



**Response to
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
on
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

JULY 28, 2025



1 General Information

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2 Proposal Introduction

2.1 Organization Profile

About Circular Philadelphia

Circular Philadelphia is the leading organization advancing the circular economy in the greater Philadelphia region. Founded in 2021, our work focuses on transforming the systems that manage materials and waste, from how materials are designed and used to how they are collected, recovered and reinvested in local communities. We bridge tangible every day impact with systems-level change through smart policy, innovation and on-the-ground action to transform Philadelphia's current linear economy (where materials are used once and discarded) into a circular one (where materials are kept in use through smart design, repair, salvage, recycling, composting and more). We are materials management and circular economy experts who bring together individuals, businesses, manufacturers, institutions, local government and policymakers to lead the region-wide shift to an efficient, resilient and regenerative system.

The organization is led by Executive Director Candice Lawton, who brings over a decade of experience advancing circularity, food systems and waste reduction across public, private and nonprofit sectors globally. Circular Philadelphia is currently supported by 2 part-time staff members, a working board of 8 civic, environmental and business leaders, a network of 50+ technical advisors and 120+ members representing individuals and organizations active in reuse, repair, salvage, composting, sustainable design and education. Our member-led working groups regularly convene 25–30 engaged stakeholders to identify local barriers, build shared solutions and pilot/scale initiatives that move circular practices forward. These groups span textiles, food systems, built environment and vacant land, creating space for practitioners and advocates across sectors to collaborate, innovate and take action. We maintain a flexible staffing model with in-house expertise augmented by a trusted network



of mission-aligned contractors and collaborators, enabling us to scale impact and adapt quickly to emerging needs and priorities.

Our experience spans five critical areas that directly support the City's waste diversion and reduction goals:

- 1. Cross-Sector Positioning and Systems-Level Impact:** Circular Philadelphia brings unique cross-sector positioning that directly aligns with the City's goal of achieving 90% waste diversion by 2045. Our organization operates at the intersection of policy & advocacy, education and outreach and market transformation across 4 key focus areas: food systems, textiles, built environment and vacant land. We work at the nexuses of waste reduction, economic development and environmental justice: positioning us to address the multi-faceted challenges outlined in Philadelphia's Municipal Waste Management Plan and the Parker Administration's Safe, Clean & Green mission.
- 2. Interdisciplinary Expertise and Action-Oriented Approach**
 - a. Policy and Planning Experience:** We have directly supported municipal policy development around Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), zero waste initiatives and circular economy frameworks. Our team understands the regulatory landscape and can help the City "stay ahead of EPR, zero waste and climate legislation" while ensuring policies are implementation-ready and cost-effective.
 - b. Data-Driven Analysis:** Our work consistently employs life cycle assessment methodologies, economic impact analysis and health outcome measurement, directly addressing the City's need for "objective, data-driven metrics that consider not only operational concerns, but the health and environmental impacts associated with solid waste disposal methods."
 - c. Infrastructure Development:** We have facilitated the development of pilot programs and infrastructure investments that de-risk innovation in waste diversion, including material recovery facilities, community composting sites and reuse networks that can serve as models for citywide scaling.
- 3. Trusted Relationships and Stakeholder Convening:** Our proven ability to convene stakeholders who wouldn't otherwise collaborate directly supports the City's need for comprehensive waste management solutions. This convening capacity is essential for addressing the City's goal of "maximum feasible waste reduction and recycling" while ensuring solutions are community-supported and economically sustainable. We have successfully brought together:
 - Large-, medium- and small-scale waste management providers with nascent and community-based organizations to create integrated diversion systems



- Municipal departments with private sector partners to develop public-private partnerships that reduce operational costs while increasing service quality
- Environmental justice advocates with industry stakeholders to ensure that waste management solutions strengthen rather than burden underserved communities
- Economic development organizations with circular economy enterprises to create local job opportunities in waste reduction, remanufacturing and recovery operations
- Corporations and businesses with nonprofit and policy leaders to design scalable reuse and recycling systems that align with corporate sustainability goals and citywide impact targets
- Academic institutions with on-the-ground practitioners to co-develop data-driven pilot programs, conduct impact evaluations and shape workforce training pipelines for emerging green jobs

4. Best-in-Class Storytelling and Community Engagement

Our communication expertise directly supports the educational outreach and community engagement essential for achieving Philadelphia's ambitious diversion goals. We craft compelling narratives that help residents, businesses and policymakers understand both the environmental benefits and economic opportunities of circular waste management systems.

