

TESTIMONY OF ROBERT LANGE, DIRECTOR
BUREAU OF WASTE PREVENTION, REUSE AND RECYCLING
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION & SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2012 - 10:00 A.M.
250 BROADWAY – 16TH FLOOR

OVERSIGHT HEARING – “EXAMINING CLOTHING AND TEXTILE
RECYCLING PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NEW YORK CITY”

Good morning Chairperson James and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Robert Lange, Director for the Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling for the Department of Sanitation. I am pleased to have this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Department’s efforts for almost twenty years to capture textiles, or what are more commonly known as clothing, linens, towels, curtains, clean rags and shoes and other apparel, from the residential waste stream for reuse rather than disposal.

In 1995, my Bureau created the NYC Stuff Exchange, which you know is a 1-877 number for residents to use to access, via their home telephone, the city’s existing and robust charitable and for profit sector specializing in the resale and reuse of the above mentioned unwanted goods. We created the service because it was by far the simplest and most cost effective means by which to connect residents with the already present and extensive neighborhood based charitable infrastructure for accepting unwanted goods, as well as those seeking second hand goods for purchase, without creating a redundant second service funded by city tax payer dollars that would both compete and possibly undermine the existing not-for-profit infrastructure.

When technology and its users began to use the internet more frequently to access information, we developed the NYC Stuff Exchange into an internet-based website that provides the same means for accessing or connecting with local establishments to donate or buy used goods. For a time, we maintained both services while our residents transitioned from one technology to another. In 2000, recognizing the increased use of the internet and smart phones by NYC residents, we terminated the former 1-877 number and further enhanced the services provided by our Stuff Exchange website. In 2010, again recognizing the evolving nature of the way residents access their information, we adapted the NYC Stuff Exchange into a smart phone application.

In all of these evolving phases of the NYC Stuff Exchange service, our goal has been to connect residents with the most convenient access to parting with their unwanted goods that reduces their personal waste footprint. This brings me now to the re-fashionNYC Program that the Department

launched in the spring of 2011 but first, allow me to provide you with a few interesting facts based upon the results of the 2004/2005 four season residential waste characterization study performed by my office:

- Textiles make up approximately 7% of the residential waste stream, of which:
- Carpets and upholstery are about 1.5% of this total;
- Clothing is about 3.0% of the total;
- Non-clothing textiles make up about 1.6%; and
- Shoes and other leather products are about 0.8%

The goal of the re-fashionNYC Program, a partnership in the public interest, is similar to our goals for the NYC Stuff Exchange Program just described, except that the re-fashionNYC Program is focused entirely upon creating even greater convenience for New York City residents who are interested in donating unwanted textiles by placing donation bins in public spaces within their own apartment building. In addition, rather than attempting to create a new infrastructure for capturing these goods and funded through an already recession-strained city tax payer base, we chose instead to partner in this endeavor with a local charitable-based organization that could provide the services to New Yorkers without requiring any additional cost. In May 2010 as the result of a solicitation issued by my office, Housing Works, a well-known and well-respected charitable organization that operates thrift stores in the city, was awarded the contract to be our re-fashionNYC partner.

The re-fashionNYC Program operates in the following manner. Existing staff resources in my office manage the portion of the program that is responsible for soliciting participants into the program such as apartment buildings and then evaluating, together with the prospective participant's management and our Housing Works partner, the viability of the proposed site to accommodate one of the program's collection bins. At the end of this process if it is mutually decided that the site can accommodate the bin, then the building is placed on a waiting list to receive a bin. Once the bin is delivered to the building and installed, the site monitor, usually the building superintendent, is advised to call the bin in for service as needed. As a side note here, because of space constraints in most New York City buildings, the bins are delivered unassembled and assembled on-site.

When a bin fills up and requires servicing, participants call my office where our program dispatcher then adds the site to a list with Housing Works as part of the next scheduled pick-up day. When a participating building is serviced, members of Housing Works' staff enter the building and remove any clothing from the bin and bring it back to their warehouse for sorting. Some of the items donated – usually the higher end items -- will be sold after sorting in Housing Works' shops throughout the city, while other items will be shipped to a Housing Works affiliated thrift shop in Haiti, some items will be made available to different nonprofit thrift shops for sale in their stores, and finally the rest will be sold to overseas markets. In all instances, the profits generated from the sale of the donations go to benefit low-income and homeless New Yorkers living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as to expand the infrastructure of the program further to capture more textiles and further increase revenues to grow the program and Housing Works' charitable efforts.

