

FCSG Statement on Proposed IGA Implementing the Regional Wasteshed Master Plan

Updated on April 16, 2019

On April 16, 2019, the Fort Collins City Council considered Resolution 2019-047 to adopt an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for Solid Waste Programming and Infrastructure Improvements between Fort Collins, Loveland, Estes Park and Larimer County. This IGA describes the responsibilities that the respective Parties must fulfill to enable implementation of the 2018 North Front Range Regional Wasteshed Coalition Solid Waste Infrastructure Master Plan. As part of the same agenda item, a first reading of changes to City building code (Ordinance No. 063, 2019) was considered that would institute flow control for construction and demolition (C&D) waste in Fort Collins. The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) strongly advocated for both of these measures. Council approved each one by votes of 7-0.

Six priority facilities are included in the Master Plan – a new County landfill, a central waste transfer station, an upgraded recycling center (a Clean Material Recovery Facility), a C&D waste processing facility, a yard waste windrow composting facility and a food waste composting facility. For some of these facilities to be economically viable, sufficient waste materials must be processed there. This will require that policies and programs be put in place by Larimer County municipalities to deliver the required amounts of waste. The IGA specifies the annual tonnages of food scraps (6000 tons), yard waste (30,000 tons), C&D waste (60,000 tons), and single-stream recyclable materials (55,000 tons) that such policies must be expected to be delivered before the respective waste facilities are constructed, but it does not require cities to adopt any specific policies or code changes.

In particular, the IGA requires Larimer County to fund, construct, own, and manage the new facilities – the new landfill and the central transfer station must be operational before the current landfill closes (currently projected to reach capacity in 2024) – and set rates for the use of the respective facilities. In addition, it requires all Parties to continue to operate their (existing) respective Integrated Solid Waste Management facilities, establish minimum hauler licensing requirements, consider policies that will support the resource recovery facilities, participate in a County-led Solid Waste Policy Council (by appointing one elected official and one additional member), and coordinate data collection and public outreach.

The building code changes proposed by City staff will provide flow control of C&D waste in Fort Collins, and this quantity of debris alone is sufficient to trigger construction of the C&D sorting facility by

Larimer County. These code changes will require that all co-mingled (mixed) loads of C&D trash and recycling debris from building sites go to a specific, County-owned facility once it is constructed and operational. These code changes would remain in place for ten years from the time that the new facility begins accepting material. The code would still allow for on-site separation of materials (wood, aggregates, metal and cardboard), as current code requires, if the contractor prefers this option. However, even though landfill tipping fees are expected to increase by 20-30%, this flow control requirement is supported by the building construction industry due to the convenience of an “all-in-one-bin” collection service and other associated time and labor savings, as on-site separation requires on-site inspection, significant paperwork, and the potential rejection of contaminated waste loads.

The C&D waste sorting facility would also reduce the City’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and move the City closer to its 2025 Zero Waste goal (a 90% landfill diversion rate). Per the most recent waste audit performed in 2016, 27.4% of C&D debris going to the Larimer County landfill was organic material (yard waste, clean wood, or treated/painted wood). City staff have estimated that diverting the compostable and recyclable portion of this C&D waste would get Fort Collins one-third of the way toward its 2025 Zero Waste goal. Diverting 70% of the clean wood from C&D in 2017 would have reduced the GHG emissions from organic waste in the City’s inventory by 0.1% of the 2005 level (approximately 2300 MTCO_{2e}), although these GHG reductions would not be reflected in the City’s accounting until the next waste audit is performed. If even more diversion could be achieved, the GHG reductions would be larger, and there are potential upstream reductions in GHG emissions if the reuse of wood and cement from C&D waste leads to lowered deforestation or cement production elsewhere.

Due to these environmental and sustainability benefits, and the fact that we are rapidly approaching the capacity limits of the current Larimer County landfill, the Fort Collins Sustainability Group urges City Council to adopt the proposed Intergovernmental Agreement for Solid Waste Programming and Infrastructure Improvements and approve the changes to the building code that allow flow control of C&D waste in Fort Collins. The FCSG additionally urges City Council to direct staff to begin consideration of City code changes that would accelerate the construction of the organic waste composting facilities that are part of the Master Plan to the earliest possible date, enabling the City to reduce its GHG emissions further and move the City toward achievement of its Climate Action Plan goals.