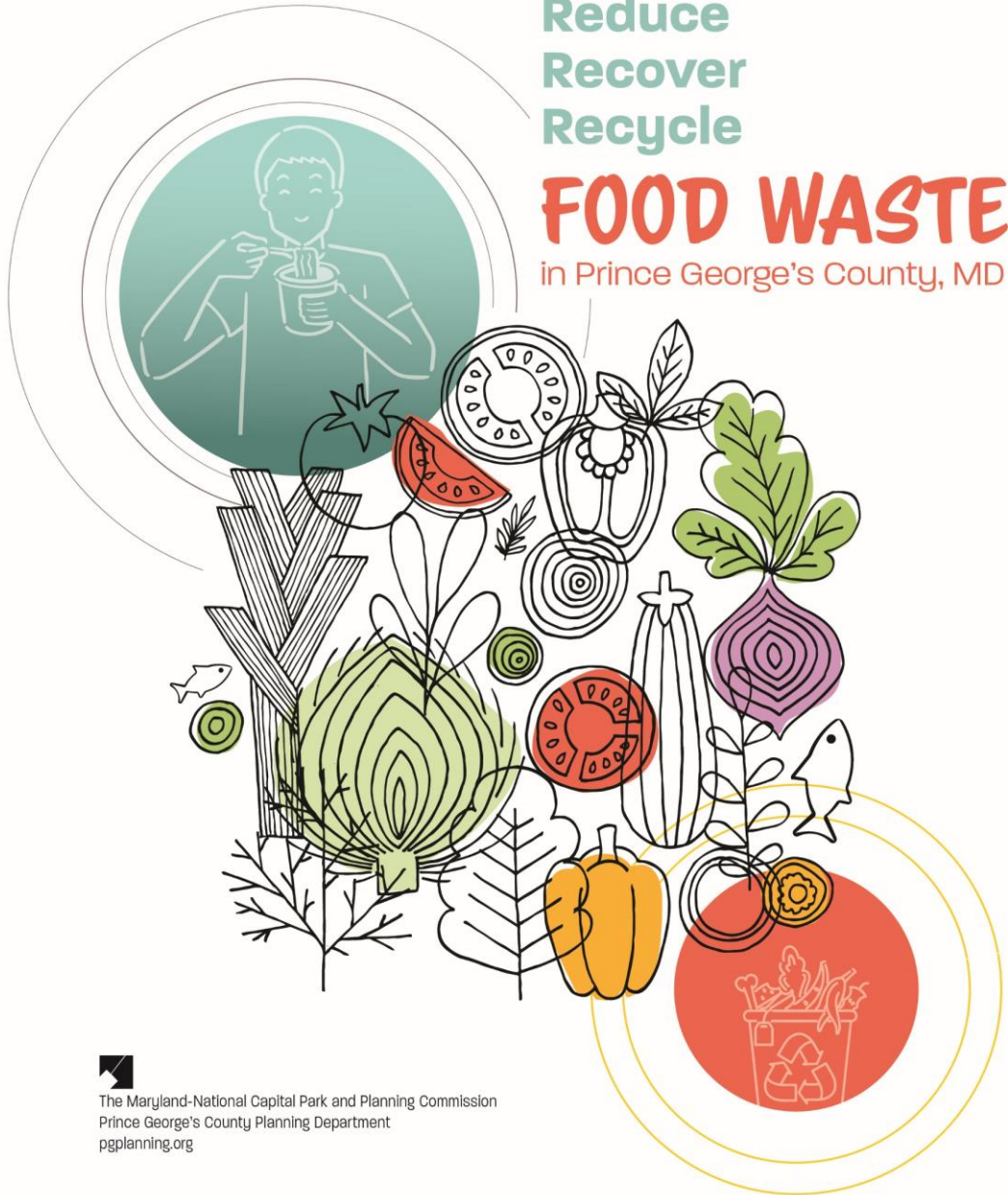


**Reduce  
Recover  
Recycle**

# **FOOD WASTE**

in Prince George's County, MD



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Prince George's County Planning Department  
pgplanning.org

**M-NCPPC  
Prince George's County  
Planning Department**

**Presentation to the  
Prince George's County Council**

**April 23, 2019**

# What is food waste?



**Food waste** is food that is not consumed by humans and discarded.

Food discarded while it is still edible is considered *wasted food*.

