WASTE REDUCTION RESOURCE GUIDE

Trash, all that we throw “away,” has become our world’s most abundant natural resource. Our landfills and our landscape are overflowing with litter and refuse. What can we as individuals, as business owners, and as an industry do about that? We can re-use as much of it as possible, but we must also reduce the quantity we generate, because as our global population grows and industrializes, our quantity of trash does, too. As we all probably have experienced, it is hard to do the right thing when we are pressed for time and our attention is pulled in several directions. So SFC is pleased to offer you this list of resources. We are also happy to serve as a resource and referral service for you. Let us know what your challenges are and we will do our best to help!

Almost anything can be recycled one way or another. But complex products, like furnishings, can require a good deal of imagination and the establishment of complex systems. Given the crowding and overflowing of US landfills, your local solid waste management department may be your best resource. They need to help you recycle more because they need you to haul less to them.

State regulations are supporting the effort to keep useful materials out of our municipal landfills, especially when they are in bulky items such as mattresses. In the last few years California has led the way with new regulation mandating mattress recycling, and other states, including Connecticut and Rhode Island, have followed suit with their own legislation. We note that upholstered furniture could be recycled in the same infrastructure and look forward to the day when more facilities for recycling are established.

The federal government supports the development of recycling efforts with a number of useful EPA programs, and by specifying a preference for recycled content in eight different product categories. Their guidance is especially useful to retailers and other furnishings businesses building or renovating their facilities.

Many community organizations create economic development opportunities from waste stream diversion, often also using these social enterprises to help rehabilitate returning citizens or employ other disadvantaged populations. But regular for-profit businesses can take a page from that book, and increase profit margins, by making sure they have a robust recycling program in place and by incorporating more and more recycled material in their product mix and packaging. Such efforts also add to the social story the business has to tell.

Since almost anything can be recycled, throwing materials “away” is ultimately throwing money away. Recycling has environmental benefits at every stage in the life cycle of a piece of furniture—from the raw material with which it’s made to its final method of disposal. By utilizing used, unwanted, or obsolete materials as industrial feedstock or for new materials or products, we make recycling work. Aside from reducing Green House Gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, recycling provides significant economic impacts. Use these resources to reduce your tipping fees and grow your profit margins.
SFC staff and volunteer leadership are ready and willing to serve as resources for member companies.

Contact us today!

Call the office at 252 368 1098

Email us: Susan Inglis, Executive Director, SFC – susan@sustainablefurnishings.org

SFC member Stanford Furniture made use of our resources and CEO Brandon Short Blell says it made a difference. "Simply asking the question about recycling made us look much more carefully at our overall waste management. We had Republic come out and do a new audit that is going to save us as much as $30,000 this year - more than 50% on our monthly bill--AND we will get the cardboard problem addressed."

Resources for Reducing Waste and Recycling


- The Zero Waste Alliance - A nonprofit organization operating as a program of the International Sustainable Development Foundation, ZWA has over a twelve year history working with industry and communities to identify and overcome barriers to zero waste. The website includes a Roadmap to Zero Waste Success, and many other resources - http://zwia.org/

Finding and using Recycled/Reclaimed Materials:

- The EPA’s Comprehensive Procurement Guidance includes a list of vendors, and instructions for being added to the list of vendors of products made from recycled materials. https://www.epa.gov/smm/comprehensive-procurement-guidelines-construction-products

- The National Recycling Coalition provides resources and networking - http://nrcrecycles.org/

Understanding “Recycled” claims:

- FSC Reclaimed - Noting the proliferation of wood materials that are “aged” to appear to be reclaimed, Forest Stewardship Council established a standard for recycled and reclaimed materials. The label recognizes the important role that reclaimed material plays in protecting the world’s forests. Look for it, and use the standard to understand what questions to ask your vendors. Forest Stewardship Council

- **Textile Exchange’s Recycled Claim Standard (RCS)** – The RCS is as a chain of custody standard to track recycled raw materials through the supply chain. The standard was developed through work by the Materials Traceability Working Group, part of OIA's Sustainability Working Group. The RCS uses the chain of custody requirements of the Content Claim Standard (CCS), and additional guidance for implementation of the standard may be found in the CCS Implementation Manual - http://textileexchange.org/integrity/

- **Textile Exchange Global Recycled Standard (GRS)** – The GRS is a product standard for tracking and verifying the content of recycled materials in a final product, while ensuring strict production requirements. The latest version of this standard was revised by the GRS International Working Group, composed of representatives from five certification bodies: Control Union, ICEA, IMO, Intertek, and SCS Global Services - http://textileexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Global-Recycled-Standard-v4.0.pdf

- The TRUE Project documents zero-waste performance and offers the TRUE Zero Waste certification - https://true.gbc.org/

Recycling Furniture:

Many community charities are supported by re-sale stores that are happy to accept your furniture donations.

- Habitat for Humanity ReStores - Habitat ReStores are nonprofit home improvement stores & donation centers that sell building materials, appliances, new & gently used furniture, and home accessories. They operate in every state and can pick up from donors. Habitat ReStores are owned and operated by local Habitat for Humanity affiliates. The stores have raised more than $110 million for homebuilding while diverting more than 235,000 tons of reusable material from landfills - http://www.habitat.org/restores

Recycling Mattresses:

- **Mattress Recycling Council (MRC)** - A non-profit organization developing and operating mattress recycling programs in California, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. In 2013, all three states passed laws requiring mattress manufacturers to develop programs to manage discarded mattresses - http://www.mattressrecyclingcouncil.org

If your state does not yet have a mattress recycling mandate, you local solid waste management facility, or landfill, can tell you if there are local organizations recycling mattresses.

