

Improving Textile Reuse in Strathcona County

Report Purpose

To provide Council with information regarding immediate opportunities to improve textile reuse in Strathcona County, and request additional time to develop recommendations for Council related to a standardized textile bin collection program.

Recommendation

THAT Administration return in Q2 of 2018 with a recommendation for Council's consideration regarding a standardized textile bin collection program for Strathcona County.

Council History

April 25, 2017 – Through a Notice of Motion moved by F. Beland Quest, Council approved

THAT Administration work with the Environmental Advisory Committee to prepare recommendations for Council's consideration on how the County could reduce the amount of textile waste disposed of by residents; and that the recommendations be presented to Council by September 5, 2017 Council meeting.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: Focusing on textile reuse in Strathcona County supports the local goodwill economy, which provides affordable clothing options for residents.

Governance: n/a

Social: Connecting with local goodwill organizations will not only provide a community voice for textile reuse, but will increase the amount of textiles available to people in need.

Culture: n/a

Environment: The proposed recommendations support the goals of the Green Routine program by increasing reuse of residential waste and maximizing diversion from landfill.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: n/a

Summary

Background

Through the Green Routine program, Strathcona County residents are currently diverting 61% of waste from landfill. The program's goal is to achieve 70% diversion by 2018. Audits are conducted every few years to determine what is still being thrown out, and where we can encourage improvement.

In 2013, Utilities conducted a waste audit of the residential stream to characterize the materials that were being disposed of by residents in the black cart. Through that audit, Utilities determined that 15% of the waste stream was textiles, mostly in good reusable condition.

In 2017, two audits were conducted of the waste streams. Overall 5.7% of the waste stream audited was textiles and reuse items; this varied from urban households at 5.6%

disposal rate, rural households at a 5.0% disposal rate and multi-family households at a 7.9% disposal rate.

What's currently happening in Strathcona County?

Strathcona County is fortunate to have a number of options available to residents for reuse of their textiles and household goods. There are four second-hand stores with collection sites within the Sherwood Park area. These include:

- County Clothes-Line
- Salvation Army Thrift Store
- Value Village
- Goodwill Industries of Alberta

In addition to these retail/collection locations, there are a number of collection bins that can be found throughout the community. Currently there are approximately 15 known locations that have bins in various parking lots and shopping areas, serving a number of different organizations.

Within the community there are also a number of other organizations or initiatives that collect textiles and household goods.

- A Safe Place – Household goods, toiletries, new clothing
- St. Vincent De Paul – Mainly furniture, household goods, winter clothing only
- Information & Volunteer Centre – Coats for the County (potentially transitioning to Elks Club)
- Strathcona County Utilities – permanent shoe collections, waste reduction week shoe drive

Is there room for improvement?

On May 29, 2017, Utilities met with the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) to discuss the topic of textile reuse within Strathcona County. In general the EAC was supportive of Utilities focusing on a textile program that would increase diversion from the landfill and generate greater support for the local goodwill community.

Through this discussion, it was determined that a program should include the following elements. Some of these elements could be implemented within existing program resources, and some will require further exploration before bringing a recommendation back to Council.

To be commenced in 2017 and 2018 utilizing existing program resources:

- Engagement
 - Further consultation with the public to determine where barriers exist and how to encourage more reuse.
 - Bring together the goodwill community to discuss how a connected strategy could support their efforts. Better understand the outcomes on local, national and international textile reuse.
 - Potentially include engagement with the retail sector to better learn their practices.

- Education
 - Develop an education campaign that focuses on textile reuse.
 - Launch the campaign with a community challenge.

Further exploration and evaluation is required. Administration proposes to bring forward a recommendation in Q2 of 2018 related to these elements:

- Standardized Textile Bin Collection Program
 - Research the implementation of a standard County approved program for collection bins that could create consistency and transparency for residents.
 - Develop an evaluation process to determine the success of these programs, and capture measurement of materials being diverted from landfill.
 - Further consultation with EAC may be required regarding program specifics.

Communication Plan

Administration to follow up with the Environmental Advisory Committee regarding outcome of this Council Report.

Enclosure

1 Textiles Reuse in Strathcona County (Document #10613252)