Food that is no longer appropriate for human consumption, usually called *food scraps*, may be reusable in a variety of ways.

# Where does food waste happen?

At every stage of the food supply chain from farm to fork:

- Fields/orchards/vineyards
- Processing and packing
- Storage and distribution
- Retail outlets
- Restaurants/cafeterias
- Homes



# Root causes of wasting food

- Unavoidable losses due to natural causes during production
- Rejection for not meeting industry's cosmetic standards
- Storage problems and food's long journey
- Confusing date labels
- Overestimating consumption
- Oversized portions at restaurants
- Fear of liability to donate



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# Why is food waste a problem?

## Excessive

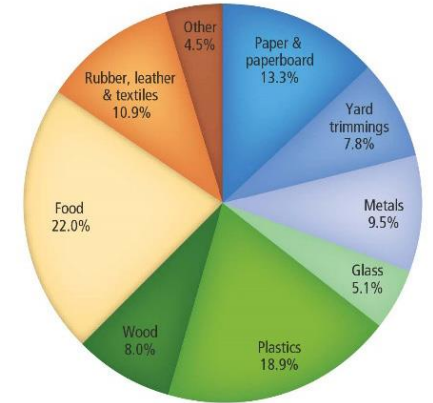
**40%** of all food produced in the U.S. is wasted

**62.5 million tons** of all food waste is generated annually



# Environmental impacts

Food is the largest component of landfills amounting to 22 percent



**Food waste is responsible for:**

- **9%** of greenhouse gas footprint
- **21%** of water use
- **28%** of cropland

**Wasting food means wasting resources**

When we waste one egg, we waste **52** gallons of water



**Why is food waste a problem?**

# Why is food waste a problem?

## Economic impacts

**\$218** billion Spent per year on wasted food

**1.3%** of U.S. GDP

**\$450** annual cost of wasted food per person

## Why is food waste a problem?

## Social impacts

- While 40 percent of food is wasted, millions suffer from food insecurity, including 14.4 percent of Prince George's County residents.
- 25 percent of food calories intended for human consumption is not consumed.

If 30 percent of food waste is recovered, it would feed all food insecure Americans





