



Increase your waste diversion rate through reuse

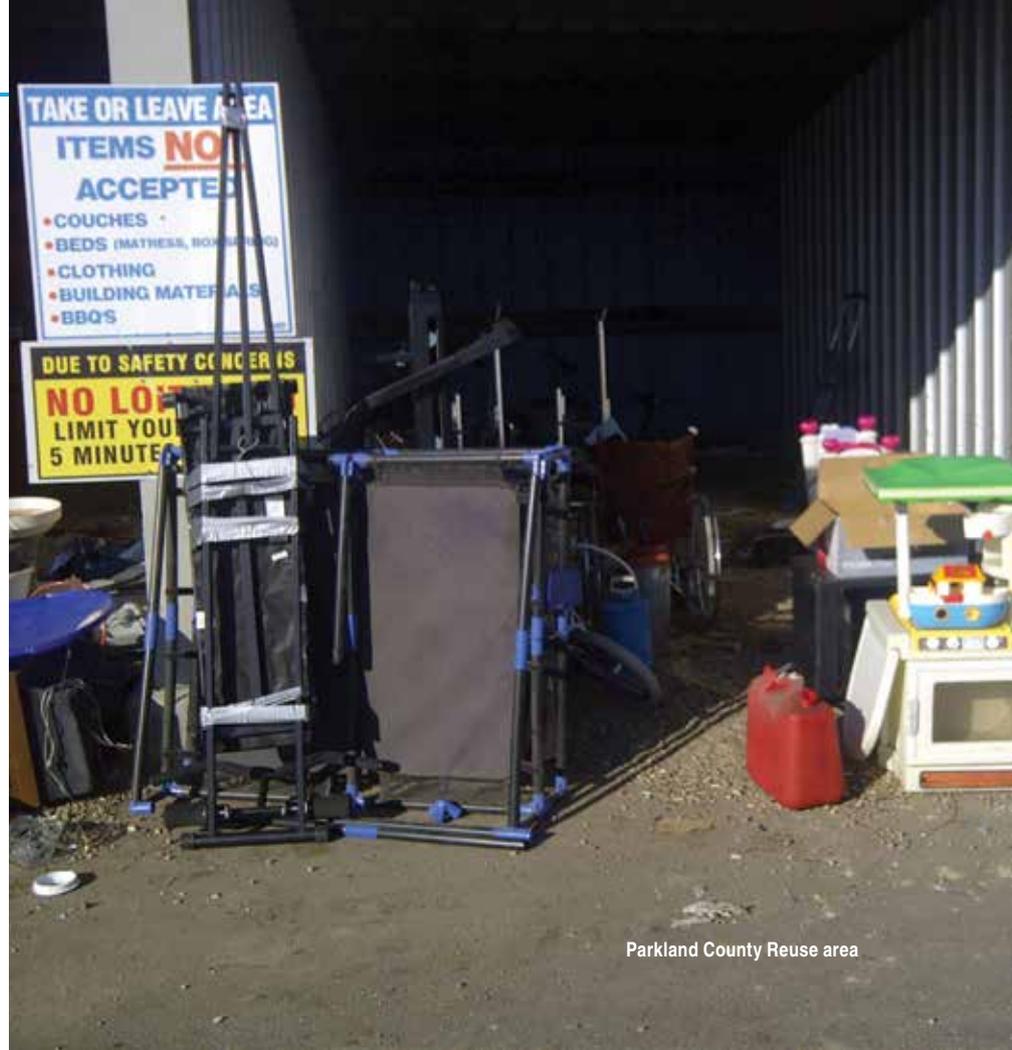
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With changing foreign markets for recycling materials limiting the items that can be profitably sold to recycling processors, many municipalities are seeing a decline in their waste diversion rate. If your municipality is losing ground on diversion and struggling to manage odd-

sized or problematic materials such as picture frames, coat hangers and old artificial Christmas tree still hanging around in March, then a reuse program might be able to help.

Reuse is second in the waste hierarchy and can provide significant environmental and social benefits while reducing landfilling and hauling costs.

