



THE BUREAU OF  
**PLANNING &  
SUSTAINABILITY**



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# REUSE, REPAIR, AND SHARE

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



@trashforpeace

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 2021

Portland, Oregon has a rich culture of reuse, repair, and share that contributes to the circular economy while reducing the City's carbon footprint. This economy welcomes nonprofits, businesses, and other organizations to thrive by reusing, repairing, and sharing materials to maximize their value and to keep them from the landfill or recycling system. Beyond creating jobs and building workforce skills, this economy provides many unseen benefits and valuable services to the Portland community.

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) worked with Start Consulting Group LLC to provide a Needs Assessment of the reuse, repair, and share system in Portland. Interviews, small group discussions, and surveys were conducted with mainly nonprofit organizations to assess the needs and current state of the reuse, repair, and share economy. Five major needs discussed throughout all of the conversations were space; racial equity; communications and marketing; capacity building and staffing support; and grants and funding.

**Space:** The biggest challenges that reuse, repair, and share organizations and businesses face are space and location. These challenges include rising lease rates, lack of storage, lack of donation processing and repair space, and hard-to-access locations.

**Racial Equity:** Strong racial equity and inclusion work in the reuse, repair, and share economy is needed to best serve and listen to community members for true climate justice. Mission-driven nonprofits and businesses have spent decades trying to meet the needs of historically underrepresented communities. Lack of foundational work has resulted in gentrification and not understanding the needs and wants of the communities they intended to serve. Additionally, inclusive and safe spaces for community members to share their perspectives need to be built into the system. Community members should be driving reuse, repair, and share in their neighborhoods, especially in communities that have been marginalized and excluded by these organizations and the City. These community members should be included as stakeholders and experts.

**Communications and Marketing:** BPS is uniquely positioned to reach many different people throughout Portland. Communications support from the City lends credibility to the reuse, repair, and share community and reinforces their ongoing work. There is a need for a cohesive reuse, repair, and share marketing campaign. Organizations also expressed value in a collaborative joint marketing group.

**Capacity Building and Staffing Support:** Reuse, repair, and share organizations and businesses run on tight budgets with little room to add staffing support or capacity to create a vision for the future of the reuse, repair, and share economy in Portland, although there is a

strong desire to participate. Workforce development and capacity support from local government organizations would empower reuse, repair, and share organizations to continue to expand their sustainable work and climate justice.

**Grants and Funding:** Receiving grants and other funding can be time-consuming and highly competitive for many reuse, repair, and share organizations. Many groups struggle to find value in applying for restrictive funding for new programming. There is a need for funders to reassess grant and funding applications to simplify the process and requirements so they are not a burden on the fund seekers. Reuse, repair, and share organizations and businesses both need access to funding that supports the important work they are already doing. These organizations and businesses provide a valuable waste management service to Portland residents, with little to no government support and a reliance on earned income models.

**Other Key Discussions:** Participants expressed enthusiasm for partnerships and collaborations with other reuse, repair, and share organizations. Participants planned to continue to address the needs of the group beyond Portland's Needs Assessment process. They noted that, as a collective, they could inform policy issues and build greater reuse, repair, and share incentives with government stakeholders.

The assessment participants shared needs in other areas like transportation and vehicle sharing; data tracking and metrics; legal and human resources support; and technology and software to improve their workflows. Some organizations also requested an assessment of the needs of community stakeholders to inform where services have the most impact. Lastly, BPS can support these organizations with tracking emissions and providing research on the climate and financial impact of reuse, repair, and share organizations to include materials rescued from the waste stream and returned to the local economy.

**Reuse Mall and Reuse Hubs:** A Reuse Mall model would allow centralized reuse, repair, and share organizations and businesses to provide services to the community while addressing the City of Portland's Climate Impact Needs. The concept of a Portland-based Reuse Mall was attractive to all organizations, even ones that did not have a direct benefit. Housing reuse, repair, and share in one location would simplify material drop-offs by donors, ease of closed-loop purchasing, symbiotic use of space and resources, and create economies of scale needed to build a sustainable circular economy. Additionally, a large-scale location could better meet the needs of community members. Smaller reuse hubs or other ideas like satellite kiosks or bookmobile-style reuse and share vans could meet community needs at the local level. Conversely, an intentional study of logistics, operations, and location would be needed to meet the needs of potential participants.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

