

# Carpet Recycling Update: Washington and around the country

November 2013

## Agencies working to build vibrant carpet recycling industry in the Pacific Northwest

Recycling used carpet currently disposed as garbage is the goal of work led by the [King County LinkUp](#) program and [Seattle Public Utilities \(SPU\)](#), which are implementing recommendations developed in partnership with business, government, and academic workgroup members.



The strategy focuses on working with businesses locally to process carpet, while increasing demand for carpet recycling and driving demand for commodities derived from and products made with recovered carpet fiber.

In a few years of work, more companies have opened, markets have moved forward and backward (not unusual in the recycling business), and a wide range of parties have joined the conversations.

Starting in 2013, in partnership with [Zero Waste Washington](#), King County LinkUp and SPU will build on existing public and private efforts and convene *a coalition of diverse participants who work together to significantly increase carpet recycling throughout Washington*. We hope that the coalition will tackle thorny challenges, thoughtfully consider diverse approaches, and eventually implement joint strategies to achieve that goal.

## Seattle Public Utilities Bans Carpet from Landfills in 2015

Carpet is one of [several materials](#) the City of Seattle is working to move out of the “garbage” and into productive reuse and recycling. The City adopts landfill bans as a means of “leveling the playing field,” increasing certainty about materials for recyclers and manufacturers who use recovered materials, and increasing recycling tonnage. Over the past several years Seattle City Council has already banned a number of materials from garbage, including common recyclables (paper, cans, and bottles), yard waste and food waste. Along with carpet, other building materials that will be banned are asphalt paving, bricks, and concrete from construction jobs, scrap metal and cardboard.

## King County LinkUp and partners develop and distribute Carpet Removal Best Practices

King County LinkUp facilitated a work group of private businesses and public agencies to assist in developing the [2011 Carpet Removal Best Practices for Carpet Recycling \(Best Practices\)](#). The *Best Practices*, also available as a [Field Guide](#) in English and Spanish, were created to help

ensure that carpet removed from buildings is uncontaminated and suitable for recycling. It clearly lays out the air quality and worker safety regulatory requirements related to carpet removal, which protect workers, building owners/occupants and the environment.

## Flooring Association Northwest provides asbestos awareness training and establishes Carpet Recycling Committee

In an effort to reduce asbestos containing materials delivered to recycling facilities, [Flooring Association Network \(FAN\)](#) (formerly Washington State Floor Covering Association) sponsored asbestos awareness training seminars. These seminars were geared toward the flooring industry to better equip flooring personnel on how to identify suspect asbestos containing materials. The Association provides guidelines for carpet and pad recycling on its website and links to relevant resources. Their Carpet Recycling Committee was established to work towards a goal of making carpet recycling commonplace. The Committee has developed plans to further support carpet recycling that will be set in motion once there are more end markets for carpet derived materials.

## Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE) initiates effort to address challenges facing PET carpet recycling

To begin to address the issue of non-recyclability of carpet made with PET fiber, [CARE](#) has hired carpet recycling expert Frank Endrenyi to “lead the development of sustainable commercial solutions for recycling post-consumer polyester carpet.” PET (a type of polyester plastic) is the same plastic used to manufacture water bottles, and recycled PET from water bottles is increasingly the material of choice for making carpet face fiber (the part of the carpet one walks on). There are strong markets for nylon recovered from recycling carpet, but not for PET. This year-long contract is designed to identify

viable outlets and assess timing, volume and probability of success. CARE reports that initial information being gathered is encouraging.

### California Carpet Stewardship Program

California became the first state in the country to establish a statewide [carpet stewardship program](#) in 2010 as required in AB2398, and there are now over two years of experience and an increase in carpet recycling business in the state. CARE implements the program, which is designed to follow product stewardship principles to make certain that discarded carpets are usable for end markets in a way that is sustainably funded and provides jobs in the state. [CalRecycle](#) is the agency responsible for reviewing and approving stewardship plans, checking progress, and providing oversight and enforcement as indicated in state law.

For the [second quarter of 2013, CARE reported 10.8 million pounds \(11.7 percent\) of carpet recycled](#) and just over \$1 million in incentive payments to carpet processors and next level manufacturers. Overall, the program has processed carpet resulting in 71 million pounds of carpet material (primarily nylon) that has been resold for use in new products. While there are quarter to quarter changes in collection and processing, the general trend is gradually upward. CARE is updating their conditionally approved Plan to address changing market conditions (due to CalRecycle by Nov 2013). Two processors have shut down in California in 2013. More carpet is made with non-nylon materials and for the long term viability of recycling, viable markets need to be developed for non-nylon materials. CARE is proposing changes in the program to address this challenge. For more details, see [California Carpet Stewardship Plan; Annual Report to CalRecycle, July 2011 – June 2013; 2012 CARE Annual Report](#).

### Carpet recycling efforts in other jurisdictions

Several jurisdictions are working to increase carpet recycling, through multi-party workgroups, legislative proposals, and other efforts. Currently, Minnesota, New York, Connecticut and Illinois expect to have legislation introduced during 2014. British Columbia plans to add carpet to their product stewardship programs in 2017, building on the substantial number of products already covered there.

### Public purchasing contracts for flooring require carpet reclamation

There are several contracts that require carpet reclamation be available for public purchasing in Washington: the [Washington State Flooring Contract](#), held by vendor [Great Floors](#), and the [U.S. Communities Flooring Contract](#), held by [Empire Today](#), along with several [City of Seattle contracts](#). All contracts are available to state and local government agencies and qualified non-profits. They also offer carpet

products that, at a minimum, meet the [NSF/ANSI 140: Sustainability Assessment for Carpet](#) gold certification standard. The U.S. Communities contract is available nationwide to government and non-profit consortium members; [City of Seattle Purchasing](#) led the solicitation in 2012.

### Carpet recycling in the Pacific Northwest

While carpet recycling is limited in the Northwest, some services are available. Carpet is removed by contractors and homeowners, and collected by a variety of businesses and facilities, some of whom sort the materials prior to sending them to processing facilities where the carpet's constituent materials are separated. There are currently two carpet processing facilities operating in the Pacific Northwest:

[Again](#), Kent, WA

Bill Betts 253-981-6675, cell 208-661-8670, [wb@againco.com](mailto:wb@againco.com)

Mark Murphy 253-981-6675, cell 503-866-6654,

[markmurphyb@msn.com](mailto:markmurphyb@msn.com)

[Carpet Processing and Recycling / Recovery 1](#), Tacoma, WA

Terry Gillis 800-949-5852, 253-627-1180

[tgillis@recovery1.com](mailto:tgillis@recovery1.com)

*NOTE: Contact these companies to check their availability to accept materials.*

Product stewardship bills for carpet were introduced in Washington in the 2011 and 2012 legislative sessions. Both were supported by a number of agencies and organizations, but were opposed by the carpet industry. Neither bill passed. There was no carpet stewardship legislation introduced in 2013.

**Would you like to be added to our contacts list?** If so, please send one of us an email. A couple of times a year we send updates by email. We don't publish the list, but we do use it to make referrals among interested businesses.

As always, please let us know how you are progressing with your carpet recycling efforts and if you have ideas for how we can help develop a vibrant carpet recycling industry in the region.

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