

# Understanding the Scope of Reuse in Vancouver: Final Report

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## o.o: Executive summary

### o.1: Introduction

This report aims to understand the current state of the Reuse sector within Vancouver. It is written as an exploratory study which contributes to the Green Economy (Goal 1), Climate Leadership (Goal 2), Zero Waste (Goal 5), as well as the Lighter Footprint Goals (Goal 7) of the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. This report serves as a preparatory study into the scope of the Reuse sector and the current perceptions, challenges and prospects of Reuse organisations. It will explore models for Reuse across the world and make recommendations as to whether the City can play a role in further developing the concept of Reuse within Vancouver. A plan of action will then be put forward which will argue for a more comprehensive study, should the following recommendations be adopted.

The concept of reuse is growing in popularity within the public imagination. This newfound awareness in reuse is the product of a greater concern with ethical responsibility, social justice and environmental stewardship. Reuse is becoming part of a wider movement within the field of sustainable consumption which focuses on cradle-to-cradle economics, which aims to cycle resources continuously within a self-sustaining system. Through up-cycling, Reused commodities gain a second life and become revalued as they establish new social relationships with other social actors. Reuse is a diverse concept which brings together a number of organisations, forming complex relationships between them.<sup>1</sup> But it is because of the many interconnections that the concept of Reuse makes with society, the economy and the environment, that makes a discussion of it a necessity at this point in time.

Reuse enterprises in Vancouver are just a small part of the larger retail sector. However the idea of Reuse in many respects extends far beyond simply selling goods. Reuse organisations are often rooted in concerns over social justice as can be seen by the proportion of charitable organisations which are categorised within Reuse. In Vancouver some 212 licenced businesses have been identified as falling within the category of “Reuse”. These establishments range from second-hand furniture stores, book stores, and antique stores to thrift shops run by charities. The diversity of the Reuse market however creates problems of definition as any commodity is potentially able to be reused.

This report is a qualitative study of 10 Reuse organisations in Vancouver attempting to understand their perceptions of the Reuse sector as a whole and their outlook for growth within the next 5 years. This report also attempts to identify barriers to the growth of the industry and seeks potential models from other cities across the world which may prove useful to Vancouver.

## 0.2: Objectives

This report is designed to define the scale and distribution of Reuse organisations in Vancouver and presents the first steps in exploring whether Reuse is a viable sector to support in order to meet the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan targets.

## 0.3: Key findings

A blended model for Reuse would be the ideal for Vancouver, combining elements from the two main network models from London (LRN) and New York (ReuseNYC). Such networks have been proven to be effective in waste and GHG reduction. However we do not live in an ideal world - a simpler model can be developed which utilises existing Reuse infrastructure, developing a materials exchange as well as setting in place a 50-50 loan-grant funding structure to facilitate business growth. These recommendations are best implemented through existing Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) who will more efficiently identify need and allocate funding. The Recycling Council of BC is best adapted to develop communications infrastructure and promote the concept of Reuse within Vancouver.

Reuse organisations in Vancouver would like to see greater support from the City in terms of infrastructural and communicational development as well as in marketing and promoting the concept to the wider public. Policy tools, through taxation changes, rent relief, certification and zero-interest business loans are all ways by which businesses can be encouraged to grow.

- 100% of businesses would like some form of support from the city.
- The limiting factor for 75% of organisations interviewed is storage capacity
- 75% of businesses want to be recognised as being Green businesses – a reclassification process needs to take place in order for Reuse businesses to better market themselves.
- Reuse infrastructure has already been developed in Vancouver; however it suffers from lack of promotion and investment from the City.
- Reuse Networks developed by municipal authorities are effective ways of developing Reuse businesses, they may provide substantial benefits to Vancouver's Reuse businesses and will help the City achieve its Greenest City Goals.

## 0.4: Recommendations in brief

- An immediate recommendation would be for the City to promote the Recycling Council of BC's Materials exchange program to facilitate peer-to-peer transfers of Reused items via the website [www.vancouverreuses.ca](http://www.vancouverreuses.ca). Through simply advertising the existence of the service through the City's website or printed on utility bills, as is the case for the City of Surrey, it is possible to increase Reuse exchanges on the site by a factor of ten according to my analysis of RCBCs data.
- Promote Strathcona Business Improvement Association's Materials Exchange and Resource Park. Expanding its park will provide more space and develop a more efficient exchange service. Seed funding should be provided to export SBIA's methodology to the other 21 BIAs in Vancouver.

- The City of Vancouver’s own Reuse business requires funding of the order of \$50,000 per year to continue in its current form. It generates roughly \$400,000-500,000 per year, but time constraints of staff have led to the operation being scaled back, despite its profitability. Officially recognising the “Reseller” position at the General Stores will demonstrate the City’s support for the sector in general and allow for a greater proportion of the Municipal government’s waste to be reused and resold.
- Advertise the work of the City Store’s Reuse program more widely to make individual departments in the City aware of the potential for Reuse. Advertise the operation to the general public and businesses to increase the market for reused government equipment.
- Create business partnerships which allow Reuse organisations to share warehousing space with other businesses that have excess storage capacity. Businesses involved could be provided with tax incentives or rent-relief if they are based on city-owned property, allowing both organisations to benefit from the symbiosis.

*0.5: Reuse in the City of Vancouver*



**Picture 1: Vancouver City Stores, Inner storage facility, Manitoba road**

I would like to begin this report with a brief description of the work that the City already does within the field of Reuse, just to give a sense of where we are and what directions we should take next.

Reuse is nothing new to the City of Vancouver, indeed it has been active within the field of Reuse for the last 13 years. Jim Lloyd heads the Reuse operation from his office in the City of Vancouver’s Central Stores; there the team deal with everything from broken computers to Harley Davidson motorcycles, to used construction equipment, to horses. That’s right, horses.<sup>1</sup>

It is the sheer diversity of Reused goods

that the City produces and that the Stores process that make Jim’s job both interesting, exciting and challenging.

Jim has been working at the City for around 33 years, since 1980 and through his work in Acquisitions for the City he has gained an in-depth and intuitive understanding of the value of most of the City’s inventory. Within his time at the City he has seen many of the acquisitions he made early on in his career reach the end of their useful life and return to him at the Stores. Jim serves as a central node in up-cycling what had originally been classified as waste into a reusable commodity.

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<sup>1</sup> Retired police horses that is.

But of course this job of identifying value in waste is not easy – it takes research and experience in a number of markets. Reusable items which may seem to possess some intrinsic value may have no market, as Jim says:

*“If we look at police cars, before taxi firms were coming in and buying most of the used cars. But now they need warranties on everything, everything needs to be less than 7 years old. The Ford Crown Victorias we have are worth virtually nothing. They’re not the push button window type, plush leather seats – these are working vehicles, so when people ask why they’re not selling they have to take a closer look at all the damage – these things have been knocked about”*

On the other hand some commodities will have a huge demand, with used garbage trucks selling for \$50,000 above market value. The value of commodities therefore isn’t something intrinsic to that commodity, its dependent upon demand and an experienced eye able to spot a good deal.

