

FCSG Statement on Proposed Regional Waste Shed Master Plan

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The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) strongly endorses the Regional Waste Shed Master Plan that Council will consider during its work session on December 11th. We believe that this plan will advance our community along the “Road to Zero Waste”, will help us meet our 2030 climate goal, and will result in the production of significant quantities of clean compost for agricultural and landscaping purposes.

Larimer County’s “Solid Waste Infrastructure Master Plan” would involve the construction of six new facilities by 2024 at a total cost of approximately \$55 Million. One of these facilities would be a new landfill, to be located north of Fort Collins. The other five facilities would be located near the site of the existing landfill, and would include a transfer station, an upgraded recycling center, a construction and demolition sorting facility, a yard waste composting system, and an enclosed food waste composting system. Most of the cost for implementing the plan would come from a reserve fund accumulated by the County to replace the landfill; additional costs would be debt financed.

The new complex of facilities would address all waste stream components that need to be addressed in order to minimize the amount of material that ultimately must be sent to the landfill. Keeping yard waste, food waste, and recyclable material such as paper and cardboard out of the landfill would minimize the production of methane, which is a powerful greenhouse gas. City staff has estimated that at relatively low yard and food waste “capture rates” of 50% and 15%, respectively, our community’s greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by almost 1% of the 2005 total. If all yard and food waste could be captured, that figure would jump to about 3%.

Finally, the FCSG is pleased to see that the Regional Waste Shed Master Plan does not include encouraging people to send their food waste down the garbage disposal for treatment at the City’s wastewater facilities. Instead, food waste would be composted separately from other components of the sewage stream, resulting in clean compost that is not at risk of being contaminated by heavy metals and other pollutants that go down the drain. That compost – along with compost produced at the new yard waste facility – could be used by farmers and others to grow food safely and keep landscapes healthy throughout our County.

The FCSG does not see any significant downsides to the Regional Waste Shed Master Plan, and urges Council to direct staff to take all steps necessary to help bring this project to fruition.