

2010 National Reuse Alliance Conference Notes (Madalyn Cioci)

Conference information will be posted at: <http://www.reusealliance.org/>

Contents:

1. Who attended the conference
2. EPA updates:
3. Green Building: Deconstruction and Reuse of Building Materials
4. Goodwill's Economic and Social Impact
5. Software and Technical Support for Materials Exchanges
6. Green Moving Services
7. North Carolina policies
8. Medical Supply Recovery
9. Barriers to Reuse
10. Notes from the Reuse Summit (group discussion)
11. Other Good Stuff:

1. Who attended the conference (very partial list of represented groups):

Creative reuse non-profits and artists: Creative reuse Pittsburgh.org, The Scrap Exchange (Raleigh, NC), Materials for the Arts (NY City) and many others.

Technology to support reuse: lwastenotsystems.com (Norm Ruttan), VerdeVida

Deconstruction/Building Reuse: ReuseConsulting.com (Dave Bennick), Habitat ReStores (many), Finger Lakes ReUse (NY state), Public Architecture (San Francisco), ReHouse (Rochester, NY),

Moving Services: U-Haul, Bungo Boxes, College Hunks Hauling Junk

Furniture Banks: several

University of Minnesota Reuse Center

Others: EPA Region 2, EPA Region 4, EPA Headquarters, NC Dept of Env and Nat Res, Dept of Energy, university professors of design and manufacturing, Northeast Recycling Council (NERC),

2. EPA Updates

EPA headquarters is running demonstration project on residential deconstruction and another on packaging. They are also working on LCA disclosure guidelines. Liz Resek is steering the EPA shift from waste management to life-cycle focused materials management. Rhonda Rollins (**EPA Region 4**) – working on consistent state recycling standard. Concerned about Florida's recycling definition including incineration and also the recinding of the ban on yard waste from landfills. Landfills want the methane.

3. Green Building

Design for Reuse in commercial Buildings: Liz Ogbu, Public Architecture, presented the new Design for Reuse Primer (download here: http://www.designforreuse.org/Design_for_Reuse/default.htm)

This grew from the realization that while 30% of all raw materials are used in building and construction, only 5-9% of LEED projects have gotten any points for materials reuse. Reuse is not yet widespread and needed support – especially in commercial buildings. Thus the Primer. Among the barriers to reuse: Building codes, limited knowledge of options, ability to source sufficient or consistent enough quantities of materials.

She also told about the Scrap House – which can be seen in a National Geographic documentary. The house had walls made of phonebooks and keyboards, among other clever reuse features.

Other deconstruction professionals and carpenters working with reclaimed materials talked about the barriers posed by building codes that don't allow reclaimed materials in any framing.

4. Goodwill's economic impacts: served 1.9 million people, diverted 114 million lbs of materials since 2005 (2010 numbers), \$2.5 billion in sales, 66 million donations, put 150,000 people to work. Has developed a partnership with Dell (www.reconnectpartnership.com) so that anyone can drop off e-waste and it will be recycled.

Working on national “donate” symbol – For example, Levi's bluejean care tag now says “Wash in cold Water, Line Dry, Donate to Goodwill” – a nod both to the embedded energy in the product manufacture and the product use.

5. Software and Technical Support for Materials Exchanges and Reuse:

Mary Ann Remolador (NERC) worked with iWasteNot Systems (<http://iwastenotsystems.com/>) to revamp and network all the Materials Exchanges in the North East. Now branded under www.reusemarketplace.com. Now all listings from multiple states and exchanges can be searched at once. She used University marketing students to come up with a low/no cost marketing plan.

iWasteNot also did the Madison, WI residential exchange site. Iwastenot costs \$2500 a year. They update it regularly so the software continues to be functional and up to date with current web platforms and social networking sites

This same company (the only one catering to Materials Exchanges in the country) is also in conversation with Minnesota's materials exchanges and may be a vendor in a recently awarded MPCA EA grant.

Other presenters included:

Ian Moise of reuseconnection a knowledge sharing site for connecting people who want to reuse something with others who have ideas for how it can be reused. Currently facebook only – but with some 35,000 followers worldwide after launching earlier this year.