But let me set the scene: we’re in the central repository for used goods in the Central Stores, far out towards Marine-Drive Canada-line station along Manitoba road. We enter a large warehouse with row after row of shelving units stretching

some 20 feet into the air. The shelves are filled with boxes, used tools, equipment and spare parts. Outside a large, concrete yard opens up, roughly the size of a football field. In the distance behind a high, metal fence lies a fleet of used City trucks and cars, whilst in the foreground are stacks of re-useable lumber. Peeking out from shelters far to the right are tables and chairs, piled one on top of the other. The site is large and as Jim tells me, it has plenty of capacity, and great potential for operations to be expanded.



**Picture 2: Vancouver City Stores, Outer storage space, Manitoba road**

Over the 13 years Jim has worked in Resale the nature of the business has changed, he explains:

*“Traditionally we used to use auctions, but with the internet age we’ve moved on to online sales. We’ve advertised on ebay and craigslist – we use the internet to obtain the best value for an item”*

With such changing business practices, and evolving markets, there are obvious boundaries to be overcome. One of the major boundaries lies in lack of resources to continue funding the resale operation, despite the Resale end returning \$400,000-500,000 in revenue each year. Lack of funding, recognition and communication acts as a barrier to the City’s Reuse potential, as Jim describes:

*“We can’t really afford to have someone full time working on uploading inventory and we can’t afford a website. But unofficially I’ve decided to second someone to it. We have an*



*interac machine here so we can do credit card transactions now. But I would like to see the position officially recognised. This is where the rubber meets the road after all. We're currently doing a logistics review, but I've worked out that we need between \$50,000 – 60,000 to recognise that position. But to justify that kind of money you can look at the revenue that we actually save”*

Part of this report is an attempt to provide the personal stories behind Reuse, and Jim's story is like many others throughout Vancouver. It's a story of people doing the right thing not because it's easy, but because it's hard and worthwhile in the end. Jim, like many of the people interviewed during this project, is a champion of Reuse: he struggles to save as many things as he can, to waste as little and to be as thrifty as possible, as he says:

*“But that's the thing, if an item can be redeployed elsewhere we'll do it, we try to reuse as much as possible”*

Reuse is not a concept which comes to us easily, as Jim says: “...[T]his kind of thing comes with a world of experience. It's a very tough field...” – Jim is right when he says that, and many others throughout Vancouver would agree. Reuse is tough. Reuse is hard work and most of the time it doesn't pay well. But Jim, like many others, would agree: it's worth it in the end. Part of this report is to show why this is the case, why Reuse is important, and what the City can do to make it a lot less tough for people like Jim.

## 1.0: Introduction

We have reused items for as long as we have had tools and technologies and cultures. We pass down items to our descendants, we exchange clothes, books and games between friends and family – Reuse is something which is implicit and yet sometimes it is not automatic. Modern society has been fixated on an ideology of consumerism which promotes waste and overconsumption. However new economic models are beginning to emerge which have the potential to alter the ways in which we think about our role within economic systems. Reuse we shall see is an important part in this new social movement which aims for ethical, responsible and sustainable consumption.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1: The Objective lens

This report will begin by establishing definitions of what Reuse actually is. It then hopes to gain an understanding of the scope of the Reuse economy in Vancouver and explore developments within Reuse in other cities around the world. The report will ask what barriers exist to developing the Reuse economy in other cities and within Vancouver itself and determine whether there is a role for the municipal government to play in promoting and supporting Reuse as a concept. It will ask whether Reuse can prove an effective tool for reducing waste going to landfill, whether Reuse jobs can be classified as “Green” and whether Reusing goods actually produces a lighter footprint by reducing GHGs being produced.

### 1.2: What does Reuse mean?

A number of definitions exist as to what Reuse actually means; the New York based organisation *ReuseNYC* classifies it as follows:

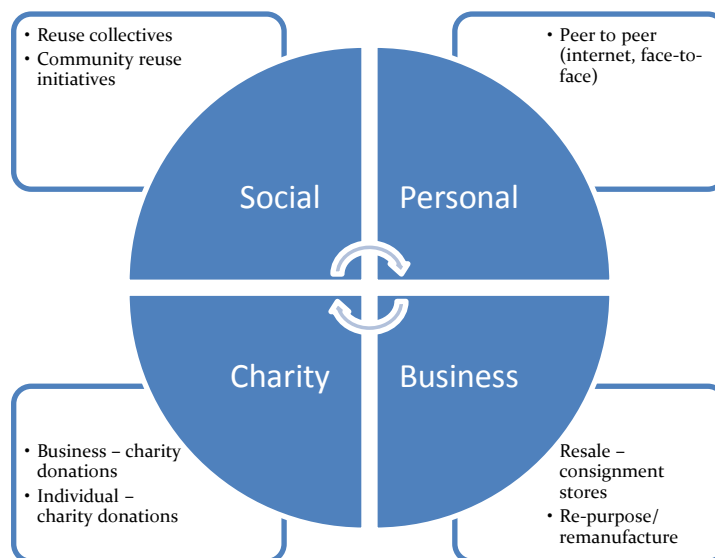
*“Reuse is the practice of using an item more than once, thus extending its life as a functional item. Often this includes a changing of hands, and may also encompass a redirection of its purpose (re-purposing). Reuse, in contrast to recycling, does not break items down to their root elements in order to re-manufacture them into new materials. Rather, reuse extends the useful life of whole items by diverting them from the waste stream”*  
(ReuseNYC website)

This definition stresses the preservation of the commodity, with the item not being broken down into its raw materials. The Reusable items must retain some intrinsic economic value in order for the commodity to remain exchangeable and therefore it should also be classified as “Resalable”. When this report speaks about Reuse it is therefore dealing with a narrow field of transactable second-hand goods which are traded through second-hand retailers.

The diagram below shows another way of understanding Reuse and that is through the organisations involved and the relationships created between different social actors. The

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy> for discussion on the circular economy.

diagram shows that Reuse spans a number of groups: From individuals to social groups and from charities to businesses. Reuse is a field which is deeply ingrained within society and within our economy and thus it is something which we should naturally pay attention to and attempt to understand.



**Diagram 1: Relationships within the Reuse sector and modes of exchange**

### 1.3: Why does Reuse matter?

Reuse is an integral part of the “Three R” waste hierarchy of “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle”. When a commodity is produced it consumes energy in its manufacture, and through that consumption of energy it also produces a carbon footprint. The ideal of any sustainable system is to reduce the amount of energy being consumed at each period of a commodity’s life cycle, from its manufacture, to its period of active use to the end of life processes when the good is no longer valued by a consumer.

Reuse mainly concerns the End-of-life or rather the End-of-usefulness phase in a commodity’s life. When a consumer decides that a commodity no longer possesses value the item is classified as a “waste item” and often times this reclassification leads to its final destination within the landfill. In ending its life within the landfill the commodity may simply become a wasted resource, but it may also be broken down, reprocessed and recycled into its base materials in order to manufacture an alternative commodity.

Such recycling however still requires energy expenditure and thus the end-of-life period of the commodity leads to further production of greenhouse gases. In many cases a commodity may still possess some value to another consumer, which allows for the commodity to be resalable. It is the resale of such goods which extends their useful lives and prevents, or at least delays, further expenditure of energy.

But reuse is important not only because of its environmental benefits – as Richard Featherstone, from the London Reuse network put it:

*“Making a case for reuse relies upon the socio-economic factors: creating jobs, creating vocational training and alleviating poverty by the provision of re-use furniture”*

Reuse has a social mission as well as providing economic benefits. The sale of reused goods oftentimes is a major contributor to the income of many charities, such charities in turn provide employment and training for low-barrier workers and these workers in turn gain exportable skills to find fulltime employment elsewhere. Already Reuse presents to us a strong case for support – but it is in the examination of the data where the argument becomes most persuasive.

#### 1.4: Focus of this report

This report addresses Goal 1: “Green Economy”, Goal 2: Climate Leadership, Goal 5: “Zero Waste” and Goal 7: “Lighter Footprint” of the Greenest City 2020 action plan. Its aim is to define the scope of Reuse in Vancouver and understand the perceptions and prospects of people working in the Reuse sector have of their field. In interviewing local Reuse businesses I will attempt to understand the barriers and opportunities to growing their businesses. The first section however sets the context for the idea of Reuse through an understanding of what models of Reuse are available from other Cities across the world; through such explorations this report then seeks to determine whether these models can be employed in Vancouver to develop our own Reuse economy.

#### 1.5: Research questions

The main research questions are as follows:

1. What is the state of the reuse economy in Vancouver, focusing specifically on reuse enterprises (for profit businesses, non-profit organisations, social enterprise, charity) as a sector of Vancouver’s economy and of Vancouver’s green economy?
  - a) What is the magnitude and scope of these enterprises (i.e. types of materials/businesses)?
  - b) What are the barriers, opportunities, successes for reuse enterprises in Vancouver?
  - c) Who are the community champions in Vancouver’s reuse economy?
2. How are other cities supporting reuse enterprises (e.g. Policies, programs, networks, tax incentives)?
3. Is there a place for the city to facilitate growth in this sector? If so, how? (i.e. a local reuse network?)

#### 1.6: Overview of methodology

This project is divided up into two main phases of enquiry:

Part 1 is composed of a number of qualitative interviews with government officials and NGO workers in Reuse networks around the world. These semi-structured interviews lasted roughly 45-60 minutes and aimed at determining the state, scale and development of the infrastructure required, the challenges the networks faced in their creation as well as

gaining expert advice and insight into the potential for establishing a reuse network in Vancouver.

The interview subjects were determined on the basis of expertise in the field of reuse and networks were selected on the basis of the success and innovation. They are as follows:

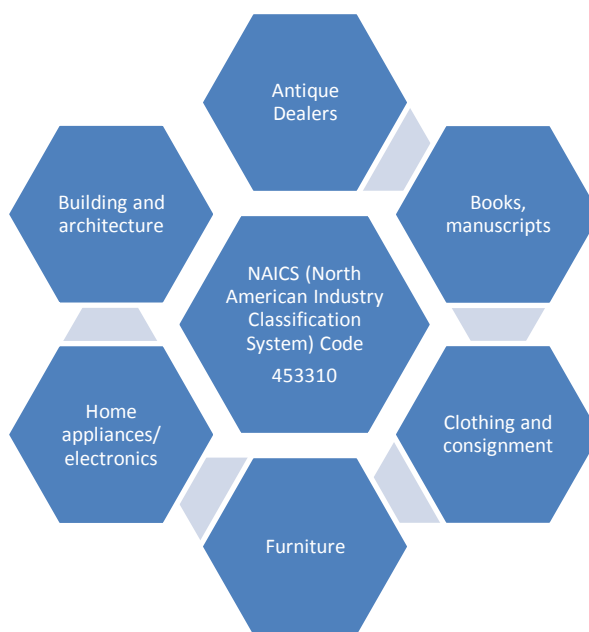
- 1. London Reuse Network (LRN)
- 2. New York Reuse Network (ReuseNYC, Materials Exchange)
- 3. European Reuse Network (RReuse)

Expert advice was then obtained from the Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC), the Recycling Council of BC (RCBC), City of Vancouver General Stores and Strathcona Business Improvement Association.

Part 2 comprises of 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews lasting 45-60minutes with local reuse businesses.

Businesses were selected according to their placement within the following categories, according to the NAICS (North American Industry Classification System)<sup>3</sup>:

- 1. Thrift/ Consignment store
- 2. Charity
- 3. Second-hand Book dealers
- 4. Electronic retailers
- 5. Furniture retailers
- 6. Antique dealers



**Diagram 2: Classification of Reuse enterprises within the retail sector, according to NAICS code.**

<sup>3</sup> A classificatory system established by agreement across Mexican, American and Canadian statistical bureaus.

# Part 1: Reuse across the world

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## *2.0: Research Aims and Objectives*

Reuse is a concept which is becoming increasingly popular across the world; testimony to this is the number of Reuse networks which have arisen within the last five years. My initial literature review and internet searches determined that a number of Resource networks existed globally. The scope of the project had to be narrowed down and for such a reason three of these resource networks were selected because of their successes in terms of raising public awareness of Reuse and in diverting waste from landfill.

This phase of the research explored the development of three of those networks. Three 45-60minute interviews were conducted with experts within the three networks. The aim of this phase of the research process was to ask the following questions:

1. What models exist for reuse networks? What do they do and how are they organised?
2. What kind of infrastructure needs to be developed?
3. What are the challenges a municipality confronts when establishing a reuse network?
4. Are these networks a success and how much waste can they potentially divert from landfill?
5. Should Vancouver establish its own network and what would this look like?

This project looked at two main municipal resource networks (London Reuse Network and the New York Reuse Network) and then a meta-network called the European Reuse network (RReuse) which connects different municipal and national networks across Europe together.

The following is a breakdown of the networks researched; it will give an overview of their scale, their successes and the challenges they have confronted:

## *2.1 What is a Reuse Network?*

Before we begin exploring different Reuse networks it is perhaps important to define what we actually mean when we use the term. Reuse networks can take on many different manifestations, depending on socio-economic and political contexts of their formations, whether they have grown organically or have been consciously created, and also they may vary in the way they are administered and organised. However the premise behind the Reuse network is that it serves to link together Reuse organisations with each other, with non-reuse organisations and with customers for the purpose of making exchanges of reused goods more likely, more numerous and easier to carry out.

Reuse networks exist on a number of scales, from within a community, to the municipal, national and international level as is the case with the European Reuse network. Often there is communication between networks at an informal level or more structured communication through an organisational body. Reuse networks therefore usually have some kind of governance structure and central administration which maintains and

facilitates communication between enterprises and between networks. To administer such networks of businesses communications infrastructure must be in place. In many cases this is carried out through user interfaces in the form of member login pages on dedicated websites, or through Reuse “hotlines”.

Reuse Networks, in the case of London and New York, are heavily involved in developing physical infrastructure in terms of collection points, storage depots and vehicles to facilitate collection, redistribution and exchange of reused goods. The final role that many Reuse networks play is in developing sector-wide standards and quality control amongst its member organisations. As is the case in New York workers in Reuse, organisations are given training in quality control and best practices through the use of instructional workshops. Other networks may provide a means through which Reuse organisations are given advice as well as lobbying, management and organisational support. In the case of London, New York and Europe the organisational framework not only helps build a Reuse community but equally serves to transfer information between organisations and thus helps transfer innovations and developments which members may not necessarily be aware of. The final role that reuse networks may provide their members is financial and developmental support for starting or growing their enterprises – such support however is dependent upon the mandate of the particular organisation and the current level of funding available.

## 3.0: London Reuse Network (LRN)

### 3.1: Overview

The London Reuse Network presents a good Reuse network model for which Vancouver can develop a future Reuse network around. The network was created with the aid of \$13 million (8.1 million Sterling) of investment allocated by the Mayor of London through the London Waste Management and Recycling Board. The day to day operations are administered by a separate, dedicated company called London Reuse Limited (LRL) which maintains contact between the networked organisations and users through the London Reuse Network website (LRN) and the London Community Reuse Network (LCRN). The network itself is comprised of a number of online portals which provide links to Reuse organisations within the network. A physical infrastructure of resource hubs, warehousing facilities and vehicles complements the funding structures available to promote growth in the organisations involved.

The LRN describes their mandate as follows:

*“The London Re-use Network has been set up by the London Community Resource Network to provide an integrated network of re-use and repair facilities which work together to deliver public and commercial re-use services” (See LRN Website).*

LRN is designed to:

1. Develop working partnerships with Reuse organisations in order to establish a network of Reuse organisations.
2. Provide project support and coordination for Reuse organisations
3. Create a product loop by diverting waste-streams to reduce waste going to landfill.
4. Promote Reuse to consumers and businesses through providing advertising platforms for local businesses.
5. Educate the public and raising public awareness through communication and campaigning
6. Provide volunteering and training opportunities.
7. Provide network members with funding through 50% loans and 50% grant allocations to grow Reuse organisations.
8. Create self-sufficient Reuse organisations through seed funding.
9. Build capacity for Reuse organisations to make London a Zero waste city.

### 3.2: Mechanics of the Network

The LRN is comprised of:

1. User Interfaces:
  - a. An online web-portal for customers to access.
  - b. Telephone hotline to advise users on local Reuse businesses.



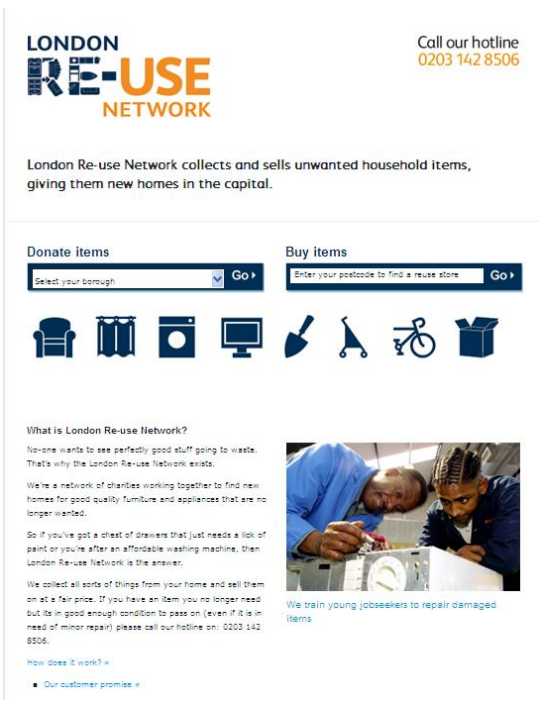
2. Integrated Reuse business network
  - a. Linking the 31 Reuse organisations involved
3. Infrastructural development
  - a. Providing IT, Marketing, Vehicles, Warehousing
4. Quality management services
  - a. Monitors 4 key areas of the business' operation:
    - i. Organisational Standards
    - ii. Operational and Product Standards
    - iii. Customer Services
    - iv. Branding
  - b. Provides audit and award system (a "Quality Mark") to provide quality guarantees to customers of second-hand items.

### *3.3: Visualising the network<sup>4</sup>*

The front end of the network is accessible via three main online user interfaces as well as the Reuse hotline created in 2012. The hotline provides users with advice and locations to places where Reused products can be donated or procured. The three websites are designed for different purposes. The .com provides a sleeker, more efficient means of searching for donation sites or Reused commodities whereas the .org gives greater detail into the services provided. The London Community Reuse Network site however provides much more detailed information targeted towards local communities and Reuse organisations involved in the Network. The LCRN website provides news updates, lists of community events as well as a wide selection of educational resources to raise awareness of the concept of Reuse. The LCRN website also has a high degree of functionality in so far as it provides a user interface for finding Reuse organisations which specialise in certain products, which lie within their geographic locality.

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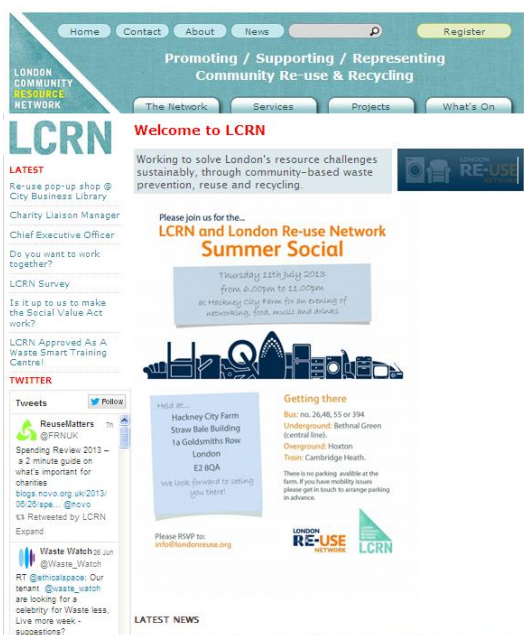
<sup>4</sup> Screenshots and maps taken from LRN websites for purpose of illustrating Front-end interfaces.



<http://www.londonreuse.com/>

<http://londonreuse.org/>

Pictures 3, 4 and 5: Print-screens of Visual interfaces from London Reuse network sites.



<http://www.lcrn.org.uk/>

### 3.4: Structure of network

The LCRN website presents simplified info-graphics and Reuse maps which help visualise what the network actually comprises of. As can be seen the network members cover a number of categories and range across many if not all of the boroughs of London. The network interface is simple, intuitive and easy to use. This map makes products easily searchable and hence gives user the opportunity to explore and then compare across a range of local Reuse options, as well as providing reuse enterprises with free, effective and targeted advertising, through links to individual sites, addresses, contact details and hours of operation being provided.



