



Reuse & Repair Roundtable Summary

Garbage and Recycling System Facilities Plan

Metro hosted a roundtable on Oct. 4, 2022 to seek input and engagement from partners in reuse and repair. The focus of this meeting was to identify infrastructure or facilities needed to support reuse and repair in the greater Portland region.

Participants were broken up into five small groups to discuss:

- *What infrastructure is needed to support reuse and repair in the greater Portland region, especially in underserved geographic areas of the region?*
- *How can Metro support the reuse and repair economy at Metro transfer stations?*
- *How can equitable distribution systems be created to benefit overburdened communities and other Reuse/Repair systems?*

Infrastructure gaps we heard:

- Physical space for warehousing, sorting and storage of reuse materials
- Centralized locations for people to drop off or shop for reuse materials
- Transportation of large items for people without vehicles (trucks)
- Places or hubs for reuse organizations to share tools and equipment

Other needs we heard:

- Communications support for reuse campaigns
- Education for regional residents about where to take reuse materials
- Support capacity-building for reuse organizations (staffing, equipment, volunteer matchmaking)
- Policy support for producer accountability and “right to repair”



Priorities

Results from a live voting exercise, in which participants ranked their top priorities today, from a list of gaps identified in previous engagements with City of Portland and other projects:

- Storage space (9 votes)
- Ongoing or operation funding from grants or local government (8 votes)
- Staffing capacity (7 votes)
- Processing space (4 votes)
- Organizational capacity (4 votes)
- Cleaning & repair space (3 votes)
- Living wages and benefits for reuse and repair workers (3 votes)
- Policy supporting reuse & repair (3 votes)

Overall comments and takeaways from participants:

- Reiterated the value of a centralized volunteer resource pool; Metro facilitating a platform for volunteer pooling would be helpful.
- The low wages at non-profits and lack of benefits mean you can't keep staff on for long; need benefits and a livable wage.
- Some organizations pay volunteers and suggested Metro could offer financial incentives for reuse/repair volunteers.
- This has been a great opportunity for folks to come together, but there should be a longer discussion opportunity, too, with more time to hear from each other.

Summary discussion notes on gaps:

Group 1

- Centralized space for refurbishing with tools and storage space
- Distributed donation centers around the city
- Places at transfer station where materials for reuse can be dropped off at no cost (prior to scales)
- Education so reuse organizations don't get junk dumped on them
- Don't want Metro to compete with community organizations, but would like support of existing reuse/repair organizations
- Desire for Metro to follow-up on what they hear from community members with actionable outcomes

Group 2

- A network of existing organizations to be able to share resources, like volunteers, trucks, bedbug dryer etc.
- Centralized hubs around the area for sharing physical resources and a location for all organizations to work together
- Location is a big barrier and needs to be convenient for many throughout the region
- Physical locations that include customer interface often means staff must deal with mental health crises that they aren't trained for

Group 3

- Agreement on the hub/spoke model, a centralized processing system for multiple organizations
- Economic incentives from Metro like making transfer station fees cheaper if waste is diverted to a reuse organization first, perhaps through a voucher
- Library is a good model for reuse
- Lowering barriers for grants

- Importance of shoppers having dignity, the experience of shopping in a place that is set up to reduce barriers
- Transportation of large household items to people's homes is needed

Group 4

- In need of more physical space to receive, process, and store materials
- Agreement with sharing space and pooling resources, especially for those organizations working directly with the public, and with access to trucks
- Importance of increasing public education on where to take materials before and at the transfer station
- Agreement on reducing financial barriers
- More conveniently located facilities for all

Group 5

- Need more space to process materials
- The large amount of clothing thrown away by each American; need to create a system to sort out what is still useable
- Support transporting large items to people's homes is needed
- Liked the large "mall" concept to bring together multiple organizations
- Interest in the subscription-based home pickup model to remove transportation barriers for customers
- Could there be an opportunity to capture the gas produced at transfer stations to use for mattress debugging?
- Organizations are having to pay retail price at the transfer station when they are taking on the burden of disposing waste on the donor's behalf

Opportunities for collaboration

Participants also broke into small groups to discuss:

- *What are the opportunities for collaboration? (What should be the role of other players in providing reuse and repair facilities/infrastructure?)*
- *What infrastructure is needed to support these organizations if there are additional collection opportunities?*

What we heard

Many reuse/repair organizations are small so Metro acting as the convener would be most beneficial to long-term collaboration.

When large businesses have an excess of materials but don't know there is a reuse market it ends up in a landfill. A campaign to market, promote and normalize reuse & repair is needed.

Goodwill has experience to share managing a truck fleet.

Most materials are not made to last long. To support a reuse market, what economic levers could be adjusted to support reuse, such as right to repair and extended producer responsibility legislation?

More sharing of resources and volunteers to make things easier on consumers would be helpful, such as being able to drop off materials at other organizations and having a shared transportation system to get materials to the right organizations.

Desire for financial support from the government to build capacity among organizations that are already doing the work vs. creating new systems.