# National efforts to reduce food waste

## Federal food waste policy

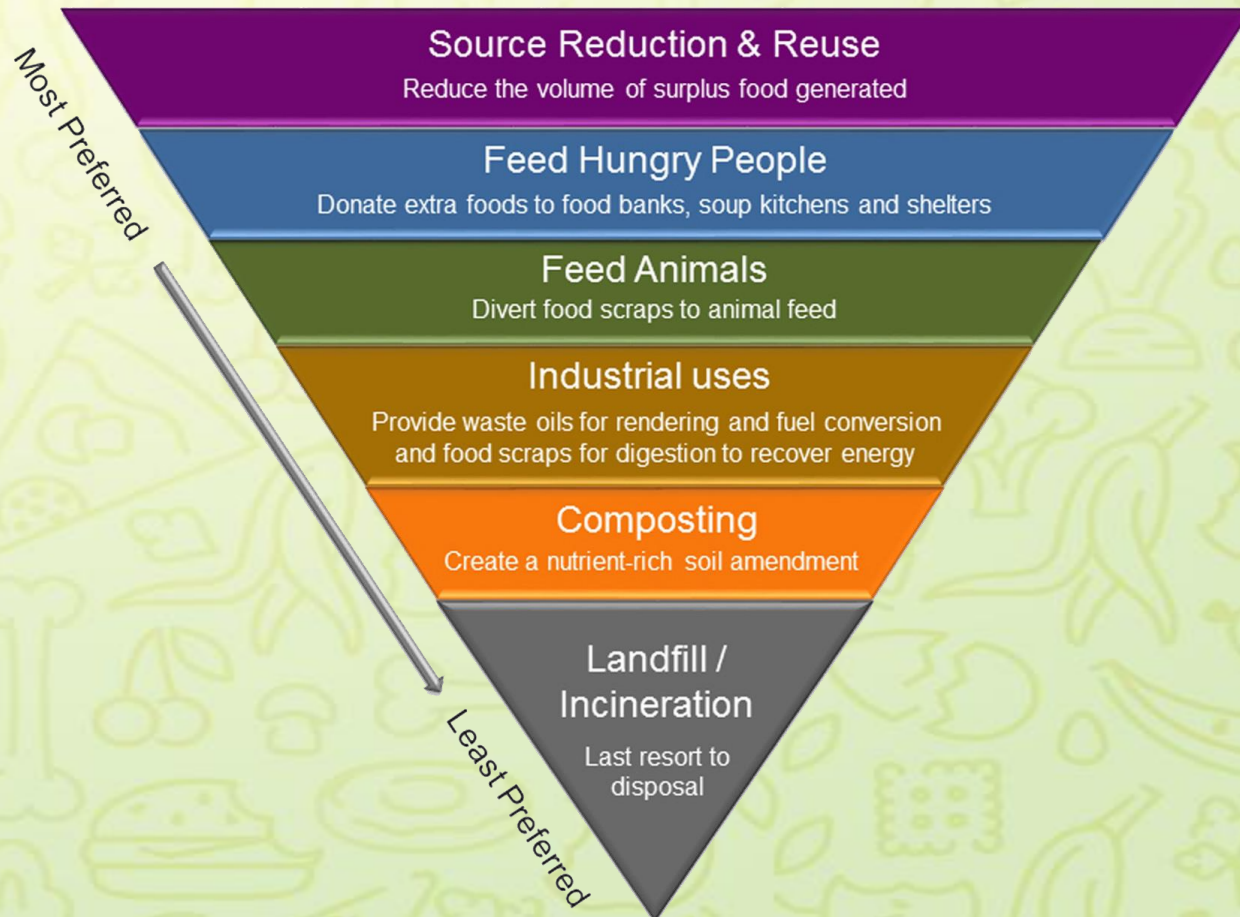
- Laws for liability protection, tax incentives, and encouragement for food donations
- Regulations on feeding food scraps to animals
- 2018 Farm Bill includes key measures to:
  - Prevent food waste
  - Increase food recovery
  - Promote food waste recycling
  - Better coordinate food waste reduction efforts—establishes a Food Loss and Waste Liaison
- Proposed legislation on food date labeling, food recovery, and food donations

# National efforts to reduce food waste

## Federal government initiatives



## Food Recovery Hierarchy



EPA and USDA launched many initiatives to reduce food loss and waste, including:

- Food Recovery Challenge
- U.S. Food Waste Challenge
- U.S. 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal

# National efforts to reduce food waste

## Initiatives by national organizations

Numerous national organizations work to reduce, recover, and recycle food waste in the United States, including:

- ReFED
- Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC)
- Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic
- Food Waste Reduction Alliance
- Feeding America
- Food Recovery Network
- US Composting Council
- Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR)

## Laws and regulations related to:

- Recycling and composting
- Liability protection for food donations
- Public schools food recovery programs
- Tax credits for farms for food donations

## Source reduction credit system

## Food recovery summits



**State of Maryland's efforts to reduce food waste**

Prince George's County is proud to have the East Coast's largest composting facility



A significant amount of food is wasted:

- 113,000 tons in 2015
- 48,000 tons of food waste are buried annually at the Brown Station Road Sanitary Landfill

**Food waste in  
Prince George's  
County**



## Food waste in Prince George's County

## Household survey results

- Knowledge about food waste makes a difference in food discarding behaviors.
- 92% of respondents are willing to do at least five out of eight potential actions presented to them to reduce food waste.
- More than two thirds of the respondents are interested in learning tips to reduce food waste.

# Interviews with food waste generators

## Food waste in Prince George's County



- Processors and distributors generate massive amounts of food waste and send a significant amount to the landfill.
- Grocery stores have sustainability goals and strategies to reduce food waste.
- Despite being careful, restaurants are major generators of pre- and post-consumer food waste. Fear of liability prevents them from donating. They will compost or reduce portion sizes if mandated.
- Institutions are major generators. UMD sends food waste to the composting facility.
- PGCPS do not have a policy for food waste.