#### Categories

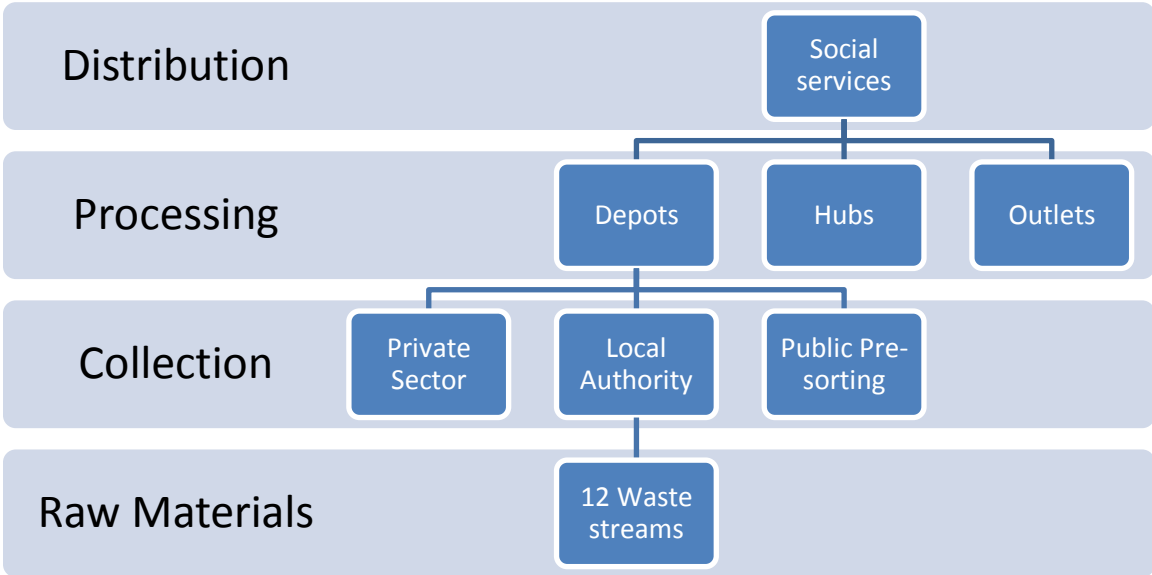
Borough	Activities	People Served
Other (79)	Other (69)	Other (253)
All boroughs (59)	Activists (0)	Children and young people (27)
Barking & Dagenham (12)	Allotments (0)	Disabled (25)
Barnet (11)	Appliance reuse (16)	Long term unemployed (26)
Bexley (8)	Business support (42)	Low Income families (33)
Brent (11)	Charity shop (17)	<b>Legal status</b>
Bromley (14)	Community garden / farm (34)	Other (42)
Camden (29)	Composting (41)	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (4)
City (14)	Cycling (5)	Charitable Trust (3)
Croydon (13)	Education & awareness (118)	Community Interest Company (6)
Ealing (18)	Environmental auditing (2)	Company Limited by Guarantee (71)
Enfield (12)	Estate recycling (18)	Company Limited by Share (11)
Greenwich (16)	Furniture reuse (32)	Cooperative (1)
Hackney (25)	IT reuse / recycling (18)	Housing Association (1)
Hammersmith & Fulham (17)	Kerbside recycling (12)	Limited Liability Partnership (0)
Haringey (21)	Local food (4)	Local Authority (1)
Harrow (7)	Network organisation (19)	London borough (0)
Havering (9)	Office recycling (15)	Non-Departmental Public Body (3)
Hillingdon (10)	Paint reuse (5)	Not yet incorporated (0)
Hounslow (15)	Public awareness (17)	Not-for-Profit Company (2)
Islington (30)	Real Nappies (1)	Other (Not specified) (12)
Kensington & Chelsea (17)	Reprocessing (4)	Private company (9)
Kingston Upon Thames (12)	Research and policy (5)	Regeneration partnership (0)
Lambeth (35)	Scrap store (5)	Registered Charity (97)
Lewisham (15)	Sustainable business practice (8)	Registered charity & Social Enterprise (3)
Merton (9)	Textile reuse / recycling (12)	Sole trader (2)
Newham (15)	Waste minimisation (19)	Statutory Authority (9)
Redbridge (13)	Wood (4)	Trading subsidiary (0)
Richmond Upon Thames (17)		Unincorporated Association (12)
Southwark (28)		University (0)
Sutton (10)		
Tower Hamlets (31)		
Waltham Forest (20)		
Wandsworth (17)		
Westminster (21)		

**Map 1: Visualisation of London Reuse Network including Reuse Category selection**

**Table 1: Example of categorisation system and variety of Reused categories for user selection.**

### 3.5: Structure of Reuse in London

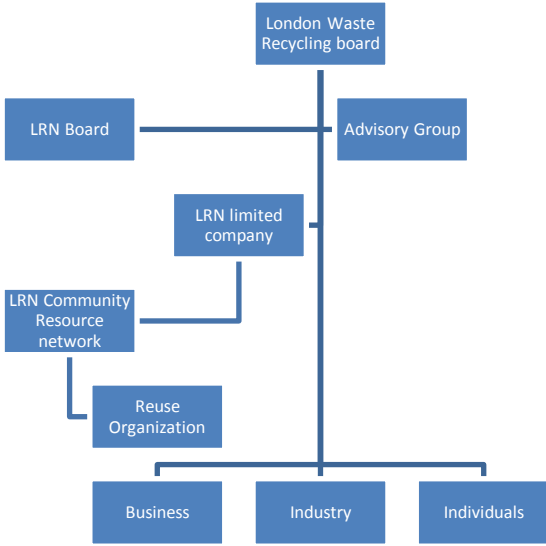
The structure of the network itself is best visualised below. Here we can see how the 12 waste streams produced by households and businesses become fed into the resource network through private and local authority collection. The waste is either sorted at point of collection or else it is delivered to resource Hubs where sorting occurs. From the Hubs the Reused material may be stored in depots for redistribution at a later date or else they may be transferred to other Resource hubs in the form of retail outlets such as thrift stores. From here the material may be reallocated to places where they are most needed, through communicating with social services where items may be used directly in homeless shelters, care homes or in council-owned affordable housing.



**Diagram 2: Visualisation of Physical structure of London Reuse network. Links between processes involved demonstrates the hierarchical organisation of the Network.**

**3.6: Corporate governance structure**

The London Reuse Network is administered by a limited company called LRN limited which operates the LRN community resource website and the LRN.org and .com sites. The company itself is overseen by the LRN board (which contains workers in the municipal government) as well as an expert advisory group who report back to the London Waste Recycling Board.



**Diagram 3: Visualisation of Corporate structure of LRN.**

### 3.7: Reasons for creation

The reasons for the network's creation were primarily to address the problem of the 65,000 tonnes of quality re-usable products that were being sent to landfill by London householders each year. In 2007 the Mayor of London Boris Johnson set forward ambitious goals which aimed towards a zero waste economy in the future. To meet those goals the reuse network was created, aiming to divert 40,000 tonnes of reused items by 2015.

The Network aimed to provide services to some 2 million disadvantaged Londoners through providing quality reused goods at affordable prices. It currently employs some 60 people. When fully developed it will employ around 220 people as well as 250 volunteers and provides training opportunities for 1520 low-barrier workers in the technical and exportable skills required within a Green economy.

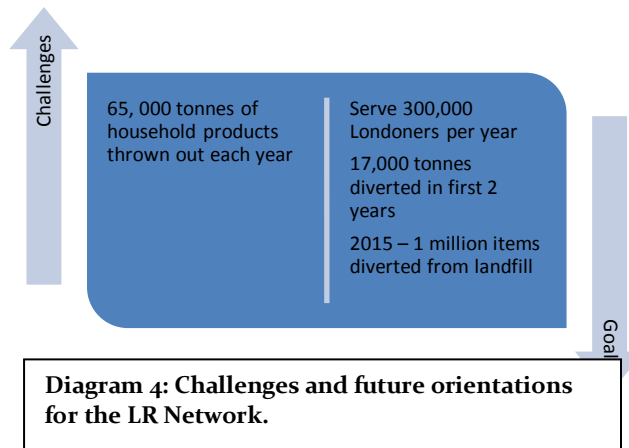
From the outset the project was ambitious and aimed to provide a new definition of what Reuse was, As Richard Featherstone explained:

*“We decided from the beginning that the way to develop re-use was not to advocate ‘more of the same’. We had to give the re-use sector a make-over. We would do this by restructuring the re-use activities from every member project working independently into an integrated structure for specialising in collections/processing/redistribution. Each member of the network has a specialism and we would invest accordingly. Furthermore we wanted integration to mean formal business partnerships. This means working together under a partnership agreement to win contracts with local authorities, housing associations or businesses to deliver a service at a large scale”*

It is such innovative new strategies of developing business partnerships and integrating different layers of government, the general public and businesses that make the LRN such a successful network so early on in its formation.