See: www.facebook.com/reuseconnection

VerdeVida CEO presented on his software system made to help reuse operations run smoothly: <http://v.avid-db.com/>

6. Green Moving Services

U-Haul presented on a variety of reuse initiatives they are undertaking around the country:

a) reusing their box vans as storage pods once they are decommissioned from service on the trucks. <http://www.uhaul.com/Articles/About/4/How-does-a-truck-van-body-become-a-storage-unit>

b) providing a system for customers to take/drop off used cardboard boxes for reuse – free <http://www.uhaul.com/Articles/About/112/U-Haul-box-programs-help-customers-and-the-environment>

c) creating reuse areas at their self-storage sites so that materials that are unwanted by customers can find new owners. They also provide donation boxes for clothing to go to Goodwill. <http://www.uhaul.com/Articles/About/58/Florida-U-Haul-center-introduces-reuse-center>

BungoBox <http://www.bungobox.com/> is a franchise-based company that rents reusable moving boxes and dollies.

College Hunks Hauling Junk <http://www.collegehunkshaulingjunk.com/junk-removal> a franchise-based company that provides pick up for donations, moving services, and junk removal – with emphasis on donation and recycling of all they can.

7. North Carolina policies to support reuse

NC DENR set up “Swap shops” at recycling drop off centers around the state. Set up cost is small -- \$2500 -- and they divert about 15-20 tons year this way.

Orange County, NC (Chapel Hill area)

Started with salvage sheds, about \$2800, which are open when the nearby recycling centers are open and are supervised. They found they needed policies to keep scavengers at bay and conflicts down – people are limited to 15 minute visits twice a day, no upholstered furniture, no broken/stained furniture. Estimate 60 tons per year is reused, maybe triple that now. Includes a book shelf. Tried textiles, but they don't do them now – because it was a mess. They don't worry about possible hazards...it's all 'use at your own risk'.

They do some lumber reclaiming – they find graders will mark it, but not officially stamp it, so it may not pass code. They have found that it can be used in some building applications by overbuilding and getting it approved on a case by case basis. They sell some on govdeals.com.

Need for siting a new C&D landfill spurred a couple of efforts: first a scavaging program at the C&D landfill for a while, but it was dangerous. They honed in on wood, metal and OCC as best materials to target at the C&D landfill and these are now banned from landfill.

These material bans require: licensing of haulers of the materials; certification for transfer stations taking in the mixed materials; applied to commercial not just construction waste; Gives county 60 days to evaluate a structure prior to demolition for recyclables (similar to house preservation rules and ordinances). County staff meet on site with all the parties and provide a room by room description of what can be recycled; then they recommend deconstruction, partial deconstruction or demolition. Recommend getting owner, permitting staff, planner and solid waste staff together early and through this they find it is not only doable but it also lowers costs.

Outreach to college buildings – they have carts out during end of year – “textiles” “housewares” “books” etc. She puts ads in the paper at that time. Ads table-top reminders in dining halls.

8. medical supply recovery

AFYA Foundation <http://afyafoundation.org/index-2.html>

Founder estimates 3.2 million tons of product disposal in US hospitals (not medical waste, but PRODUCTS).

Problems don't rest entirely with hospitals:

- Medical device companies won't guarantee their product as sterile if it's been in an operating room, even if it is unopened. And US hospitals require the guarantee.
- Hospitals change vendors and don't arrange for buy back of leftover inventory.
- Materials expire or are cosmetically damaged.
- Overstock.
- Hospital anticipates inspection and throws out stuff to clear clutter.
- Supplies are ordered for operations and never used.

She's training nurses to put the left over supplies from the OR – items never opened, put them in a bag and stash them for her truck to pick up.

AFYA can pay for donor shipping costs if shipment is big enough. Materials go to Africa (Malawi) and to emergency needs like Haiti and Pakistan.

9. Barriers to Reuse: this wasn't a session but are some of the responses to my question about barriers they face.

Building codes restrict use of reused materials

People don't know about us

Corporate policies often forces overstock to disposal instead of reuse (ex: Sears, Home Depot)

No incentives for reuse (tax incentives for reuse businesses or materials), landfills too cheap.

10. Notes from the Reuse Summit (group discussion) Wed 10/20/10

Ideas for next year: more specific education focus.

Consumer products guide – what reuse places are allowed to take and give out. People who don't trust the materials will pull out of participation in programs.