# Interviews with food waste mitigators

## Food waste in Prince George's County



- Food recovery organizations rescue unharvested or surplus food from various places.
- Capital Area Food Bank plays a big role in rescuing food that is otherwise thrown away.
- Food pantries, by rescuing surplus food and giving it to the hungry, help reduce the amount of food that goes to the landfill.
- Food scrap collectors and composters turn food waste into valuable soil amendment.



# County's efforts to reduce food waste

The Department of the Environment (DoE) is diligently working to reduce food waste in the County.

- Over the past several years, the County has held the number one position in the state for recycling and waste diversion with an average 61 percent.
- Achieving the County's zero waste goals includes food waste diversion and composting.

## Curbside food scrap collection

will soon be launched, initially with 3,000 households and will expand to countywide in three years. The County Executive's budget includes \$200,000 for food waste bins.



# County's efforts to reduce food waste

## Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility (OCF)

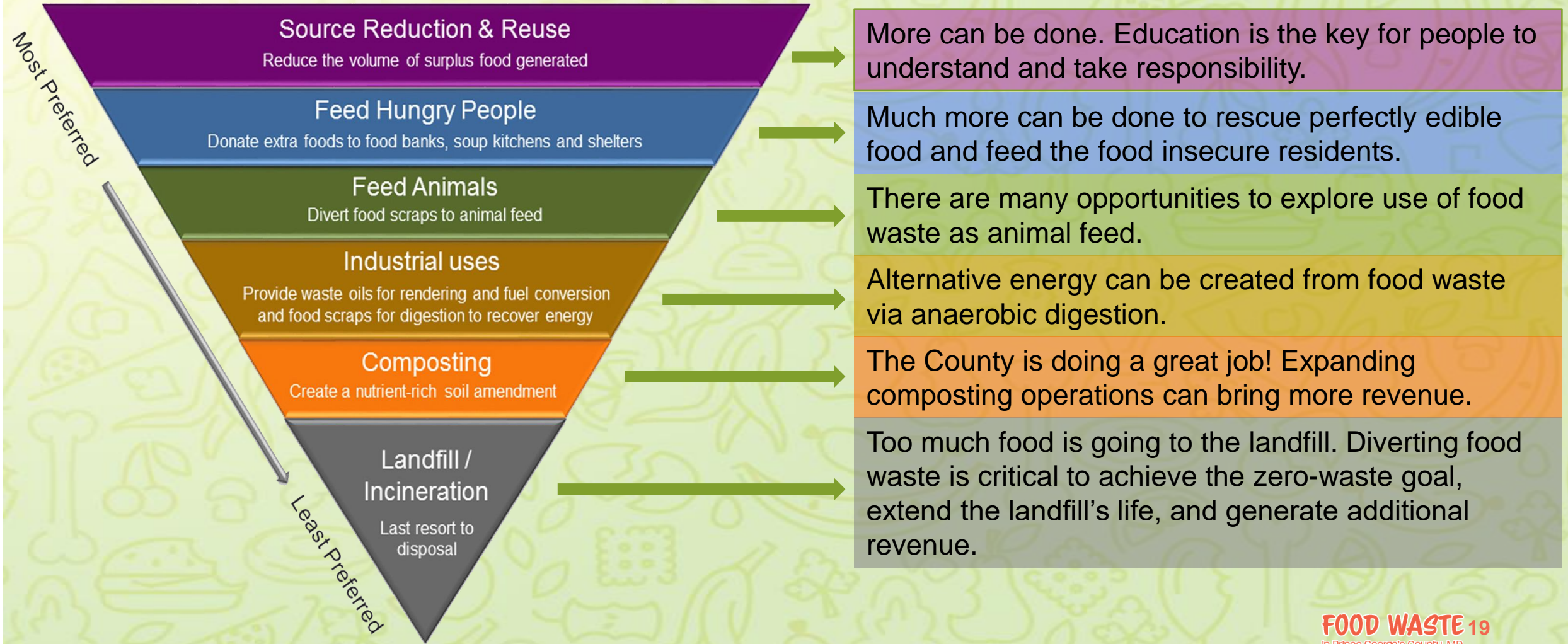
- The largest composting facility on the East Coast
- 8-heap Gore® system and 12-heap mega system with bunker walls
- Food scrap input is 625 tons/week
- Capacity of turning 32,500 tons of food scraps into LeafGro Gold™ annually.
- Major revenue generator for the County.



# How the County is following the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy to reduce food waste



## Food Recovery Hierarchy



# Policy recommendations



- Policy recommendations were developed based on thorough research on national best practices and the solution ideas presented by household survey respondents and businesses that were interviewed.
- For each policy recommendation, multiple strategies are proposed, and a sample of promising practices is presented.
- Policy recommendations are organized by three major categories of the EPA's hierarchy: reduce, recover, and recycle.

# Policy recommendations



- Source reduction or prevention is the first step in the Food Recovery Hierarchy.
- Source reduction means reducing the volume of surplus food generated or stopping waste before it happens.
- This can be accomplished by raising awareness, which can change people's behaviors.

*Reduce food waste by improving product development, storage, shopping/ordering, marketing, labeling, and cooking methods.*

*-USDA & EPA*



## Policy 1

Launch a food waste awareness campaign. Educate the public about the food waste problem and how each person can reduce it and save money.



## Policy 2

Invite all entities across the food chain to a “food waste challenge” to encourage them to reduce food waste.



## Policy 3

Educate the public about date labels and clarify that date labels indicate food quality, not food safety.



## Policy 4

Support County farms, increase locally-grown food supply, and encourage local food consumption, which would significantly prevent food waste.



## Policy 5

Encourage all businesses and institutions that generate food waste to perform an annual food waste audit.



## Policy 6

Encourage food retail outlets to reconsider their policies, operational rules, and practices to prevent and reduce food waste.



## **Policy 7**

Encourage restaurants to reconsider their practices to prevent and reduce food waste.



## **Policy 8**

Reduce school food waste by using no-cost or low-cost smart strategies.



## **Policy 9**

Lead by example and practice food waste reduction at M-NCPPC and County-owned and operated facilities.



# Policy recommendations



- When there is excess food, the best option is to recover it and make it available for food insecure people.
- When food is recovered, resources to produce that food are not wasted.
- Recovering wholesome food and redistributing it where healthy food access is a challenge will help solve the County's "food desert" problem.

*Recover food waste by connecting potential food donors to hunger relief organizations like food banks and food pantries.*

*-USDA & EPA*



## **Policy 1**

Develop markets for products that would not have stayed in the food chain otherwise, which could also alleviate the challenge of access to healthy food in the County.



## **Policy 2**

Encourage donation of surplus food.



## **Policy 3**

Facilitate collaboration of food recovery and anti-hunger organizations and help them develop partnerships with food donors, which would increase the efficiency and volume of food donations.

# Policy recommendations



## Policy 4

Establish a nonprofit food rescue organization.



## Policy 5

Help establish a sustainable “food runner” enterprise specialized in delivering surplus food to hunger-relief organizations.

# Policy recommendations



- When food is not fit for human consumption, recycling is the best option.
- Recycling food waste for other uses, including animal feed, energy, and compost, helps keep food out of landfills.
- Turning food waste into energy also contributes to the alternative energy creation efforts.

*Recycle food waste to feed animals or to create compost, bioenergy, and natural fertilizers.*

*-USDA & EPA*



## Policy 1

Ban food waste at the Brown Station Road Sanitary Landfill in a tiered approach. Mandate residents and businesses separate their food waste and select alternative ways to reuse/recycle it following the EPA food waste hierarchy.



## Policy 2

Encourage use of food scraps as animal feed.

# Policy recommendations



## Policy 3

Support and explore ways to convert food waste to energy.



## Policy 4

Establish a comprehensive composting program that includes all levels of composting.



**Thank you!**

**M-NCPPC  
Prince George's County  
Planning Department**

**food... don't waste it!**