### 3.8: Success so far

The LRN has already been successful in fulfilling parts of its mandate. After a 1.9 million pound infrastructural investment an additional 6,706 tonnes of re-used material was handled (10% of the 65,000 tons of potentially reused items going to landfill) exceeding its second year target by 49%. Some 60 full and part-time jobs have been created as well as 458 training positions with projections of 190 jobs and 3,000 training positions developing by 2016.



8 Reuse retail outlets have since been established as a result of LRN funding, with a \$480,000 depot in East London and a \$1.6 million depot in west London also adding to the Reuse network's capacity, allowing for some 8,900 tonnes of Re-useable items to be saved as well as providing an estimated 75,000 hours of training to low-barrier workers. Another

innovation being trialed by the network includes a computerised product tracking system, implemented in 11 member organisations. The system is designed to sell reusable household goods online, to promote high turnover in commodities through cycling them through retail outlets and to better target specialist outlets throughout the network<sup>ii</sup>.

### 3.9 What can Vancouver learn from this example?

The effectiveness of London’s network in diverting waste is evident from the figures provided. In terms of the Greenest City Climate Leadership Goal (Goal 2), the Lighter Footprint Goal (Goal 7) and its Zero Waste targets (Goal 5) the LRN demonstrates that significant progress can be made through an investment in building a Reuse network of our own. Such a network would (if the same amount of investment were made, assuming contexts are similar) be of benefit for the following reasons:

1. It would create employment for builders, administrative staff, retail workers and distribution/ collection workers.
2. Provide volunteering opportunities to underprivileged youth/ low-barrier/ low skill workers.
3. Stimulate the development of local Reuse enterprises as well as the formation of new ones.
4. Divert a significant volume of waste from landfill.
5. Promote a culture of Reuse in the city.
6. Support charitable organisations and the underprivileged of society.

City	Population	Investment in Network required over 5 years (CAD \$)	Investment per head of population (CAD \$)
London	8,174,000	13,100,000	1.6
Vancouver	603,502	965,603	1.6

**Table 2: Comparison of investments required by the City of Vancouver to match per-capita investment of London Reuse Network.**

However there are a number of limiting factors in pursuing such a project, the first being the cost, in terms of finance, labour and implementation time - \$15 million requires a large investment in resources, some 220 people need to be employed and results will not manifest themselves until 5 years after the start of the project implementation. Vancouver of course, being a smaller city will need a different level of investment per head of

population, from my estimations if we are to match the \$1.6 per capita in funding that London provides roughly \$1 million in investment should be provided to provide roughly the same results. Of course with Vancouver being a much smaller city (roughly 13 times smaller than the metropolitan area of greater London) the density of Reuse businesses is not the same and so the level of scaling needs to be reassessed.

The network therefore is not a magic bullet which will yield immediate results. But in order for efficiency savings to be made, in order for businesses to network, there has to be some form of overarching organising principle. The City of London has demonstrated that Government does play a role in doing what it does best through providing structure, funding and developmental support. This report argues that Vancouver can reach its Greenest City targets and develop its Reuse capacity through following London's example.

## 4.0: NYC Centre for Materials Reuse

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### 4.1: Overview

The New York Reuse network presents another model for us to understand what a city can do to promote Reuse. The New York network is comprised of a number of different, but interrelated projects whose purpose is to educate, promote, research and facilitate the development of Reuse; these projects are comprised of the following:

1. The Reuse NYC site
2. NYC Materials Exchange Development Program (MEDP)
3. NYC Materials Exchange research programme.

The MEDP was established in 2005 through funding provided by New York City's Department of Sanitation's Bureau of Waste prevention as well as The City College of New York. The aim of the project was to develop New York's reuse sector (which composes of some 80 non-profit Reuse organisations) through describing the scope of the sector and the challenges to growth faced by the sector. Through promoting best practices in terms of comprehensive data collection the MEDP hopes to allow organisations to quantify their social, economic and environmental impacts in order to better promote them as Green enterprises.<sup>5</sup>

### 4.2: Mechanics of the Network

The Reuse Network in New York takes a more holistic approach to Reuse, focusing not only on practical aspects of Reuse such as developing communication and physical infrastructure to support Reuse, but it also aims to analyse the Reuse sector and produce research based upon it. The educational and outreach aspect of New York's network has also played a large role in making New Yorkers aware of the concept of Reuse and promoting it as a natural benefit for society.

The roles of the City of New York's Reuse projects can be divided into four major categories:

1. Research and Data analysis
2. Education and Promotion
3. Development, Networking and facilitation
4. Providing user interfaces and infrastructure

New York currently has a number of innovative schemes which can be loosely grouped into these fields:

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<sup>5</sup> Such data management of the Reuse sector is being managed by the *NYC Reuse Sector Data Management Project*. This data will record the weight of materials being saved from landfill and incineration, from which the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions avoided, can be calculated. The impact of the Reuse sector can thereby be assessed and compared to other "Green" organizations in terms of their contribution to the sustainability of the city.



1. **Research and Data analysis**
  - a. NYC REUSE SECTOR DATA MANAGEMENT PROJECT (DMP) – Collects data on the Reuse sector to better understand the environmental, social and economic impact on the City.
  - b. MATERIALS EXCHANGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM – Promotes research into reuse, collecting metrics on the success of Reuse programs and identifies areas to target to enhance Reuse in the city.
2. **Education and Promotion:**
  - a. NYC MATERIALS REUSE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM – Provides a series of eight workshops which train Reuse workers in technical skills as well as giving them the chance to gain qualifications and network with other Reuse organisations and workers.
  - b. ANNUAL REUSE NYC CONFERENCE – Brings together members of Reuse organisations as well as experts and City workers to explore the challenges and opportunities facing Reuse in the city.
  - c. SPECIAL TOPIC WORKSHOPS
  - d. REUSE NYC DIRECTORS ROUNDTABLE – Since 2008 the roundtable has been promoting discussion on themes of reuse including the leaders and experts from fields.
  - e. ANNUAL REUSE NYC CONFERENCE – Brings together leaders and Reuse members to discuss best practices and share insights on the development of the field.
3. **Development, networking and facilitation**
  - a. NYC WASTEMATCH – An Online materials exchange service which matches donors to groups in need. Provides unique managed accounts which allow peer-to-peer exchanges of Reused items, facilitating donation and preventing excess inventory accumulation.
  - b. REUSE NYC MEMBER FORUM – Allows members of Reuse organisations to share information, post questions and give advice using an online messaging board.
  - c. NYC REUSE DIRECTORY – Provides a comprehensive resource for locations of reuse establishments in New York.
4. **Providing user interfaces and infrastructure**
  - a. TRANSPORTING REUSABLES USING COMMERCIAL CARRIERS (TRUCC)<sup>6</sup> – Explores the potential for synergies and symbiosis between different commercial businesses and Reuse organisations. Attempts to create an informational and technical resource to expand the transportation capacity of Reuse organisations.

