



# Greenbelt GreenTEAM



Greenbelt is a Sustainable Maryland Certified Community

**Subject:** Testimony in support of HB1520 Sustainable Maryland Program Fund – Establishment

**Date:** 05 March 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Ronald Bjorkland. I've been a member of the Greenbelt's Green Team for three years, and I am honored to speak in support of the Sustainable Maryland Certified program.

The City of Greenbelt was one of nine Maryland municipalities that become Sustainable Maryland Certified in 2014, and in 2017, it was re-certified. Greenbelt is proud of its sustainability vision and of its historical and current efforts to realize it. We pride ourselves on community input into policies and implementation on many environment-related issues and recognize that community action will inspire individual commitments to protect our environment (our home) and serve as a model for other communities in the region, throughout the state, and beyond. Within the region, we are a leader in sustainability and environmental protection in large part because of the actions of city Council, the creative, energized and committed efforts of the Green Team, and the guidance and support provided by the Sustainable Maryland Certified program. As our city continues to address legacies of past actions, current, and emerging issues that impact our environment, the role of our Green Team, with the support of the Sustainable Maryland Certified program, will assume greater importance. Let me identify a few of the many recent initiatives to which the Green Team has contributed:

#### Composting:

Our Public Works Department currently supports several composting endeavors with the twin goals of reducing material entering the landfill stream and providing locally produced, high quality organic matter for use in the community. (Additionally, this program help us earn points toward SMC recertification). Our Organics Task Force, part of the Green Team's Zero Waste subgroup, recently completed a survey of composting techniques currently used in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The report provided 11 recommendations, several of which our Public Works is currently undertaking. Public Works has constructed a three-bin community compost system and is building two more. The Public Works electrical team also supplied access to electricity for a vermicomposting project which Green Team members manage with our co-operatively owned New Deal Café. Soon, the Public Works will build a community compost drop-off location modeled after the facility in College Park, and at last month's Route 1 Corridor Sustainable Maryland summit, we solicited help from other Green Teams in identifying available property suitable for establishing a neighborhood in-vessel composting operation.

#### Switching from fossil fuel:

Our Green Team's Electric Vehicle subgroup worked with the Electric Vehicle Institute and helped secure support for the acquisition of public electric charging stations, and our Public Works coordinated with the Institute to install them, first on the grounds of the municipal building and, additional ones are planned for other strategic locations within the city.

#### Waste reduction:

This initiative has encouraged other departments and entities within the city to take aggressive steps to reduce the waste stream. For the past several years, we have zero wasted Greenbelt's Christmas tree lighting ceremony; the cooperative efforts of the event organizers ensure that only compostable beverage cups and the wrappers of all candy and other sweets are used. During other public celebrations throughout the year, such as the Green Man and the Labor Day Festivals, Zero Waste volunteers work with the public to educate them about recycling and composting, and Public Works then collects the discarded items for delivery to recycling or composting facilities.

#### Pesticide use reduction:

Some Green Team members have researched and worked with Public Works for alternatives to the use of inorganic pesticides on city property to lessen the burden of toxic chemical exposure and buildup in the soil, vegetation and waterways to better protect human health and wildlife.

The Sustainable Maryland Certified program has helped facilitate the City of Greenbelt buy-in and the support of projects that the Green Team has identified as critical steps on the road to sustainability and a healthy environment. The program has also promoted inter and intra-community collaborative efforts toward meeting these goals. While we recognize Greenbelt, like other municipalities, still have a lot more to do to be truly sustainable, the Sustainable Maryland Certified program provides a structure to examine our progress and to plan new pathways to sustainability. The program is critical in identifying the needs and tools to achieve environmental sustainability and for introducing the community to novel and cost-effective approaches. The specter of global climate change and other emerging stressors demands that we press ahead expeditiously to preserve and repair our local environment. I believe you will agree the Sustainable Maryland Certified program is a valuable tool for Maryland municipalities. On behalf of the citizens of Greenbelt, I petition you to approve permanent funding for this very important program that has already yielded so much to so many. Thank you.