- a. **Community Education & Outreach:** We develop and implement educational campaigns and events that demystify circular economy principles, making zero waste accessible and actionable for Philadelphia residents. Our approach includes interactive workshops, community challenges, and neighborhood ambassador programs that transform residents from passive recipients of services into active champions of circular practices. We translate complex waste management policies into accessible public communications that build support for necessary regulatory changes while addressing community concerns about health and environmental impacts. Our expertise includes facilitating community forums, creating fact-based responses to misinformation, and ensuring authentic community input in circular economy planning to foster genuine buy-in rather than top-down mandates.
- b. **Economic Development Messaging:** Our storytelling emphasizes how circular solutions create local jobs and retain economic value within Philadelphia neighborhoods, particularly in communities "traditionally excluded from climate economy gains."



5. Philadelphia-Specific Knowledge and Local Impact

Our deep understanding of Philadelphia's unique waste management challenges, regulatory environment and community dynamics positions us to provide immediately actionable recommendations. We understand the operational realities of serving over 510,000 households, the infrastructure constraints within the city, and the community concerns that must be addressed for successful program implementation.

a. Our local experience includes:

- Working with Philadelphia's existing waste management infrastructure to identify optimization opportunities
- Engaging with communities across the city to understand barriers to increased recycling and composting participation
- Collaborating with local businesses to develop waste reduction strategies that also create economic opportunities
- Supporting policy development that aligns with both municipal operational needs and community health priorities

What is the circular economy?

It's a smarter, more economically viable approach to how we make, use and dispose of things. Instead of a take-make-waste system where materials go straight to the landfill or incineration, in a circular economy, products are designed to last longer, be repaired easily and have their materials recovered and reused when they reach the end of their life. A broken phone gets refurbished rather than tossed. Food scraps become compost for urban gardens. Construction waste becomes material for new buildings.

Why does it matter for Philadelphia?

Philadelphia spends more than \$48 million annually¹ cleaning up litter and illegal dumping alone, public money that right now is used to manage symptoms instead of solving the root causes of these issues. At the same time, the City sends hundreds of thousands of tons of waste to landfills and incinerators each year, driving up disposal costs and straining municipal budgets.

This linear approach represents a missed opportunity. Materials that are discarded too early, from food scraps to building materials to textiles, represent untapped business opportunities and green job creation potential that could be kept circulating in our local economy. In a circular system, those resources are kept in use through local businesses, repair shops, composters and reuse centers, generating economic activity instead of cost.

¹ Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, and Burns & McDonnell. *The Cost of Litter & Illegal Dumping in Pennsylvania: A Study of Nine Cities Across the Commonwealth*. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, 2020, <https://www.keeppabeautiful.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/KPB-Litter-Cost-Study-013120.pdf>



Moving toward a circular economy offers practical benefits for everyone in Philadelphia:

- **Cost Savings and Efficiency:** Reducing waste through reuse and better material management lowers disposal costs and eases the burden on the City's sanitation system. This means more taxpayer dollars can be directed toward other pressing priorities like public safety, education and infrastructure.
- **Economic Growth and Job Creation:** Circular systems create local jobs in repair, reuse, remanufacturing and composting, jobs that cannot be outsourced and provide good wages. Supporting local businesses that specialize in these areas strengthens Philadelphia's economy and promotes economic resilience while keeping value circulating within the city.
- **Cleaner, Safer Neighborhoods and Environmental Justice:** Reducing litter and illegal dumping makes streets safer and more attractive, supporting community pride and reducing crime. Clean neighborhoods encourage outdoor activity and stronger social connections while addressing public health concerns by reducing pests and disease risks. Importantly, waste infrastructure and pollution burdens are not distributed equally across Philadelphia, many low-income communities and communities of color bear disproportionate impacts from waste facilities, truck traffic and dumping. A circular economy approach can help address these environmental justice concerns by reducing overall waste generation, creating local economic opportunities in affected neighborhoods and ensuring that the benefits of cleaner systems reach the communities that have historically borne the greatest costs.
- **Attracting Residents and Businesses:** A clean and well-managed city appeals to new residents, visitors and entrepreneurs who want to live, work and open businesses in cities that demonstrate effective management and offer a high quality of life. This helps Philadelphia compete with other metro areas for talent and investment, strengthening the city's tax base by making neighborhoods more attractive for new residents, businesses and visitors.
- **Elevating City Profile and Funding Opportunities:** Cities that lead in innovative waste management and circular economy practices attract grants, private investment and partnerships while building national recognition as hubs for climate resilience, innovation and community-based sustainability. This makes Philadelphia more competitive for corporate investment and talent recruitment, amplifying the city's impact and resources.

