

San Francisco Is Joining the Textile Recycling Party

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Say what you will about San Francisco, a magical place where the football stadiums feature [edible gardens](#) and the apartments boast [butterfly habitats](#), but there's no denying that the City by the Bay has *never* been the bridesmaid when it comes to [waste diversion](#).

Still, even with [mandatory composting laws](#) in place and a reputation for being the most recycle-happy city in all the land, San Francisco has never quite figured out what to do about the whopping 4,5000 pounds of clothing and textiles that are trashed every *hour*. Even New York City, which lags behind San Francisco when it comes to citywide recycling rates due in part to some poor decision-making early on in the Bloomberg administration (to be fair, things in the Big Apple *have* improved rapidly with the 2012 appointment of a dedicated [recycling czar](#)), has had a successful, citywide [textile recycling initiative](#) in place for a couple of years now.

Now, it would appear that San Francisco is donning its best soiled rags and joining the [textile recycling](#) party.

Launched just yesterday with the placement of over 160 clothing-dedicated recycling bins in schools, municipal buildings, and libraries across the city, San Francisco's voluntary [textile recycling scheme](#) differs logistically from New York's but is no less aggressive. After all, the city, which claims to already divert 80 percent of its waste from landfills, has a zero waste by 2020 goal to meet.

The bins, which are also available to apartment buildings, community groups, and nonprofits through the city's collection partner, [I:Collect USA](#) (I:CO), are pretty much fair game for any sort of unwanted or worn-out type of clothing or textile: retired boxer briefs, hole-ridden socks, stained tablecloths, moldy bath towels, last season's sweaters, belts, purses, jeans, and footwear ... you name it.

Click here to see video about "Clothes piling up?":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqiCf0hmARM>

In addition to the aforementioned locations, retailers such as H&M, The North Face, Puma, American Eagle Outfitters, and Levi's will also have the bins at the disposal of customers looking to responsibly offload their old threads before they score new ones.

As reported by the [San Francisco Chronicle](#), I:CO — a global firm that describes itself as an “end-to-end solutions provider for clothing, shoes and other textiles reuse and recycling” — will resell rewearable collected clothing in bulk while rubber sourced from discarded tennis shoes will be reused. Other textiles will be cut up and resold as rags or shredded for use in insulation, car upholstery, carpet padding, or pillow cushions.

More elaboration in a [press statement](#) issued by I:CO: “Through extensive procedures, textiles are sorted using upwards of 400 criteria to allocate as second-hand clothing, reuse as cloths, recycled into fibers and paddings or upcycling into a product of equal or higher quality. I:CO's vision is for all products to be designed with future uses in mind, so materials can be 100% reused in a truly endless cycle.”

Naturally, designer and zero waste guru William McDonough (the [Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute](#) is also a partner in the public/private/nonprofit initiative) has something to say about it:

I:CO is signaling one of the most important intentions being manifested in the world of redesign: circulating things humans make with an endless material, energy, and creative resourcefulness. I:CO is instigating and provoking clothing and shoe collection programs that allow commerce to take in these items and reutilize, renew and regenerate with them. Nature reuses everything it produces; I:CO is an invaluable piece of a movement that will ultimately allow manufacturers, retailers, and their customers to emulate natural systems, circulating materials in endless beneficial reuse.

Good stuff. San Francisco residents can click [here](#) to find out where to deposit their old cast-off T-shirts and trousers.