



UPDATE: Nonprofits push back against curbside textile recycling program in Austin, TX

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UPDATE: Some Austin nonprofits and charities are concerned they will lose out on potential inventory due to the city's new curbside collection of textiles. One group has even said the contract should be canceled, as reported by KXAN.

The CEO of Easter Seals Central Texas estimates the program could cost his organization up to \$70,000 and also claimed that local organizations weren't alerted that the contract was available. Simple Recycling, the Ohio-based for-profit company that won the contract, deferred to the city on all of KXAN's questions.

Austin Resource Recovery's website tells residents to donate their items first and a spokesperson told KXAN that the intention is not to take clothing or other items that could be resold by nonprofits.

Dive Brief:

- Residents of Austin, TX will soon have the ability to place textiles out for curbside collection in a separate green bag, as reported by KXAN.
- A company called Simple Recycling has been contracted and will pay the city \$20 per ton of material collected. In addition to textiles, appliances, toys and a range of other items will also be accepted. The program begins on Dec. 5.
- City officials recommend that residents still try to donate their items first so they can receive a tax write-offs. Residents who live in multi-unit buildings without curbside service can still take items to Austin's Recycle & Reuse Drop-Off Center.



Dive Insight:

According to a 2014 waste characterization study, Austin Resource Recovery sees more than 3,000 tons of textiles per year in the waste it collects. The city has set a goal of "zero waste" by 2040, though didn't meet its 50% goal for 2015. Unlike some other cities, Austin's definition of "zero waste" doesn't include using waste-to-energy. The city has instead

looked to make progress on diverting organic waste and is planning to bring in outside firms to find other solutions.

Textile recycling has also become a priority in other cities, though this may be one of the first large-scale curbside collection programs in the country. New York, which offers drop-off services at farmers markets and custom bins for larger buildings, hosted a fashion show to promote textile recycling earlier this fall. Goodwill San Francisco has also started deploying more modern collection bins in large buildings and the organization is known as a contributor to textile recycling nationwide.

National data shows that textiles are among the least commonly recycled materials in the country. Retailer H&M has made this a priority by launching its "World Recycle Week," complete with a special music video from M.I.A., and other brands have been working on the issue as well. Companies are finding ways to make new clothing from recycled textiles that could help create a greater demand for the material once the process becomes more economically feasible.