

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, 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 service delays during the FY 2025 season caused by early leaf volumes and a severe winter storm event that occurred during the second round of leaf collection. SWMP amended the contract with the hauling contractor to include a higher ratio of contractors per county-operated collection vehicles. In addition, the new model for FY 2025 included greater use of trailer (tag) units and a more focused use of specific county collection vehicles (automated trucks and self-contained leaf machines) in certain areas. SWMP set an ambitious goal for the completion of the FY 2025 leaf collection season. Based on the outcomes, SWMP will evaluate the schedule for FY 2026 with the goal of completing the leaf collection season in a shorter period of time to avoid setbacks caused by winter weather.

SWMP remains concerned about its ability to guarantee timely service due to unpredictable leaf drop timing and weather variability. 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.

Due to the concerns with vacuum leaf service program quality, and the program's conflict with the Board of Supervisor's sustainability and environmental goals, SWMP developed a proposal to discontinue vacuum leaf service after the FY 2024 season. SWMP conducted a public opinion survey in early FY 2024 to gather customer feedback regarding the staff proposal. As a result of the survey, SWMP discovered 53 percent of respondents believe the service is convenient and 86.5 percent of respondents did not support discontinuation of vacuum leaf service.



Upon reviewing the results of the public opinion survey, SWMP staff postponed the discontinuation of vacuum leaf service. Although the rationale for discontinuing the service remained, the strong negative reaction from current customers indicated that additional outreach to educate the public was needed, as well as allowing 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 2026 levy of \$0.019 per \$100 of assessed real estate value remains the same as the rate set in FY 2025. 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. It is anticipated that additional rate increases will not be necessary in the next five fiscal years.

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 2026 Advertised Budget Plan](#) for those items.

Organizational Chart



Budget and Staff Resources

Category	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Adopted	FY 2025 Revised	FY 2026 Advertised
FUNDING				
Expenditures:				
Personnel Services	\$480,554	\$872,141	\$872,141	\$921,829
Operating Expenses	2,189,301	2,938,323	2,938,323	2,590,203
Capital Equipment	197,308	1,000,000	1,000,000	825,000
Total Expenditures	\$2,867,163	\$4,810,464	\$4,810,464	\$4,337,032

**FY 2026
Funding
Adjustments**

The following funding adjustments from the FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2026 program:

Employee Compensation **\$49,688**

An increase of \$49,688 in Personnel Services is due to the realignment of payroll cost allocations and additional staffing levels required to operate the program.

Operating Expenses **(\$348,120)**

A decrease of \$348,120 in Operating Expenses is based on actual trends in recent years.

Capital Equipment **(\$175,000)**

Funding of \$825,000 in Capital Equipment, a decrease of \$175,000 from the FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan, is included for replacement equipment that has exceeded its useful life. The replacement equipment includes \$600,000 for two leaf trucks, \$160,000 for two leaf vacuum tag trailers, and \$65,000 for one pickup truck.

**Changes to
FY 2025
Adopted
Budget Plan**

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2025 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2024 Carryover Review and all other approved changes through December 31, 2024.

There have been no adjustments to this fund since approval of the FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan.

FUND STATEMENT

Category	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Adopted Budget Plan	FY 2025 Revised Budget Plan	FY 2026 Advertised Budget Plan
Beginning Balance	\$4,324,673	\$3,152,184	\$4,139,146	\$3,587,545
Revenue:				
Interest on Investments	\$111,816	\$44,697	\$44,697	\$35,879
Sale of Equipment	0	35,000	35,000	25,000
Leaf Collection Levy/Fee	2,623,820	4,223,359	4,223,359	4,345,235
Total Revenue	\$2,735,636	\$4,303,056	\$4,303,056	\$4,406,114
Total Available	\$7,060,309	\$7,455,240	\$8,442,202	\$7,993,659
Expenditures:				
Personnel Services	\$480,554	\$872,141	\$872,141	\$921,829
Operating Expenses	2,189,301	2,938,323	2,938,323	2,590,203
Capital Equipment	197,308	1,000,000	1,000,000	825,000
Total Expenditures	\$2,867,163	\$4,810,464	\$4,810,464	\$4,337,032
Transfers Out:				
General Fund (10001) ¹	\$54,000	\$44,193	\$44,193	\$44,193
Total Transfers Out	\$54,000	\$44,193	\$44,193	\$44,193
Total Disbursements	\$2,921,163	\$4,854,657	\$4,854,657	\$4,381,225
Ending Balance	\$4,139,146	\$2,600,583	\$3,587,545	\$3,612,434
Operating Reserve ²	\$827,829	\$520,117	\$717,509	\$722,487
Capital Equipment Reserve ³	827,829	520,117	717,509	722,487
Rate Stabilization Reserve ⁴	2,483,488	1,560,349	2,152,527	2,167,460
Unreserved Balance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Leaf Collection Levy/Fee per \$100 of Assessed Value	\$0.012	\$0.019	\$0.019	\$0.019

¹ 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.

² The Operating Reserve provides a minimum of 15 percent of the operating budget to maintain financial stability for unforeseen expenditures.

³ The Capital Equipment Reserve is for future capital equipment requirements based on replacement value and age of equipment.

⁴ The Rate Stabilization Reserve provides funds to mitigate against any need for an unusually large rate increase in a future year.