A circular economy approach addresses both immediate challenges: the \$48 million annual cleanup burden and long-term opportunities to build a more resilient, prosperous and sustainable Philadelphia where waste becomes a resource and environmental responsibility drives economic growth.



2.2 Relevant Experience

Circular Philadelphia brings proven experience addressing the exact barriers and solutions identified in RFI Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3. Our track record includes removing regulatory roadblocks for nascent providers (example: advocacy for Pennsylvania's first Urban Composting Permit), facilitating policy changes that enable innovative business models (example: reusable container regulations) and developing comprehensive zero waste strategies through active working groups focused on materials reuse, composting infrastructure and circular business model development.

Cross-Sector Positioning and Systems-Level Impact: We orchestrated a multi-stakeholder partnership connecting Bottle Underground and Bennett Compost with OLIN Labs on their innovative glass-to-sand soil project, transforming waste glass into valuable soil amendment. This collaboration exemplifies how we create triple wins: businesses develop new revenue streams from waste materials, the city reduces landfill costs while advancing sustainability goals, and the environment benefits from reduced virgin sand extraction. Our Revive and Thrive program applies the same systems thinking to activate Philadelphia's vacant land for community benefit, where property owners see increased land values through productive interim use, the city reduces blight and maintenance costs, and communities gain green space with measurable environmental improvements.

Interdisciplinary Expertise and Action-Oriented Approach: Our working groups focus on circularity throughout Philadelphia's food system, built environment and textiles, identifying and developing circular practices in food recovery, composting, reusable food packaging, and doing comprehensive research on systematic practices that can reduce waste. We understand that the City's waste challenges require coordinated solutions across multiple departments and sectors. Our interdisciplinary approach bridges the gaps between environmental health, economic development, and community services that often create implementation barriers for municipal initiatives. When we connected Circle Compost and re:Dish to solve the practical challenge of compost bin cleaning, we demonstrated how operational solutions can support the City's waste diversion goals while strengthening local business partnerships. This collaboration increased composting participation rates that directly advance your waste reduction targets, reduced contamination that improves processing efficiency for city-contracted facilities, and created a replicable model for connecting complementary services across Philadelphia's circular economy ecosystem.

Trusted Relationships and Stakeholder Convening: Our ability to bring diverse stakeholders together creates compounding benefits across sectors. We facilitated partnerships between Drexel, Penn, waste management startup Rego and the Philadelphia Furniture Bank to address campus move-out waste, transforming a neighborhood burden into organized resource flows. Universities reduced disposal costs while enhancing sustainability



credentials, Rego developed a scalable business model, the Furniture Bank expanded inventory for community members, the city decreased illegal dumping and cleanup costs, and the environment benefited from diverted waste and extended product lifecycles. Similarly, our Vicinity Energy partnership created a litter mitigation program with cost-sharing mechanisms that enhanced the company's community relations, delivered cleaner neighborhoods for residents, reduced city cleanup costs, and increased environmental stewardship throughout the area.

Best-in-Class Storytelling and Community Engagement: Effective communication drives adoption of circular practices across all sectors. We launched ResourcePhilly, an interactive search engine made possible by a \$20,000 grant, helping residents find responsible drop-off locations for hard-to-recycle items. Built through research with hundreds of surveyed people and one-on-one interviews, resourcePhilly demonstrates how addressing information gaps creates cascading value: recycling, repair and reuse businesses see increased customer traffic, the city achieves higher diversion rates with reduced contamination, residents gain accessible waste management tools, and the environment is protected from improper disposal of electronics, batteries and hazardous materials.

Philadelphia-Specific Knowledge and Local Impact: Our successful advocacy for reusable container regulations demonstrates our ability to create policy wins across sectors: restaurants reduce packaging costs and differentiate their brand, the city advances waste reduction goals while supporting local business innovation and the environment benefits from reduced single-use container waste. Similarly, our work on creating opportunities for deconstruction pilot projects while educating architects, developers and contractors on incentives for adaptive reuse creates economic opportunities for emerging deconstruction businesses, helps the city meet climate goals while generating revenue from material sales, and prevents construction waste from overwhelming landfills while preserving embodied carbon in existing materials.

Circular Philadelphia is ready to work with the City to reimagine its waste system not as a burden to manage, but as a resource to unlock, with social, environmental and economic benefits for all Philadelphians.



3 Proposal Body

Circular Philadelphia's expertise aligns with Section 3 of the Request for Information (Recommendations for Solutions), so we have confined our response to topics in that section.

