



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Khalil Zaied, Acting Director, Dept of Public Works <i>Khalil Zaied</i>
DATE	June 24, 2024
SUBJECT	City Council Bill 23-0466 (Recyclable Materials and Yard Waste)

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400

6/24/24

Position: Support with Amendment

SUMMARY OF POSITION

City Council Bill 23-0466 would prohibit the disposal of recyclable materials and yard waste in landfills or incinerators by October 1, 2025.

The Department of Public Works' Bureau of Solid Waste conducts separate curbside collections of mixed refuse and of recyclables weekly and provides five residential drop off locations for mixed refuse, recyclables, textiles, bulk items, electronics, food waste, and other materials. Yard waste may be set out separately for curbside collection on mixed refuse days, with special accommodations for seasonal collection of leaves and holiday trees. While recyclables are delivered to a vendor for processing and repurposing, yard waste is collected with mixed refuse and is incinerated or landfilled.

An eastside transfer station, to be located at Bowley's Lane, is currently under design. In addition to providing a new transfer station to supplement the current Northwest Transfer Station, this location will provide a more convenient and efficient drop off location for our solid waste collections crews, a third location for small haulers, a well designed residential drop off location, and the City's first composting facility. An additional \$16 million will be needed to fully fund the construction of this facility complex. The Department recently received a \$4 million federal grant to fund a scalable composting facility that would be capable of processing 12,000 tons per year of organic matter. An additional \$4 million would get this compost facility to full size, doubling the amount of organic material it could process. Based on four (4) waste sorts conducted for the *Less Waste Better Baltimore* plan in 2019, approximately 36,300 tons of residential yard waste per year was ending up in mixed refuse curbside collections. To address how to keep yard waste out of the incinerator and landfill, the Bureau of Solid Waste's Office of Waste Diversion is developing an organics diversion plan that would be

scalable and done in phases to separately collect organic materials. While still a work in progress, the draft plan is considering a phased approach to get yard waste out of the mixed refuse stream. As with any change in services, an educational and behavioral change process would be essential to successfully guide residents into a new way of managing yard waste.

Phase 1 -

- This first phase requires the development of a yard waste composting facility at Bowley's Lane, the location of the new Eastside Transfer Station. As noted above, the compost facility could initially handle approximately 12,000 tons of yard waste and with additional funding, could double the input. Composting would be the ultimate destination for these organic materials.
- Yard waste currently collected by mixed refuse collection crews would transition to a 311 Service Request, including pickups of leaves and holiday trees. If a Monday collection day were selected, it would allow these collections crews to use the routine services vehicles that collect recyclables and mixed refuse Tuesdays through Fridays. A limit such as 10 bags per stop would need to be considered to assure all 311 tickets were addressed timely.
- To enhance this program, a separate roll-off for yard waste at Sisson Street residential convenience center could provide an additional option for residents to correctly divert their organics.

Phase 2 -

- The second phase would build upon the elements of Phase 1 but increase the capacity and the types of the materials collected and processed.
- The yard waste would continue to be collected separately from mixed refuse, but for the compost facility to accept comingled food scraps and a curbside collection pilot, the facility would have to transition to a more complex composting system. In-vessel systems would need to be purchased that could also process non-recyclable paper, animal manure and bedding, industrial food processing, and other materials.
- Removing more compostable materials from the waste stream helps increase the City's diversion rate, but does require more nuanced programs, pilot programs that may need a fee to support the collection, more complex systems to process the materials, and willing communities to absorb the changing services.

Phase 3 -

- Based on the performance and data gathered from Phases 1 and 2, Phase 3 would consider scalable options.
- Would multiple mid-sized composting facilities best serve Baltimore City or could a large-scale composting facility successfully serve the City and the surrounding region.
- Should a curbside organics collection be offered through an opt-in fee-based program for weekly collections by contracted organic haulers, or should curbside collection be provided to all residents and the organics hauling contract costs supplemented by City taxes or fee systems.
- Activities to support these scaling up decisions would be part of this Phase, such as organics hauler focus groups, compost training facilities, and compost operator training scholarships to develop a strong and local workforce.

The Department of Public Works supports passage of City Council Bill 23-0466 as proposed to be amended by the Administration that would change the implementation date to January 1, 2032.