



Recycled Products: The Way in San José

**City of San José
San José, California**

Background. The City of San José, California has long been regarded as one of the early leaders in recycling policies, including a multimaterial curbside recycling program and a serious municipal commitment to buying recycled-content products.

Like most of our great recycling stories, this one starts with a pioneer—the late Sam Gaetz—who led the city into purchasing recycled paper as early as 1980-81, long before it was PC (politically correct) to be EC (environmentally correct).

Yet if we know our California history, it takes much more than the first pioneer to settle a territory. Taking up the torch and continuing to expand on Sam's work to make recycled products the way in San José is Doris Evans Hencken, recycling coordinator, and her supervisor, Central Procurement Manager Carol Reed. While San José's recycled products purchasing efforts span a 15-year period, their formal buy recycled policy was adopted in 1990.

Scope of Recycling Program. San José is home to one of the state's largest curbside recycling programs, serving over 165,000 households. It includes a citywide yard waste recycling program and used motor oil collection. Within the city offices, San José's paper collection program alone is as good as it gets, with all of the following collected: computer paper, white and colored paper, mixed paper, newspaper, magazines, and blueprints. The city staff had the wisdom, in their employee handout, to explain *why* the different grades of paper need to be recycled (which leads to more cooperation), to note common contaminants, and to remind staff that "just recycling isn't enough" by citing 11 easy waste-reduction tips. In keeping with their attention to all levels of the waste management hierarchy, the city donates unclaimed stolen

Buying recycled products is an extremely important facet of your integrated waste management program. *Until materials are made into new products, they are not really recycled (your trash is just tidily separated.) Recycling won't work unless those products are purchased*

regularly. In the interest of encouraging you to consider all facets of waste reduction and recycling, these case studies include not only the buy-recycled practices of model companies, but give you a glimpse of their overall approach to waste management. Some companies highlighted in these studies are winners of the IWMB Waste Reduction Awards Program (WRAP). Government agencies are not eligible for the WRAP program.

property such as videotapes (which are erased and given to schools), blankets, and handbags. Purchasing is currently developing a request for proposal (RFP) for an outside contractor to service all city facilities with collection of recycled materials. Many municipalities have done this for office paper only, but San José is including cans, bottles, and cardboard (OCC). This program is anticipated to begin in March 1997.

Recycled-Content Products Purchases. San José recognized that with ever-increasing amounts of materials being collected, the city needed to protect its investment in its own recycling program. To make sure the recyclables collected eventually end up in products bought by other agencies and businesses, the city set a good example by increasing the amount of recycled-content products (RCP) purchased. San José currently buys over 40 types of RCPs, ranging from office supplies to compost for city parks. All office supplies have recycled content: copy paper, computer paper, envelopes, steno books, manila folders, hanging folders, writing tablets, adding machine paper, data binders, easel pads, stacking letter trays, and miscellaneous office supplies from Post-it™ notes to message pads. Materials printed outside the city government are required to come in from contractors on recycled paper. City business cards are also made from recycled paper.

Janitorial products include recycled-content: toilet tissue, paper towels, handy-wipes, plastic trash can liners, and plastic refuse bags. In the landscape maintenance area, besides the compost already mentioned, plastic picnic tables and park benches are RCPs.

The miscellaneous products are among the most interesting RCPs: laser toner cartridges, carpet, reclaimed paint, cellulose insulation, recycling containers, disposable wiping rags, textile absorbent pads, airport parking ticket stamp cartridges, retention storage boxes, and concrete outdoor equipment reinforced with recycled fiberglass mesh.

Overall, the city saves about \$10,000 annually on the purchase of recycled-content products. While these savings are not enormous, the city's net gain for protecting the environment and supporting its recycling program investment will be large over time.

What's New in Recycled-Products? The City of San José has tested, and now considers it standard, to purchase recycled computer disks. (Old software program disks are erased, cleaned, and packed for reuse.) Also being field tested are recycled signs—some with 95 percent postconsumer plastic, others from refurbished aluminum.

Although uninspired to change at first (as most of us tend to be), the city's vehicle fleet maintenance crew now swears by recycled oil. They prefer it because it is cleaner and burns better. Re-refined antifreeze is also an accepted product used throughout the fleet.

What's New in Recycled-Content Procurement? The City of San José writes its product specifications for products where it is available for recycled content *only*, so there is no competition from virgin products. The purchasing staff cites a new trend in procurement that involves getting away from "low bid" and moving toward awarding contracts based on "best value." This allows longer-range planning for the full life cycle of products. This often makes RCPs the best buy.

Tip: Recent hikes in paper prices and potential shortfalls in availability prompted the city to buy an entire year's supply of paper at once. The City of San José seeks to buy the highest possible recycled content, which at times has been up to 30 percent postconsumer. This year's paper has a postconsumer content of 20 percent.

"Every section needs a champion," says Carol Reed, about the challenge of selling recycled-content products within your agency. In one case study after another, we find it all boils down to enthusiastic individuals who are eager to be the ambassadors of change.

For More Information: Contact Doris Hencken at 408-277-4795.



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