Section 3 Recommendations for solutions that will assist the Department in developing new approaches, innovations, and initiatives to minimize the City's waste streams, including practices that will help the City advance its Safe, Clean & Green mission and Zero Waste goals.

3.3.2. Roadblocks and Barriers to Nascent Provider Capacity

Because of the work that Circular Philadelphia does at the intersection of economic development and the circular economy, as well as the make-up of its membership, which includes many small businesses that provide circular economy solutions, Circular Philadelphia has witnessed and heard first hand from its members many of the barriers to expansion that these solutions providers face. These barriers range from infrastructure deficiencies to a lack of policy to support small businesses working in the waste recovery and diversion space.

i. Infrastructure Constraints

Missing Infrastructure: Building Material Reuse

In Philadelphia, our building material salvage and reuse sector has been shrinking over the past several years, and it is partially due to the difficult economics of salvaging, warehousing and preparing materials for resale. Circular Philadelphia has repeatedly heard from stakeholders in the building material reuse space that one of the biggest barriers to the growth of building material reuse in Philadelphia is affordable warehouse space. Much of Philadelphia's warehouse space in locations that are easy to access by potential customers, including contractors and homeowners, is too costly to make it economically viable for a business or organization to operate a building material reuse center. This is an area where the City of Philadelphia can play an important role in supporting the sector.

By making unused or underutilized City-owned property available at low- or no-cost to businesses or organizations in the building materials reuse sector, the City of Philadelphia could provide critical support to these businesses that are integral to diverting construction materials from landfill and incineration. Boulder, CO, [provides an example](#) of a city that provides this infrastructure support. On city-owned property, non-profit [Resource Central](#)



operates a [building materials reuse center](#). Also on the same city-owned property is another facility, operated by non-profit Eco-cycle that collects hard-to-recycle items and other goods for reuse. This facility is explained in more detail in the response to section 3.3.3 (iii.) of the RFI.

Missing Infrastructure: Resale Businesses

In October 2024, Circular Philadelphia held a [Reseller Listening Session](#) with support from Philadelphia's Department of Commerce to hear from resale business owners about their challenges and needs. The resale and secondhand community in Philadelphia represents a vibrant and growing sector that contributes directly to the City's zero waste goals by keeping products in circulation and out of landfill for as long as possible.

From that session, Circular Philadelphia and the Commerce Department learned that two of the biggest issues related to this sector being able to grow were a lack of affordable storage/warehouse space (especially climate-controlled) and a lack of affordable year-round indoor vendor space. For both of these needs, the City could play a role in providing affordable space in vacant City-owned property.

ii. Inter-departmental Collaboration

Because the circular economy sits at the intersection of materials, waste, health and economics, it is critical that the City of Philadelphia take an intersectional approach to transitioning from its current linear approach to waste management to a circular one. This requires collaboration and communication between City departments. Circular Philadelphia has been very successful in collaborating with various departments outside of the Sanitation Department to change regulations and policies and create programs that advance circularity and reduce waste.

In July 2021, Circular Philadelphia [worked with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health](#) to update regulation language to allow restaurants and food businesses to offer reusable containers without seeking a variance to do so. The change eliminates a hurdle for small businesses that want to reduce waste, implement reusable systems and move towards a circular economy.

In spring of 2025, Circular Philadelphia worked with the Health Department again to release a [food recovery infographic](#) for food businesses to find simple, effective solutions to divert surplus food from landfills. Because how the City manages waste is linked so closely to health outcomes, the Health Department has the opportunity to be an ally in the movement towards a system that prioritizes recovery over disposal.



Similarly, Circular Philadelphia has had a good relationship with the Philadelphia Department of Commerce, which sponsored a [Reseller Listening Session](#) in October 2024 to hear from salvage and resale businesses in Philadelphia about their challenges and opportunities for the City to support their continued growth. As discussed in the preceding section, these businesses play a big role in helping the City in its goal to keep goods out of its waste stream by keeping them in circulation, so it makes sense for the City to support this sector.

In May 2025, Circular Philadelphia again partnered with the Commerce Department to hold an informational session for its members about the Catalyst Grant Program for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Because a shift to a circular economy provides tremendous opportunity for economy development in Philadelphia, it's important that the Commerce Department be involved in developing and implementing programs that help spur growth in the alternative waste management and circular economy space.

Circular Philadelphia also works with Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, which runs robust composting and organics recycling programs, and the Office of Sustainability on various initiatives, like the development of [resources for restaurants and food businesses to start offering reusables containers](#).