As I'm sure you are all already aware as residents of the City, last June the Department sent out a citywide mailer to 3.5 million NYC households to both announce the start of the textile collection program and to solicit possible apartment building locations for participation in the program. The mailing detailed how the program would work, who would be eligible, and invited New Yorkers to clean their closets for a good cause and a green city. Residents and building staff were encouraged to contact my office via a convenient online portal or via regular mail. The initial public notice resulted in well over 1,000 inquiries, most in the first few months after the mailing and many directly from building residents interested in having their building participate.

After a careful review and vetting of the inquiries received, 128 residential buildings and 3 commercial buildings have been approved to date. A total of 157 bins have been installed in those 128 buildings, some with multiple bins. Over 100,000 pounds or 50 tons were donated in the first 6 months of the Program. Another 600,000 pounds or 300 tons is expected for the rest of the year. In other words, the Program, both through additional sites and increased participation at existing sites, is growing steadily. And, as part of Mayor Bloomberg's plan to double the City's diversion rate by 2017, we are looking to expand this program to additional sites in buildings and public spaces throughout the City.

To give you a sense of what the public thinks about the program here is a small sampling: *"Just a note to let you know that the response to having a collection bin in our apartment building has been overwhelmingly positive. I keep hearing from my neighbors what a great convenience it is, and our super is very enthusiastic. Wonderful program and implementation! Keep up the good work!"* Without exception, all of the feedback we have received from the public about the Program has been positive.

I would now be happy to answer your questions.



CarpetCycle, L.L.C.

NYC Council Hearing on Textile and CARPET RECYCLING
2.17.2012

Markets for post-consumer carpets have been evolving for over 15 years. The various polymers used to construct most carpets have a value in the secondary plastics market. We at CarpetCycle, with over 15 years experience, have collected over 100,000,000 LBS of spent carpets from the tri-state area for recycling purposes. We now operate a 50,000 SF "de-manufacturing" facility built specifically for carpet recycling in Newark NJ, 6 miles outside the Holland Tunnel. We need further supply of spent carpet feedstock, however it is challenging to collect the carpets in a manner that retains the secondary market value. Carpets must be kept DRY and out of the weather elements. Furthermore, carpet that is mashed together in compactor trucks with other C&D debris cannot be recycled, because it is too contaminated. Spent carpets from commercial buildings and homes must be collected in "source-separated" fashion (same as acoustical ceiling tiles, which are recyclable). Harvesting of the valuable nylon, polypropylene, and Polyester polymers can then be accomplished when the carpet is collected in this fashion. *We at CarpetCycle have proven that spent carpets and ceiling tiles can be collected in this fashion at no added cost to the building owners or managers.* We can provide a long list of happy customers and successful recycling projects in the City of New York.

Our Newark facility will be able to process upwards of 2000 tons per month of spent carpets. We then plan to open a new "pre-sort, pre-process collection center" possibly in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The final step will be manufacturing sustainable products, for use in NYC commercial building, from NYC generated "carpet waste" using NYC jobs. This is a TRUE GREEN JOBS story. Please come for a tour of the Newark facility and attend our ribbon cutting in mid-April of this year. Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,
M. Sean Ragiell
Founder, CarpetCycle LLC 1999.
CARE Board of Directors Member since 2007

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Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2-17-12

Name: M. SEAN RAGIEL (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Carpet Cycle LLC

Address: 16 Herbert Street, Newark NJ

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

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Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: HARRIET I AUB (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Materials for the Arts

Address: 3300 Northern Blvd LIC NY

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆ 11601

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bob Lanza Director

Address: DEPT. OF SANITATION

I represent: Bureau of Waste Prevention,

Address: Reuse and Recycling

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/17/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Matthew Bernardo

Address: 245 EAST 19th ST #05

I represent: Housing Works

Address: 57 Willbrosky ST BK, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms