



Let's Get Circular!

YEAR ONE PROGRESS REPORT

June 2022

Circular Philadelphia is on a roll, having built strong relationships with members, policymakers, regional institutions and local and global circular economy experts. Through the four working groups established in the last year, the organization is already taking action to transition the region to an equitable circular economy.

This report highlights the progress that Circular Philadelphia has made in its remarkable first year.



In just one year, Circular Philadelphia has jumpstarted the conversation about circularity among the City's political and business leaders. Without its work, we wouldn't have new programs for reusable takeout containers or resources to better incentivize deconstruction. As Chair of City Council's Committee on the Environment, I've turned to Circular Philadelphia to help me better understand the needs of the business community and to think strategically about our city's policy needs. I can't wait to see what Circular Philadelphia can do in Year Two!

At-Large Councilmember Katherine Gilmore Richardson

Circular Philadelphia at a Glance

(June 2021 - May 2022)



18

**SPEAKING
ENGAGEMENTS**



4

**WORKING
GROUPS**



72

**INDIVIDUAL
MEMBERS**

33

**ORGANIZATION
MEMBERS**



6

**OUTREACH
EVENTS**



1

**POLICY
CHANGE**



4,600

WEBSITE USERS

Intention to Action

In Year One, Circular Philadelphia Drives Tangible Change

Since its inception, Circular Philadelphia has operated with an action-oriented ethos. This ethos is reflected in its theory of change, which holds that by setting the right policy conditions and creating an informed business and consumer landscape through education and outreach, market transformation becomes possible. These three components—policy advocacy, education and outreach, and market transformation—comprise Circular Philadelphia’s programmatic areas, and they underpin the work that the organization is doing in all of its market focuses.

In its first year, Circular Philadelphia has converted this change theory into action, advocating for—and ultimately achieving—a policy change to pave the way for reusable container adoption in Philadelphia and promoting existing policies to expand the practice of deconstruction. Similar efforts are underway in all core focus areas thanks to the food systems, built environment, textiles and vacant land working groups. Collaboration with members, City department leadership, councilmembers, private enterprises and regional institutions with whom Circular Philadelphia has built strong relationships over the past year make it possible to accelerate the circularity work at the heart of the organization’s mission.

These early accomplishments set the stage for Circular Philadelphia to continue its action-oriented approach in the coming year and beyond to drive true market transformation as it leads the transition to a circular economy in the Philadelphia region.



MARKET FOCUS

Food Systems

In July 2021, Circular Philadelphia achieved its first policy win when the Philadelphia Health Department updated regulation language to allow Philadelphia food establishments to offer reusable containers by right. Since then, CP has focused on education and outreach to increase the use of reusable containers in Philadelphia food establishments while also addressing other needs of our members working in and advocating for a circular food system.



FOOD SYSTEMS HIGHLIGHTS

- Hosted a webinar in August 2021 on regulations and best practices for businesses adopting reusable containers.
- Hosted a webinar in May 2022 to highlight businesses that have successfully adopted reusable containers.
- Conducted training for Philadelphia Health Department Staff, in collaboration with our partner ECHO Systems, on guidelines for inspecting establishments that use reusable containers.
- Created a series of how-to guides for businesses looking to use reusable containers.
- Worked with the Philadelphia Health Department to provide Philadelphia composting businesses with language and reporting mechanisms for businesses not complying with compost regulations.
- Began research on a single-use container ban for Philadelphia.



The introduction of reusable takeout containers has been the most significant advance in our restaurants' operations to date. But it's a fact that usage by our city customers would have been severely hampered had it not been for the direct intervention of Circular Philadelphia. They paved the way for the health department to remove restrictions on use of the containers not only for us, but for any restaurant that wants to use them. That direct action will result in the removal of millions of single use plastic containers from the production cycle and the landfills. CP is serious about their mission and they show it through action.

Marianne Kelly

Director of Marketing & Operations, Tiffin Indian Cuisine

MARKET FOCUS

Built Environment



Within the built environment, Circular Philadelphia began working with recycling companies, construction companies, architects and city officials to increase awareness of incentives and opportunities for deconstruction to make the practice of deconstruction more accessible and affordable. CP has also started policy work to support construction and demolition recycling as well as address other needs of our members working in and expanding a circular building sector in the region.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed information materials for developers, contractors and architects on tax incentives for deconstruction as well as streamlined permitting processes to accelerate deconstruction projects.
- Presented deconstruction information at the Green Building United Symposium.
- Collected research for a Construction and Demolition Recycling Ordinance white paper for Philadelphia legislators.
- Worked with Mural Arts Trash Academy to research circular management of drywall and present findings to City government and legislative partners.