Not yet much conversation on repair/refurbish and remanufacturing – add this to conference.

Producer's role in design for repair/durability. Design for the environment. Be careful about product stewardship – since it ends up being glorified recycling.

Starting state chapters of Reuse Alliance to build lists to help expose just how many entities are out there.

Add opportunity to conference for reuse sectors to meet (include suppliers to reuse industry and academic and government)

How do we get a seat at the table?

- know how much we contribute – need to do data collection. Minnesota's effort and the Reuse Alliance grant with Minnesota are good steps.
- map out reuse sectors and where one can help the other. The ecology of reuse...who feeds whom? Bring the multitude of groups together: Association for reusable textiles, Assn of Furniture Banks, Reusable Packaging Group, Antiques, E-Bay, Craigslist, consignment, repair, refurbishment, used automobiles,
- Maybe the ED's of the above groups or boards should get together
- Study on the ecology of reuse is needed.
- State of New York folks are particularly interested in consumer products and including them in WARM. (contact them through Norm Ruttan, iWasteNot)

- Also need to work on assigning financial value of those reused products.
- Furniture Reuse Network (Scotland) – uses avg weights and a factor of 3.2 x lbs of goods to get carbon equivalent. – “Reuse business as a carbon offset program”
- Reuse carbon credits – where is this discussion.
- How can we foster more LEED reused materials credits – can we push on USGBC so that the reused materials count for more credits?

Master Reuser’s Training Program & And Master Reuser community advocacy program – web/conference call.

“All these years we’ve never seen our work as reuse, it has been serving the community” (Furniture Bank Houston) He will be doing a mattress recycling program that is funded by RWJohnson foundation; Terry MacDonald, Eugene OR started it, and is taking it national.

What is lacking is a way to pull us all together --- logo or ad campaign. –

Put certification/branding on next conference agenda.

One person from the Raleigh area is using a grant from the Triangle Community Foundation to create a regional Reuse Alliance chapter, to look at public policy for reuse and to run 3 public reuse events.

Looking for legislative sponsor for the National Reuse Day – in October.

National advocacy – Bureau of Labor Statistics was defining green jobs and they didn’t have reuse in there anywhere – Mary Ellen got it added.

11. Other Good Stuff

Interesting Collaboration Models:

Beth Stelson – created Reuse District and got it recognized by the city council. The city put 35 years of stuff into the landfill since the storm. No recycling, No comprehensive waste management. \$50 membership fees. No employees. Steering Committee.

Models and sources for funds and materials for Creative Reuse Centers:

Annual membership fee for unlimited shopping up to 4 times a year.

Often find center will pay for itself, but not for salaries.

Donation Site: Kickstarter.com and b Corporations

Locate next to an established entity – like architectural salvage

From Sara in Scotland: everyone’s a stakeholder. People who’ll need her service: prisons - people coming out need help; the army, mental health agencies, job and welfare centers,

refugee advice seekers, GLBT, women's aid, midwives, church ministers, St. Vincent DePaul.
For stuff: schools, funeral directors, insolvency brokers,

** Harriet at MFYA NYC – tells teachers to set up a “treasure box” next to their trash and their recycling bins in their classes – to get materials they may use in creative reuse games or activities later.

**Connect event planners with ArtScraps – because people leave so much behind after events.

Marketing ideas for all types of Reuse:

Thank you notes from users of reused goods back to donors. (Materials for the Arts, NYC)
Have customers do the marketing for you. She tells them “You can't shop here until you've written your thank yous”.

Show where the deconstruction materials go...show the result as in “your house framed 3 homes in Mexico”

Get ads in business magazines

Need to have Reuse be part of basic sustainability plans in organizations.

Trade Groups:

Deconstruction Reuse Network

ReuseCollective (Portland OR, twitter, no website yet)

National FurnitureBank Association (Andrea Fowler. Bridging is a member)

Other Groups, Resources to check out:

Madison Stuff Exchange (powered by iwastenot)

Recyclopedia

UN Paper on Climate and Waste (July 2010) and Chapter 10 of the IPPCC 4th assessment

International Sleep Products (Goodwill is working with them to deal with mattresses)

Keystone (industry group working on policies)

Reverse Garbage Truck – Australia

Designforreuse.org

Reusemarketplace.com

GovDeals.com