

Carpet Recycling in Washington Current Landscape

Design & Production

- Carpet hard to take apart and not designed to be recycled
- Properties of resins have critical impact on whether carpet is recyclable
- Nylon markets are strong
- Manufacturers increasingly use inexpensive PET from plastic bottles for face fiber, but PET from carpet is not recyclable
- Limited demand and markets for PP, PET, and calcium carbonate from carpet
- No universal definition of “sustainably recycled”

Use & Reuse

- Potential for greater reuse of carpet tiles locally
- Revisions of third-party product standards and rating systems applicable to carpet (NSF 140, LEED, Living Future, etc.)
- Green building companies increasingly see products as “assets” to “farm”
- Consumers and “specifiers” don’t realize PET carpet isn’t recyclable



End-of-Life Management

- PET crisis
- Inadequate processing technology, including low yield
- Sorting by fiber type and processing is time-consuming and expensive
- Asbestos and other contamination
- Only 2 processors in state – not dialing back but not taking new customers
- Carpet recycling reported as more expensive in Washington than elsewhere
- Inadequate drop-off locations
- Sometimes long haul distances to processors
- Cost difference between disposal and recycling not enough for recycling to be consistently viable for collectors
- Customers not aware of recycling options
- Local building and solid waste codes strengthened to require waste diversion, salvage assessment, landfill bans including on carpet

Graphic from “Materials Management in Oregon” as modified for the draft 2014 Washington State Solid & Hazardous Waste Plan Update