All of the City departments mentioned in this section should cooperate on initiatives that help expand nascent provider capacity in Philadelphia, as each has an important role to play, and indeed, has played a role in the past in supporting Philadelphia's circular infrastructure as it exists today.

iii. Policies, Programs and Incentives to Spur Growth

[Single Use Plastic Legislation](#)

Through its policy paper, [Single Use Plastic Legislation for Philadelphia: A Policy Guide](#), Circular Philadelphia has proposed that Philadelphia City Council enact legislation that bans certain types of plastic containers (mainly styrofoam) and places a fee on other single-use plastic containers. Enacting this policy would set favorable conditions to shift demand from single-use plastics to reusable or compostable containers, thus spurring growth for providers of both of these products and services.

Reusable container company [Re:Dish](#) has already launched operations in Philadelphia, but there are other such reusables providers, like Bold Reuse, rWorld and USEFULL, that would be willing to set up operations in Philadelphia and create local jobs if conditions were more favorable. This legislation also has the potential to cause large generators of single-use plastics, like Philadelphia's stadiums, arenas and other large scale venues, to shift to



reusable containers, having a multiplier effect by normalizing the use the reusables among the general public, thus increasing demand for reusables in people's everyday lives.

This would have a direct positive impact on not just the amount of waste that Philadelphia generates, but also Philadelphia's pervasive litter issues.

Construction and Demolition Recycling Programs and Legislation

In July 2023, Circular Philadelphia released a second policy paper, [Construction and Demolition Recycling Legislation for Philadelphia: A Policy Guide](#), that serves as a framework for City Council to develop a construction and demolition (C&D) recycling ordinance to spur growth of building material recycling and reuse and decrease illegal dumping in the city. C&D materials are the top illegally dumped materials in the city, and in 2021, the City of Philadelphia spent \$8.3 million cleaning illegal dump sites.

Circular Philadelphia also released a separate policy in June 2023, [Expanding Access to Demolition Debris Recycling in Philadelphia: A Policy Guide](#), which outlines how the City of Philadelphia could allow drop-off of C&D materials by small-scale haulers and residents at the City's Sanitation Convenience Centers to reduce illegal dumping and capture these materials for recycling. The program, as outlined in the policy guide, would be cost-neutral through a small fee charged to individuals dropping off materials, similar to how the Fairmount Park Organic Recycling Center accepts organic materials from private haulers for a fee.

Both this legislative change and this programmatic enhancement would have three main benefits:

1. Increase demand for C&D recycling services provided by local businesses such as Richard S. Burns & Co. and Revolution Recovery, allowing them to grow and create good-paying local jobs.
2. Decrease the amount of C&D material sent to landfill or incinerator in Philadelphia.
3. Decrease illegal dumping in the city with the potential for millions of dollars of savings.

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Grant Programs

Through the Department of Commerce, the City of Philadelphia already supports small businesses and entrepreneurs through a myriad of programs. The Catalyst Program, launched earlier in 2025, supports small businesses and entrepreneurs, through grants of up to \$50,000, business support and advisory services to ensure long-term success. The City could build on a program such as this to specifically support small businesses in the circular



economy space. Many nascent circular businesses in Philadelphia are in need of investment and other business support to help them scale.

The City of Austin supports circular entrepreneurs and small- to mid-size businesses through their [Circular Austin Showcase and Accelerator programs](#). The Circular Austin Showcase provides the opportunity for circular economy businesses and entrepreneurs to compete for a cash prize of \$10,000 each year. The Showcase also helps businesses gain exposure in the region's investing community. The Circular Austin Accelerator helps entrepreneurs improve their circular business ideas throughout a 16-week program.

Repair Fairs and Other Circular Economy Programs

Circular economy programs, such as repair fairs and clothing swaps already happen in Philadelphia, often sponsored by non-profits, small businesses or community groups on an ad hoc basis. In other cities, like Cleveland, OH, and Boulder, CO, these programs have support from the municipality and often take place at libraries, rec centers or affordable housing complexes. [Fix-It CLE Repair Workshops](#), Cleveland's initiative, happens throughout the year at various locations throughout the city.

The City of Philadelphia could launch a similar program by partnering with organizations like the [Philly Fixers Guild](#) to host these events across the city. Repair Fairs help keep goods in circulation for longer, thus reducing waste burden and preventing residents from having to purchase new goods that will eventually become waste. These programs can also help normalize repair as an alternative to disposal and grow demand for repair businesses, which are often small and locally-run, further bolstering economic development in Philadelphia.