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<sup>6</sup> See [TRUCC@nyccmr.org](mailto:TRUCC@nyccmr.org) for more details.

### 4.3: Structure of Reuse in New York

The corporate governance structure of the City’s Reuse programs can be visualised below. Overriding control is given to the Bureau of Waste Management through which funding is allocated. The NYC Centre for Materials Reuse is a product of collaboration between the Bureau of Waste Management of the City College of New York. Below this layer of organisation we can see the various other programs which are tailored towards supporting Reuse.

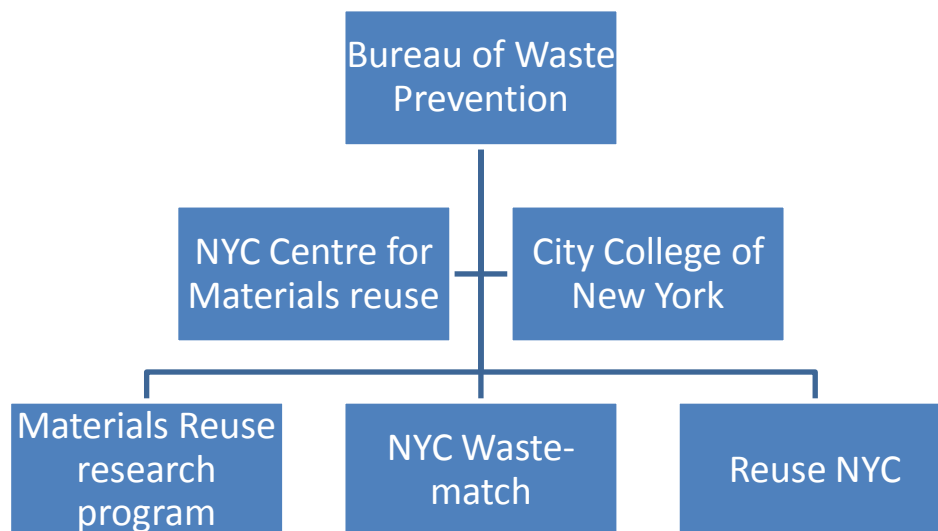
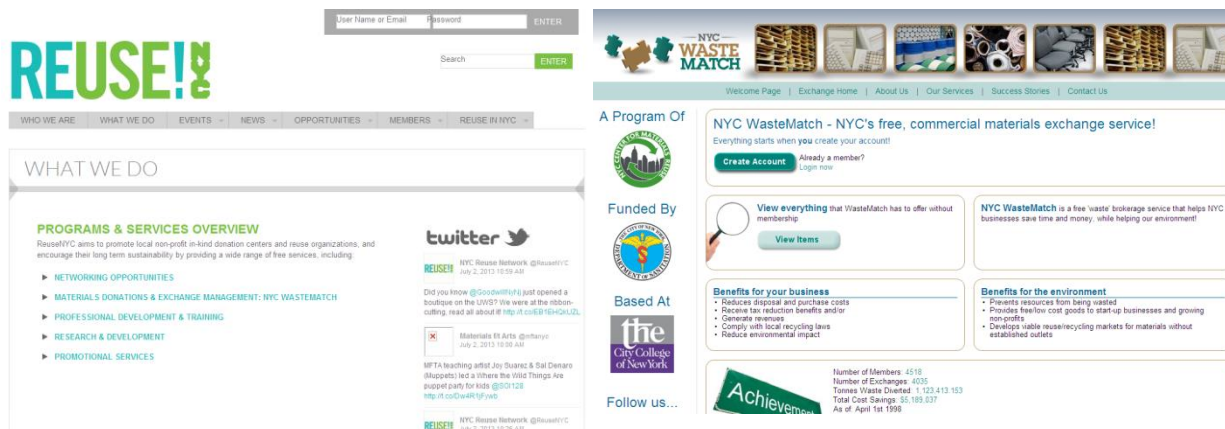


Diagram 5: Representation of corporate governance structure of NYC’s Reuse network showing administrative machinery and current projects being implemented.

### Visualising Reuse<sup>7</sup>



<http://www.reusenyc.info/what-we-do>

<http://www.wastematch.org/>

Picture 6 and 7: Print-screens of NYC websites, demonstrating user interfaces and functionality.

<sup>7</sup> Screen-shots are taken from NYC Reuse websites for the purpose of illustration of user interfaces.

Above can be seen the main user interfaces for the NYC websites. On the one hand we have the NYC-reuse site which provides information on Reuse activities to the general public. The site also has links to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, which helps to generate interest and communities around exchanging materials. The Waste-match site provides businesses and individuals with a virtual platform over which exchangeable reused goods can be traded between users. It also provides links to local Reuse businesses, allowing them to gain access to a wider customer base.

#### *4.4: Reasons for creation*

The Reuse program developed in New York was born out of concern over diminishing space within landfill sites used by the city. The Bureau for Waste Prevention was founded in 1986 as a result of this, carrying a mandate to promote and educate New Yorkers in the benefits of Reuse and Recycling. By the 1990s Reuse and recycling organisations such as the Salvation Army and Goodwill had successfully promoted Reuse as a tool for social good which further stimulated growth in the Reuse sector. However by 2000 the situation had become critical as the City's last landfill began reaching capacity. The development of an updated Solid waste management plan and growing community advocacy led to a corporate sustainability movement which promoted waste reduction and reuse as key concepts. The Materials Exchange program was born of this effort<sup>8</sup>.

#### *4.5: Successes of Reuse Programs*

Through its educational, outreach and research arms the New York Reuse programs have succeeded in changing the perception of Recycling and Reuse in New York. Since 1997 the NYC WasteMatch program has diverted over 250,000 tons of materials from landfills and saved the municipality an estimated \$5 million (US).

#### *4.6: What can Vancouver learn from this example?*

Like in the LRN example New York provides a number of insights in terms of what role municipal government can play in supplying organisational capacity and structural support for Reuse organisations to grow. New York also demonstrates how periods of crisis stimulate innovation. The landfill problem that New York experienced led to new strategies being developed to dispose of waste – but Vancouver, although it does not face such immediate problems should learn from New York's mistakes and think ahead to a point at which such a crisis may manifest itself. Forward thinking on the part of the City can help mitigate the effects of a future waste crisis and can save significant amounts of money in the development of future landfill sites.

New York also provides good models for how Reuse can successfully be marketed within a city, in order to change the perception of the sector. Through outreach, skills workshops, certification and establishing sector-wide quality standards NYC Reuse has successfully

<sup>8</sup> See the 2008 sector assessment report for more details:  
[https://www.reusenyc.info/uploads/medp\\_project\\_document/MEDP\\_Sector\\_Assessment\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.reusenyc.info/uploads/medp_project_document/MEDP_Sector_Assessment_Report_FINAL.pdf)

managed to build consumer confidence and arm Reuse workers with transportable skills. Globally NYC has established itself as a leader in “Reuse-thinking” and thus provides a ready mentor to the City of Vancouver in developing more effective waste management strategies.



## 5.0: European Reuse Network (RReuse)

### 5.1: Overview

The European Reuse Network (Branded as RReuse) is a meta-reuse network, providing a portal from which to access other Reuse networks located at national, regional and municipal levels. RReuse, unlike the previous two examples discussed is not funded by any one municipality – the network is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation which is mainly involved in lobbying, promoting and educating the European public on the concept of Reuse. Its mandate is to link together Reuse organisations throughout Europe as well as to develop and lobby for policy changes at national and EU member level.