Reusing items is already occurring in the community through thrift shops, yard sales and charity donations, but eventually everything gets discarded. When an item is no longer useful to its owner a reuse program can provide the last chance for diversion and create opportunities for arts, education and community building.



Parkland County Reuse area

In 2017 the site diverted over 320,000 kgs (704,000 lbs) of material that couldn't be easily recycled but was too good to waste.

There are a number of reuse programs established by municipalities and typically include one or more of the following options:

Urban Facilities

Urban reuse programs such as the City of Edmonton Reuse Centre operate very similar to a retail store. Inventory is brought in by residents at no charge and is weighed and set out on shelves for purchase. Reusable items such as books, baskets and ice cream pails are sold by weight for \$5.00/25 kgs (55 lbs). The Reuse Centre opened in 2007 and expanded to a 14,000 sq ft former grocery store location in 2014. The facility is used for education, volunteer programs and can even be rented for birthday parties! In 2017 the site

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Rural/Small Facilities

Smaller facilities can be located within rural transfer stations, recycle locations or central landfills. Reuse in smaller communities may be as simple as a shed or designated area for residents to drop material off and others to scan through. Parkland County with a population of 32,000 operates "Take it or Leave it" sites at several transfer station locations and diverts approximately 50,000 kg (110,000 lbs) per year. The drop-off area is a simple three-sided shelter to keep items covered from snow and rain inside a secure site. Residents must show identification to drop

off material at the transfer stations and there is no charge to take items.

Reuse Events/Fairs

An alternative to permanent locations is to stage a day or weekend event where residents can drop items off and possibly pick up something new on the way out. The City of St. Albert hosts a "Take it or Leave it" day where residents need to show proof of residency to drop off items, but anyone can pick up an item. An event like this can be coordinated with other events such as large item drop-off, household hazardous waste (HHW) or e-waste drop-off. To supplement facilities or fairs, waste apps developed by municipalities can offer reuse options or connections to charities that can also take some items.



Material-Specific Sharing and Repairing

Other organizations may focus on reuse of specific items such as textiles, bicycles, waste paint or craft items. The City of Toronto supports reuse through a variety of material-specific programs that also support community development and education programs. The Bicycle Repair Hub provides dedicated work space to train residents in bicycle repair, maintenance and safety. Other programs include a sewing hub, urban harvest and community composting.

Once you decide to start a reuse program you should consider the following issues and options before you open the doors:

- Free vs. Charge for drop-off – facilities typically charge for waste and other items to be dropped off while recycling is free. Reuse items may fall into both categories and the service you are offering is to get rid of the item either as a reuse item or waste; either way the resident is not leaving with it. Alternatively, if the item is clearly reusable and will be picked up quickly, you can always choose to waive the fee.
- Resale online or yard sales – your organization will need to evaluate if you are concerned what happens to the items after they leave your site. Do you care if it shows up online for sale? If so, you may need to consider limits to the number of items or trips per day to your site.
- Security – free stuff draws attention after hours and may impact your site security. You may want to lock up the free stuff.
- Inspect carefully or do not accept cloth or fabric items that could carry bed bugs.
- Electronic devices that may contain personal information should be sent to a processor for destruction of personal information or recycling.
- Signage indicating that all items are taken at your own risk and that items dropped off for reuse will be given away and not recycled or disposed. Some residents may be confused, and you will need to be clear what is happening with the items.
- Contact charities or social agencies in your area to check what they are collecting and reduce overlap in items you accept. A free reuse program may help charities move items they receive but won't sell and they would otherwise have to pay for disposal.
- Really big items such as pianos, boats and campers can be a problem to move as reuse or waste items. Be clear what you will and will not accept. However, there are moments of opportunity. At a large item drop-off site, a resident wanted to drop off an upright piano and was discussing with staff; another resident overheard the discussion and claimed the piano immediately. The resident sat on the piano for over four hours to guard it while a friend rented a truck to come back and pick it up. Thanks to good timing the equivalent of 18,000 cans was diverted from landfill.

However you choose to operate or promote reuse in your area, you will see the benefits in your community and might get a new piano in the process. I encourage you to check out the websites of the communities mentioned for more information on their facilities and programs.

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