3.3.3 General Information on Zero Waste Strategies

Cities across the nation are moving beyond zero waste to implement a full portfolio of resource recovery and diversion strategies that help move them towards a circular economy. The circular economy is a truly holistic solution that will allow the City to nearly eliminate waste sent to landfills and incinerators. Without prioritizing this shift in how the City manages materials, Philadelphia is falling behind other major cities in 21st century waste and materials management, environmental justice and health outcomes.

In 2024, Circular Philadelphia organized the Circular Cities Network, a network of circular economy and waste practitioners within 24 municipal governments or directly adjacent non-profit organizations (like Circular Philadelphia) across the U.S. The group meets every other month to share knowledge, strategies, and practical tactics to advance the circular economy across the nation. As a result, Circular Philadelphia has very good visibility into



successful practices and programs in other jurisdictions that enable a more comprehensive approach to eliminating the need for landfills and incinerators.

Below are strategies and approaches that Circular Philadelphia has seen be successful across the U.S. and believes the City of Philadelphia could employ to increase circularity and reach zero waste.

iii. Materials Reuse

The City of Philadelphia has a substantial opportunity to keep goods in circulation by supporting material reuse in a much more meaningful way than it has historically. There are numerous instructive examples from other cities that Philadelphia could explore and build upon.

Reuse in the Built Environment

According to the EPA, 40% of all materials entering landfills nationwide is construction and demolition materials. Construction materials are also the most illegally dumped material in Philadelphia. This presents a big opportunity for the City of Philadelphia to both improve quality of life and reduce landfilling of these materials by better supporting building material reuse.

In other jurisdictions, building reuse centers are supported by the municipality in a variety of ways. In Atlanta, the [Lifecycle Building Center](#) received funding from the City of Atlanta prior to the purchase of their current warehouse in 2016. In San Antonio, the City of San Antonio provides warehousing and training space for their [Material Innovation Center](#) and [Deconstruction Training Center](#). The City funds deconstruction training, which helps develop a skilled workforce for deconstruction jobs. Building materials are made available to the City's affordable housing program through the City's reuse database powered by [Rheaply](#), and the City plans to ultimately make these building materials to private contractors.

In Houston, the [Building Materials Reuse Warehouse](#) is run by the City of Houston out of one of the City's Recycling and Depository Centers (equivalent to the City of Philadelphia's Sanitation Convenience Centers). Started in 2009, the facility accepts materials from individuals, supply companies, and builders free of charge and makes them available at no cost to non-profits.

Soon Austin, TX, will also have a city-run reuse facility. In 2023, the City of Austin secured a \$4 million grant from the EPA to build a Reuse Warehouse that will focus on bulky materials like furniture for recovery and reuse.



Other Tools to Support Reuse

In June 2025, Circular Philadelphia, in partnership with another Philadelphia-based non-profit, The Resource Exchange, launched [resourcePhilly](#), a local online search engine wrapped in educational content to assist Philadelphians with how and where to donate reusable materials, rehome and repair belongings, take their hard-to-recycle items and shop secondhand, bulk, sustainable, and circular products. Since its launch less than a month ago, 3,700 users have visited the site to find better reuse and recycling solutions.

Other municipalities across the U.S., including [New York City](#), [Austin](#), [Portland](#), [Alameda County, CA](#), and (coming soon) Boulder, have similar websites to enable reuse by residents. The key difference is that, in all of these cases, the websites are funded and maintained by the municipality. In the case of resourcePhilly, the development of the tool was funded by a private foundation, and funding is needed to ensure its ongoing maintenance and operation. A simple way that the City of Philadelphia could enable more reuse among residents would be to fund resourcePhilly into the future, thus supporting local reuse and recycling infrastructure and providing critical education to residents about how to divert their unwanted belongings from landfill and incineration.

iv. Infrastructure Needs

Robust Drop-off Center

While the City of Philadelphia operates six Sanitation Convenience Centers across the city, it could do a better job of leveraging that infrastructure to increase the number and type of materials captured for recovery. Other cities have similar facilities where the types of materials they collect are more extensive, providing much more of a one-stop-shop for residents to drop off unwanted materials for recycling.

Austin's Resource Recovery's [Recycle and Reuse Drop-off Center](#) accepts all of the things that Philadelphia's Sanitation Convenience Centers accept, but they also accept other items such as styrofoam and clothing and textiles. They have a densifier on-site for the styrofoam, and they work with Goodwill to take the clothing and textiles.