With the undeniable impact of waste on society and the significant contribution from the construction and demolition waste sector, it's easy to recognize the need for drastic improvement. Through working to lead our Turner Construction Company team to improve our waste practices and focus on circularity, I was searching for resources in the Philadelphia market and came across Circular Philadelphia. In the short time I've had the opportunity to be a part of the organization as a member and part of the Built Environment Working Group, I've been impressed with their Philadelphia market knowledge, industry presence, and culture of advocacy. I look forward to see the improvements Circular Philadelphia will undoubtedly lead in Philadelphia!

Kayla Reddington

Regional Sustainability Manager, Turner Construction



MARKET FOCUS

Textiles



Of Circular Philadelphia's three main market focuses, textiles is in the earliest stages of moving towards transformation, largely because of a lack of available data and information to drive investments in circular textile infrastructure. In this first year, CP has largely focused its efforts on gathering data to analyze the economics of implementing a circular textile system and attract investment in infrastructure to the region as well as identifying policies and regulations that will set the right conditions to push textile recycling forward.

TEXTILES HIGHLIGHTS

- Working with the Textile Recycling Task Force to quantify the scope, scale and composition of textile waste in the region.
- Quantifying local markets for reclaimed and recycled fibers.
- Conducted U.S. policy review to identify potential legislation to support textile circularity in Philadelphia.
- Began development of RFI for fiber ID technology to be released by Circular Philadelphia and member organization, Retrievr.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Vacant Land

Circular Philadelphia views the city's 40,000 vacant lots as an opportunity to increase circularity throughout Philadelphia while building businesses. In the last year, CP has partnered with Sunflower Philly to develop a program for circular businesses to express interest to work with Circular Philadelphia on circular materials management and for community groups to express interest to work with Sunflower Philly on programming community spaces.

VACANT LAND HIGHLIGHTS

- Researched and mapped Department of Public Property vacant lots throughout the city that could be utilized for both residential and industrial/commercial use.
- Created a form for circular businesses and community groups to express interest in working with Circular Philadelphia or Sunflower Philly to receive assistance in gaining access to these lots.
- Began promoting these opportunities to Circular Philadelphia membership and community groups.
- Working with Bottle Underground to identify a lot as the first pilot project for temporary use as a community glass collection and processing facility.

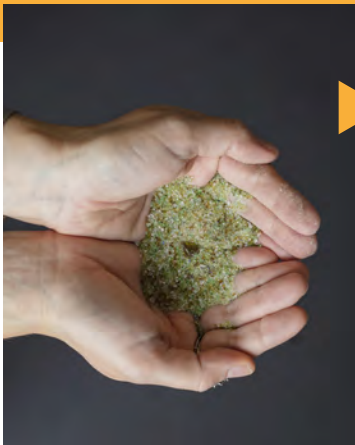


Photo credit: Sahar Coston-Hardy/OLIN

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

From Glass to Sand, a Circular Rags to Riches Story

Philadelphia-based landscape design firm OLIN successfully completed an EPA Small Business Innovation Research Phase 1 grant in 2020 to develop a process for turning recovered glass bottles into sand. In 2021, Circular Philadelphia assisted OLIN in applying for a Phase 2 grant to commercialize the process. This grant was awarded in 2022 and Circular Philadelphia has worked to secure vacant land for glass processing, developing collections systems for glass and securing a pilot test site on City-owned property to apply the product.

Circular Philadelphia is privileged to work with its member organizations Remark Glass/Bottle Underground and Bennett Compost on this project. CP is also collaborating with the Pennsylvania Recycling Markets Center on the commercialization plan for this project to open up this new, innovative market for glass recycling in Philadelphia.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Mapping Circularity in Philly

In March 2022, Circular Philadelphia created an online member directory with the help of digital mapping partner and technology company, Urality. This directory gives visibility to the growing community of circular enterprises in Philadelphia and, in turn, helps grow their businesses.

Through the Circular Scavenger Hunt, an effort to identify and equitably acknowledge the legacy businesses in Philadelphia that have been employing circular techniques for years—repair shops, second hand shops and refillable goods stores—CP is collecting information on those businesses through its network and highlighting their efforts.



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