There are numerous social enterprises engaged in recycling mattresses while also providing employment opportunities to marginalized populations, including the following:

- **Blue Marble Materials** – operating in the Los Angeles area - http://www.bluemarblematerials.com/#!services/c1z52
- **Second Chance** – operating in Minnesota - http://www.secondchancerecyclingmn.com/
Recycling Carpet:

- Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE)- Since 2002, CARE members have diverted over 3 billion tons of carpet from landfill. The website has detailed info on finding recycling locations throughout the US - https://carpetrecovery.org/

Recycling Textiles:

- The Council for Textile Recycling has a finder on their site for locating textile recyclers in your area - http://www.weardonaterecycle.org/locator/index.php The organization was established by SMART, or Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles, the association of the Wiping Materials, Used Clothing, and Fiber Industries - http://www.smartasn.org/
- SWIFT or Sample Waste in Furniture and Textiles is dormant at the moment, but will soon be revived by Sustainable Furnishings Council in partnership with the International Textile Alliance to keep more of our industry’s textiles out of the landfill.
- Quilts for Kids, with chapters around the country, provides quilts and wheelchair bags to children in hospital. Find your local chapter on their website - http://www.quiltsforkids.org/
- Habitat for Humanity ReStores take donations of end bolts and samples - http://www.habitat.org/emp/restores.aspx

Recycling Foam:

- The Global Recycling Network offers information and an exchange system for materials recovered from municipal waste streams, including flexible polyurethane foam - http://www.grn.com/a/1025.html

Recycling Packaging Materials – Wood, polystyrene, plastic, etc.:

- GreenBlue – GreenBlue, a non-profit dedicated to sustainable use of materials, has an excellent program to help consumers know how to recycle such things as odd packaging materials - http://greenblue.org/work/how2recycle/
- GreenBlue also developed a program specific to packaging, The Sustainable Packaging Coalition - https://sustainablepackaging.org/, which includes a useful resource section.

Recycling Paint:

Most paint retailers, including Lowes and Home Depot, will take back paint for recycling. Your local landfill may also have periodic events for recycling toxic materials such as left over paint.

- Paintcare - A paint stewardship program operated on behalf of paint manufacturers in states that have passed paint stewardship laws, the group’s main effort is to set up more places for people to take unwanted, leftover paint - http://www.paintcare.org/
- Habitat for Humanity ReStores - Habitat ReStores are nonprofit home improvement stores & donation centers that sell building materials, appliances, new & gently used furniture, and home accessories.
They operate in every state and accept donations of full and partial cans of paint that is still usable. Habitat ReStores are owned and operated by local Habitat for Humanity affiliates - [http://www.habitat.org/restores](http://www.habitat.org/restores)  

**Recycling batteries and electronics:**

Because of the high level of toxic materials they contain, batteries and electronics must be recycled carefully. EPA maintains a site with useful points to consider and a list of places you can recycle electronics appropriately: [http://www2.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling#where](http://www2.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling#where) In addition, we recommend you consult these experts:

- Call2 Recycle - [http://www.call2recycle.org/](http://www.call2recycle.org/)
- Greener Gadgets - [http://greenergadgets.org/](http://greenergadgets.org/)

**Waste Reduction Activism:**

- Upstream - [http://upstreampolicy.org/](http://upstreampolicy.org/)
- Product Stewardship Institute - [http://www.productstewardship.us/](http://www.productstewardship.us/)
What else?

It is time to reduce your waste at home, too!

If you live in North America, then you will likely generate 102 tons of garbage over the course of your life. Most of that gets buried in landfills, which are full of toxic goo; much less of it breaks down and biodegrades than we’d like to think, especially in this era of plastic saturation; and relatively little gets recycled -- a mere 34 percent in the United States!

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Memorize the 7 R’s for Zero Waste:
“Refuse, Reduce, Return, Repair, Reuse, Recycle, Rot.”

Support stores that have adopted Zero Waste practices, or at least are willing to work with them. These are usually smaller, privately owned businesses that show more flexibility.

Commit to banishing disposables. Carry a stash of reusable items at all times – a mug for coffee (or a screw-top glass jar that prevents coffee from spilling), cloth shopping bags, glass jars or metal food containers, handkerchiefs, a washcloth, cutlery for meals on the go or on an airplane, a water bottle.

Buy based on packaging, always choosing the reusable, recyclable option over the disposable one. Be willing to buy fewer and higher quality items that will last longer. This particularly applies to clothes, since the average American throws away 70 pounds of clothing each year.

Do regular waste audits at home to figure out what actually goes in. Work backward from there, slowly eliminating the sources of trash. Take advantage of a backyard composter to deal with all organic scraps.

Come up with alternatives. Ditch paper towels in favor of rags. Tell restaurants you’re bringing reusable containers whenever you order take-out. Use cloth diapers for your kids and grandkids. Use reusable flannel sanitary pads for yourself. Buy a bacterial culture and make your own yogurt in a glass jar. Buy unpackaged bar soap. Stop using shampoo. (I haven’t used shampoo since Christmas and wash my hair with baking soda and apple cider vinegar, which eliminates a lot of plastic bottles.) Buy toilet paper in bulk from an office supply store that sells paper-wrapped rolls. Make deodorant from scratch. Order compostable toothbrushes online. Replace plastic wrap with reusable wraps.