Additionally, Austin residents don't have to wait for a household hazardous waste (HHW) event to drop off items like paint, oil and other chemicals. This facility takes those materials on a daily basis. They collect oil that is primarily used for fuel oil applications, and antifreeze is filtered and reused in City vehicles. They also accept excess paint from residents and mix it into new paint on-site that they provide to residents at no cost. They collect batteries for recycling, and when they receive HHW in perfectly good, sellable condition (such as spray



paint), they have a "Reuse Shed" where residents can pick up those items for free for their own use.

In Colorado, Boulder's [Center for Hard-to-Recycle Materials \(CHaRM\)](#) accepts electronics, appliances, hard-to-recycle plastics, and more for recycling and reuse. The center is operated in partnership with Eco-cycle, a non-profit that operates zero waste facilities, provides zero waste hauling services and consulting, and develops public programming around zero waste. CHaRM accepts [most consumer discarded materials](#) for reuse and recycling, and it charges a nominal \$3 fee to all cars entering the facility to cover the operating costs of the site, including things like utilities, general maintenance, equipment costs, etc. Specific items have additional disposal fees. It is also funded in part by taxes paid by Boulder residents.

CHaRM is co-located with another facility, [Resource Central](#), that focuses on building material reuse and accepts building materials and tools for reuse. The public can then purchase these materials for projects. As explained in the response to section 3.3.2. (i.) of the RFI, this facility and CHaRM are situated on city-owned property.

[Innovation Center](#)

Often innovation happens when similar businesses and organizations can co-locate and share access to facilities, equipment, technology and personnel. This is particularly true of the circular economy space, where often one business's waste can become another business's raw material. Other cities are realizing that providing space for this kind of collaboration and incubation of ideas can turbocharge circularity.

In Charlotte, NC, the [Innovation Barn](#) provides such a shared space. Small circular businesses are located on-site at the Innovation Barn and have the opportunity to collaborate with one another on a daily basis. Additionally, the Innovation Barn hosts numerous waste, recycling and circular economy related programs and services, from materials drop-off to swaps to repair events to summer camps.

At larger scale, Phoenix, AZ, is developing a [Resource Innovation Campus](#) that co-locates a transfer station, a MRF, a composting facility and a business incubator to help innovators identify new ways to transform waste into resources and utilize feedstock from the waste stream and MRF for research and development testing, new product development and cultivating local end markets. The campus will also lease land to innovators and manufacturers with market-ready technologies and manufacturing processes that use waste to create new products.



The City of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, the Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL) provides one of the most successful city-level blueprints for circular economy ecosystem-building. [COIL](#) has driven remarkable impact. One example is their [Our Food Future](#) initiative. The purpose of this initiative was to increase the circularity of the local food ecosystem. Over 4 years, this initiative mobilized 1,000+ stakeholders to lead 80+ projects to tackle current challenges and explore opportunities.

The results from COIL across all programs are impressive: 131 jobs created, \$1,646,963 in value earned by shifting to circular practices, \$17,151,507 in new funding leveraged, and 166,992 tonnes of GHG equivalent prevented. COIL has documented its achievements, such as in its [two-year interim report](#) on their [commercial food diversion](#) efforts, creating invaluable resources for other communities seeking to replicate their success.

Even if not at this scale, the City of Philadelphia could work towards creating such a center for innovation that provides holistic resources and opportunities for collaboration among Philadelphia's business, institutional, governmental and research communities to advance circular solutions to waste in the city.

v. Public/private Partnerships

Public/private partnerships present an opportunity for the City of Philadelphia to leverage existing programs and relationships with businesses and non-profits to help build out circular economy programs to increase reuse, recovery and waste diversion. Based on what Circular Philadelphia has seen in other cities and what it has heard from its members and others in the circular economy space, several specific opportunities are outlined below.

Reuse Systems

We have already discussed in this RFI submission that the City could support various types of reuse through funding and real estate, but the City also has the opportunity to support various reuse initiatives through public/private partnerships.

In the building materials space, the City could partner with an organization – either here in Philadelphia or one that would like to expand to Philadelphia – to operate a building material reuse center similar to the model that Boulder, CO uses with CHaRM and Resource Central where the City provides the land and some funding, and the organization provides operational expertise and seeks funding from other sources to run the center.

In the reusable containers space, the City of Philadelphia could look to cities like Seattle (WA) and Phoenix (AZ), where the municipalities are partnering with reuse companies to increase the use of reusables as an alternative to single-use containers. Seattle has created



[ReuseSeattle](#), an initiative with participation from multiple city departments and private businesses to create a network of reuse systems for food and beverage containers at Seattle institutions, venues, businesses, and communities. Phoenix has been working with private company Bold Reuse to pilot reuse systems in public schools.

