

Testimony of Neil Seldman
Montgomery County Council Hearing:
Resolution to approve the Comprehensive
Solid Waste Management Plan 2025-
2034, February 11, 2025

My name is Neil Seldman. I work for Zero Waste USA where I am director of the Recycling Cornucopia Program. Formerly I directed the waste to wealth Initiative at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. During both of these positions I have been advisor to both the Sugarloaf Citizens Association and Zero Waste Montgomery County.

The County Solid Waste Management Plan for 2025-34 needs to be amended to account for the availability of businesses that can create wealth from the County's discarded materials and significantly expand the tax base. These businesses divert recyclable, reusable and

compostable materials and products in the County's waste.

Zero Waste policies and programs can attract new tax paying small businesses and new tax paying workers by increasing the recycling rate, composting organic materials, repair and resale of used products.

County Executive Marc Elrich expressed his goal of 'monetizing the waste stream'. I followed up on this specific request from the Executive to identify companies that could fulfill this policy goal.

As a result I interviewed operating companies that were successfully creating wealth from discarded materials in the form of new jobs which added value to materials through processing, repair, remanufacturing, distribution and sales.

I concluded that 850 - 1,000 new jobs can be created in Montgomery County and that the companies I interviewed were keen on working with the county to invest in operations and jobs. Further, each direct job leads to 1.5 additional indirect jobs. The total direct and indirect jobs potential of Zero Waste is 1,275 – 2,665.

Several of these companies focus on re skilling hard to employ residents and help bring them into the economic middle class of the county by providing good jobs with good benefits. Several companies specialize in recruiting gang members and recently released returning citizens for training, employment as they return to their communities. These companies provide a vital service to the communities in which they are located including Baltimore, MD, Indianapolis, IN, Eugene, OR and Los Angeles, CA.

Here is a summary of my findings assuming that Montgomery County enacts supportive Zero Waste policies.

**Direct and Indirect Jobs Potential
Based on Zero Waste Policies,
Programs and Enterprises in
Montgomery County, MD**

Building Deconstruction	500 - 600
Traditional Recycling	100 - 120
Composting	100 - 120
Retail Thrift	50 - 60
Textile	20 - 40
Books	20 - 40
Mattresses	20 - 30
Appliances	10 - 20
Construction/Demolition	
Debris	15 - 30
Electronic Scrap	25 - 50

Total 850 – 1,110

Indirect Jobs

Potential 1,275 – 1,665

Total Direct and

Indirect Jobs 2,125 - 2,775

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