



# Howard County

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*Internal Memorandum*

SUBJECT: DRAFT 2014-2024 Solid Waste Plan  
Executive Summary

TO: Lonnie R. Robbins,  
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Mark De Luca  
Bureau Chief, Environmental Services

DATE: March 23, 2015

Howard County maintains a comprehensive 10-year Solid Waste Plan that discusses the County's current solid waste program and projects the needs for the next ten years. The current Plan is for the ten-year period between 2014 and 2024. DPZ staff reviewed the Plan for consistency with Howard County's General Plan, PlanHoward 2030 and has provided a Statement of Certification. Also, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has provided a first review of the plan and found it currently meets the regulations, guidelines, and prior goals established by the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, Section 9-1703. The Plan will be subject to a second review and approval by MDE.

The Plan also adopts the future diversion, reduction and recycling goals of PlanHoward 2030 and MDE. While this Plan is a 10-year plan, it is subject to review and revision on a 3-year cycle and can be amended at any time as new state regulation and law may require.

**Legislative Additions and Changes to the Plan:**

The previously approved 2003 Plan was revised to incorporate four Plan amendments which were adopted either by bill or resolution by the County Council.

CR117-2010 addressed recycling in public schools

CR 110-2011 addressed collecting and recycling of fluorescent light bulbs that contain mercury

CR7-2014 required apartment and condominium to submit recycling plans to the county

CB2-2014 provided enforcement for compliance with the apartment/condo recycling law at the local level.

Additionally, in the 2014 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly passed Senate Bill 781: Environment-Recycling-Special Events, which amended Sections 9-1703 (b) and (g) and added Section 9-1712 of the Environment Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. The law requires counties to revise their recycling plan to include special event recycling by October 1, 2015. The state law became effective October 1, 2014.

Specifically, the law requires special event organizers to provide for recycling in accordance with the county Solid Waste Management Plan. Special events subject to the law are those that:

- a. Include temporary or periodic use of a public street, publicly owned site or facility, or public park;
- b. Serve food or drinks; and
- c. Are expected to have 200 or more persons in attendance.

Special event recycling has been included in this Plan under Section 5.6.3. It will be adopted as part of the Council-approved Solid Waste Plan.

### **Report Summary:**

#### **Trash**

Currently, trash is exported out of the county through an export contract. This practice will continue through the plan period to 2024.

During the plan period, the county population will increase from approximately 300,000 residents in 2014 to 350,000 residents in 2024. Based on the population totals, we anticipate approximately 131,000 households by 2024. Not all of the projected household will receive public service. Some will retain private services. However, as service areas grow the size of trash and recycling routes will be evaluated for efficiency. Adjustments may be necessary to maintain the current level of service.

In 2013, the county residential curbside collections program picked up 100,000 tons of trash and 60,000 tons of recyclables. In the same year, commercial properties contributed 320,000 tons of trash and 192,460 tons of recyclables for a total of 672,460 tons of waste generated in the County. By 2024 we estimate the total waste generated in the County will be approximately 776,520 tons.

Considering population growth and the current waste-generation rate per capita, residential trash is expected to increase to approximately 114,000 tons by 2024. Based on these estimates, we do not foresee any change in our current export practice over the next ten-year period.

If we continue our trash export practice along with the minimal use of our landfill, the estimated life of the landfill is approximately 120 years.

Should we need to use the landfill in the absence of an export contract, the current landfill life is estimated to be 3 years. Design and implementation of the two remaining unconstructed cells would need to be expedited. Design and construction is estimated to take 2 years. Funds for design and construction are set aside and adjusted annually within the capital budget to accomplish this should it ever become necessary. With all cells constructed at the Alpha Ridge facility, landfill life would only be extended 6 to 10 years.

### **Recycling:**

From the 2003 Plan, our mandated recycling goal has been 35 percent by 2015. The County is currently at a 52 percent recycling rate.

The voluntary state goal for 2020 is 60 percent. The PlanHoward 2030 recycling goal is 75 percent by 2030 and the current Maryland zero-waste recycling goal is 80 percent by 2040.

We have already met the mandated 2015 recycling goal. In order to meet the 2020 voluntary goal, we believe expansion of the curbside food scrap program to more county residents as well as to the county public schools will help the county meet or exceed the 60 percent target.

Moving forward, a multi-faceted strategy will be needed to meet future goals in 2030 and 2040. For example, an increase in business recycling through the existing cooperative or other future program coupled with better recording keeping will help us make great strides in meeting the goals. Other steps may include:

- increased recycling of targeted materials such as textiles and Styrofoam
- continued expansion of the food scraps program
- opening an eastern regional drop-off facility for residents
- increased efforts in reduction and reuse programs and activities.

Success of the plan depends not only on efforts of County staff, but support from residents, elected officials, local businesses and a continuing belief in the importance of being responsible environmental stewards.