Campus Move-Out

Philadelphia is home to numerous universities, and student move-out from off-campus housing presents a perpetual waste and quality of life problem for the communities surrounding the universities where the students live. This spring, Circular Philadelphia members Rego, the Philadelphia Furniture Bank, and Habitat for Humanity ReStore teamed up with Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania to [divert tons of material from landfill](#) while keeping them off city streets and out of the City's waste stream.

The City of Philadelphia has an opportunity to take a more active role in supporting these efforts by working with the universities and Rego to scale these move-out programs. In Austin (TX), [MoveOutATX](#) is a partnership between the University of Texas-Austin and the City of Austin to reduce waste, support local reuse organizations, and make the move-out process easier for students when apartment leases end at the end of the school year. To date, the program has kept 223 tons of materials out of landfill.

Textiles Partnerships

Clothing and textiles are a growing part of the waste stream and present a particularly thorny challenge to municipalities. Other cities across the U.S. are partnering with large textile collection, sorting, and resale non-profits like Goodwill to help collect textile waste from residents and divert it from landfill or incineration. The City of Austin partners with Goodwill of Central Texas to collect clothing and textiles at its Recycle and Reuse Drop-off Center for sorting and resale. Similarly, the City of Philadelphia could partner with Goodwill of Southern New Jersey and Philadelphia to collect items at its Sanitation Convenience Centers and/or possibly other city-owned properties like rec centers.

There are also many other smaller thrift and reuse organizations in Philadelphia that specialize in clothing and textiles. The City of Philadelphia could explore how to support these local businesses and organizations scale their collection and sorting infrastructure and use city-owned property as collection points. This could potentially support job growth in this sector while diverting textiles from landfill and incineration.



vii. Funding Mechanisms

Aside from City-provided grant funding for small businesses and entrepreneurs, as discussed in Section 3.3.2 (iii.), the City of Philadelphia could explore models that capture a fee from businesses for undesired waste-related practices that then in used to fund waste reduction programs. This strategy is outlined in Circular Philadelphia's [Single-Use Plastic Legislation policy paper](#), where fees levied by the City of Philadelphia for continuing to use single-use containers that are not recyclable or compostable in Philadelphia's existing infrastructure would be placed in a fund to help businesses transition away from single-use plastics.

Other successful models for financing across the U.S. require state-level legislation, but if the City were able to engage with state lawmakers to support these policies, it could have a tremendous impact on the City's ability to reduce waste.

For example, [Colorado's Circular Communities \(C3\) program](#) provides grants for circular economy programs encompassing waste aversion and diversion efforts, accomplished through sustainable design, remanufacturing, distribution/market development, source reduction, reuse, repair, recovery, collection, recycling, composting, anaerobic digestion, or biochar production through a \$2/ton fee on solid waste disposed of in Colorado landfills. This fund has been instrumental to circular economy development throughout the state.

viii. Local Policy to Incentivize Waste Reduction

Circular Philadelphia has already shared several local policies that could be enacted to divert materials from landfill or incineration in Section 3.3.2 (iii.) of this RFI response, but there are other policies that the City of Philadelphia could enact to incentivize waste reduction.

The first are deconstruction incentives, ordinances or policies like cities such as [Boulder](#) (CO), [San Antonio](#) (TX), [Seattle](#) (WA), and [Portland](#) (OR) have enacted to keep valuable building materials out of landfill. Currently in the Pennsylvania legislature, [HB-611](#) has been introduced to set deconstruction standards for the Commonwealth. The City of Philadelphia could build on this and follow the lead of other cities by supporting deconstruction as an alternative to demolition through incentives, pilot programs or legislation. Circular Philadelphia has already [created resources](#) for architects, developers, contractors and homeowners that want to deconstruct buildings in Philadelphia to keep valuable and useful building materials in circulation.

San Antonio reports that, between enacting its deconstruction ordinance in October 2022 and November 2024, over 102 buildings have been deconstructed that would have otherwise been demolished, with an average diversion rate of 63% across all reported



projects, with a majority for reuse. This has resulted in more than 350 tons of waste diverted from area landfills.²

The second are environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) policies or guidelines that the City of Philadelphia could adopt to incentivize City departments to prioritize durable, previously-owned, refillable and repairable products when making purchasing decisions. The County of San Diego (CA) has recently updated their Board Policy B-67 to include EPP guidelines and could be used as a model for a similar policy in Philadelphia.

² Presentation to Circular Cities Network by Stephanie Phillips, Senior Program Manager, Deconstruction & Circular Economy, City of San Antonio. November 21, 2024.