<b>BPS</b>	<b>BPS AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS</b>
<p>Define the role and vision of BPS and determine what financial, marketing, and staff support the City will commit to the reuse, repair, and share economy.</p>	<p>Fund training to support nonprofits with racial equity and inclusion strategies, de-escalation training, and trauma-informed care.</p>
<p>Compensate organizations for their time and expertise. Build capacity for them to participate in the broader reuse, repair, and share vision.</p>	<p>Include and tap into the expertise of reuse, repair, and share nonprofits and organizations with policy and planning around reuse, repair, share, and beyond.</p>
<p>Refocus priority and investment from landfill and recycling systems to support the reuse, repair, and share economy as the first option.</p>	<p>Determine if the region is thoughtfully invested in creating a Reuse Mall model. Create actions to provide real support to the region's reuse, repair, and share community and economy.</p>
<p>Prioritize support for organizations with missions that are primarily driven by reuse, repair, and share.</p>	<p>Assist reuse, repair, and share organizations with a wage and benefits analysis and use the data to support increased wages and benefits.</p>
<p>Provide data and climate research to inform the work on reuse, repair, and share in Portland.</p>	<p>Build communication strategies with Metro, DEQ, county sustainability departments, and reuse, repair, and share stakeholders to support and grow the reuse, repair, and share economy.</p>
<p>Ensure systems are in place to include and listen to community members as stakeholders and experts, especially communities of color.</p>	<p>Seek input from organizational staff and volunteers, not just Executive Directors, managers, and board members.</p>
<p>Create a plan to use non-fiscal resources to support the reuse, repair, and share organizations, especially with marketing and communications.</p>	<p>Track emissions and provide research on the climate and financial impact of reuse, repair, and share. Include materials rescued from the waste stream and put back into the local economy.</p>

## CONCLUSION

Reuse, repair, and share organizations and businesses reclaim discarded materials and create markets that benefit the local economy while adding a level of accessibility and affordability for the community. There is no shortage of materials and with the support of government and private investment, these businesses and organizations could build a more robust system.

In the current system, local governments direct community members to these organizations to divert material from the waste stream, however, support is needed to “close the loop” by also advocating for the purchase of reused materials. Additionally, there is a disconnect in funding and energy that is concentrated on the landfill and recycling side, rather than the upstream systems of reuse, repair, and share. Jobs are created, the climate impact of new materials is reduced, affordable items are accessible to the community, and a sense of community is built through reuse, repair, and share initiatives. Funding to support and grow the reuse, repair, and share economy is imperative to affect meaningful change in Portland.

The reuse, repair, and share economy needs ongoing support from government organizations and private industry to continue and to expand upon the highly beneficial services they provide the community. These groups should be involved early in discussions surrounding materials management to leverage their hands-on expertise for services that they have been providing for decades at little to no cost to stakeholders. Compensation for nonprofit organizations’ staff time and expertise is imperative for these resource-limited environments.

There is an incredible opportunity to bring nonprofits, businesses, and government entities together to build a sustainable reuse, repair, and share economy in Portland. Syncing funding support from government and business with the knowledge of hands on organizations will have a positive impact on access to reused, repaired, and shared materials for all while reducing climate and environmental impacts.



**Thank you to all the organizations that participated in the Needs Assessment Process and sharing your expertise. Special thanks to Alicia Polacok with BPS for her vision and passion for reuse, repair, and share**

**Nonprofit Organizations**

Bike Works by p:ear  
Central City Concern Reuse Operations Center  
The City Repair Project  
Community Cycling Center  
Community Warehouse/Estate Store  
Free Geek  
Green Lents Community Tool Library  
Habitat for Humanity ReStore  
Kitchen Commons (Kitchen Share NE)  
Kitchen Share SE  
Northeast Portland Tool Library  
ReBuilding Center  
ReClaim It!  
Repair PDX  
Schoolhouse Supplies  
SCRAP Creative Reuse  
Southeast Portland Tool Library  
St. Johns Swapnplay  
Trash for Peace/Ground Score

**Other Organizations**

Oregon DEQ  
Metro  
Portland Repair Finder  
Ridwell  
Sankofa Lumber  
The Thingery



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