324,673	\$3,459,959	\$3,152,184	\$3,270,177	\$2,600,583
Operating Reserve ³	\$864,935	\$691,992	\$630,437	\$654,035	\$520,117
Capital Equipment Reserve ⁴	864,935	691,992	630,437	654,035	520,117
Rate Stabilization Reserve ⁵	2,594,803	2,075,975	1,891,310	1,962,107	1,560,349
Unreserved Balance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Leaf Collection Levy/Fee per \$100 of Assessed Value	\$0.012	\$0.012	\$0.012	\$0.019	\$0.019

¹ In order to account for revenues and expenditures in the proper fiscal year, audit adjustments were reflected as a decrease of \$406.09 to FY 2023 expenditures to record accrued expenses for contracts and building maintenance in the proper fiscal year. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) reflected all audit adjustments in FY 2023. Details of the audit adjustments were found in Attachment VI of the FY 2024 Third Quarter Package.

² Funding in the amount of \$44,193 is transferred to the General Fund to partially offset central support services supported by the General Fund, which benefits Fund 40130. These indirect costs include support services such as Human Resources, Purchasing, Budget and other administrative services.

³ The Operating Reserve provides a minimum of 15 percent of the operating budget to maintain financial stability for unforeseen expenditures.

⁴ The Capital Equipment Reserve is for future capital equipment requirements based on replacement value and age of equipment.

⁵ The Rate Stabilization Reserve provides funds to mitigate against any need for an unusually large rate increase in a future year.