Currently some 22 Reuse networks are part of the European network which spans 12 EU member states. The combined networks employ 42,000 fulltime employees plus over 200,000 volunteers, highlighting the importance of Reuse as a sector within Europe. Despite the diversity present between the networks there are some common values shared between the different networks based around themes of environmental protection, community service and social justice.

RREUSE acts as a policy advisor and lobby group at a supra-national level, promoting sustainable development concepts based around three main “pillars” of environmental protection (waste prevention), social equity and economic viability (job creation and training). The practical realisation of these ideals, however are the responsibility of the individual Reuse organisations which form the nodes within the different National Reuse networks.

### 5.2: Mechanics of the network

The European RReuse network comprises of the following:

1. A Reuse website with links to different Reuse organisations via an interactive map.
2. Advice and Advocacy - develops and advocates policy changes at EU-wide levels, provides network members guidance.
3. Educational and training side which promotes a number of development projects.

As part of its economic and social-equity goals, the RReuse network administers a number of developmental projects:

1. **LOWaste** – this aims to reduce the 3 billion tonnes of waste produced each day by citizens in the EU. At the current rate of growth such figures are set to grow by 45% by 2020. This project hence aims to move towards goals set out by the EU’s 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action program, exploring life-cycle thinking, eco-design and raising waste-awareness.
2. **QualiPro SecondHand** – Through partnerships across seven EU countries the project aims to develop vocational training and research instruments within the

field of Reuse. The aim is to promote professionalization of the sector and develop criteria for best-practices within the field.

- 3. **Leonardo Recycle Set** – Promotes managerial abilities, giving training, certification and qualifications for Reuse workers.
- 4. **Qualiti-ES** – Aims to develop Quality assurance guidelines for Reuse organisations and foster transparency and communication between customers and businesses.

### 5.3: Corporate Governance structure

The corporate structure of Europe’s RReuse differs from the other models mentioned in so far as its structure is “non-bureaucratic” and “non-hierarchical”. The Board of directors is comprised of individuals belonging to different member networks across Europe.

### 5.4: Structure of Reuse in Europe<sup>9</sup>



This map clearly outlines the span of the European RReuse network. It demonstrates the range of different countries and cultures involved, and yet shows how they are united by a common theme of sustainable consumption. The map reveals that there are several “Hot-spots” of Reuse activity mainly around Brussels, France and Germany as well as around the United Kingdom, which has the highest density of network members. The many symbols united under the

**Map 2: Map of European Reuse Network member organisations.**

RReuse banner shows a certain degree of solidarity between network members and demonstrates the growing

potential and awareness that Reuse has within the public imaginary.

<sup>9</sup> Pictures taken from RReuse website: <http://www.rreuse.org/t3/>

### 5.5: Visualising the Network

The RReuse website offers an easy to use portal for members of the public to access. A separate site also gives member organisations access and provides a means of communicating across the network. A range of materials are provided which facilitate raising public awareness and educating people on developments within the field of Reuse.

### 5.6: Successes of Reuse Programs in Europe

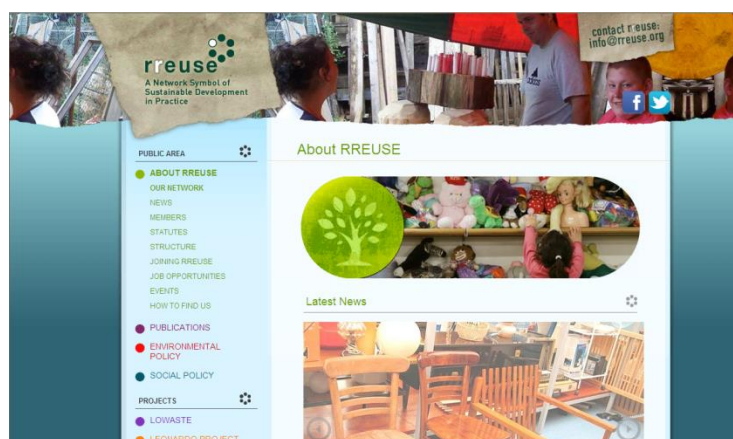
The main successes of the European RReuse network lie in its ability to integrate reuse networks across Europe and give them the potential to share their innovations. RReuse's role as an advocate has helped foster the concept of Reuse and promote it more broadly across European countries. Through networking Reuse leaders together the network has allowed for best practices to be shared and for strategies in reuse to be developed and envisaged for the future.

### 5.7: What can Vancouver learn from this example?

The size of the European Reuse network demonstrates that such networks are becoming more and more mainstream. The ubiquity of these emerging networks shows three things:

1. They are effective enough to be adopted.
2. There are numerous different models to select from.
3. There is a general will and demand globally to develop such networks.

The question therefore needs to be asked: why is Vancouver behind in the race? Why have the successes of these networks not yet filtered through to influence our own waste management paradigms in the City? One of the main problems is that Reuse networks are still developing; the concept of Networks is also fairly new, only perhaps within the last 8 years have such networks really began promoting themselves and their effectiveness, and lastly the movement towards more sustainable living is still somewhat in its infancy. But through RReuse Europe continuing to lobby the EU government, and through raising awareness of the work and benefits of Reuse enterprises, this relatively unknown concept is now at last becoming mainstream. If Vancouver is to learn anything from the European Reuse network it is that such networks are effective means through which to address economic, social and environmental issues, and that if Vancouver is to be a leader in sustainability it should adopt innovative new policies and strategies as early as is sensible to do so.



Picture 8: Print-screen of European Reuse Network website.

## Part 2: Reuse in Vancouver

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### 6.0: Aims, Objectives and methodology

To begin defining the scope of Reuse in Vancouver I undertook a series of ten interviews with local Reuse enterprises. These interviews spanned a range of Reuse enterprises which were chosen on the basis of their categorisation within several Reuse fields, namely:

1. Used Furnishings
2. Used Books
3. Antiquarian Books
4. Antique sellers
5. Second hand Clothing retailers
6. Charities
7. Second hand sports retailers
8. Used electronic resellers<sup>10</sup>

The businesses chosen range in age in terms of the date they were established. Some businesses have been functioning for some 50 years whereas others are only recently established 5-10 years ago. The longevity of some of these businesses demonstrates that Reuse is not a new concept and that it has been a successful part of the Vancouver economy for quite some time. The recent innovations however show that there is a growing appeal for Reuse in the city and increasingly within the popular culture of Vancouver. With a growing sustainability movement in the city and a concern for healthier lifestyles and the environment, the City and more generally the private sector has the opportunity to inculcate a culture of sustainable consumption and responsibility in waste production.

The aim of these interviews was not to provide an exhaustive analysis of the scope of Reuse in the city, rather the aim was to provide a sense of what workers within this field felt about the development of the sector and their experience of change. A number of questions were asked concerning the current state of their operations, expectations for growth in the future, impact of changing technologies (such as internet trading), the current challenges faced as well as the role the city can play in supporting their enterprises.<sup>11</sup> From these interviews three case studies will be presented in order to provide faces to the Reuse economy and ground this report in specific examples of the problems faced.

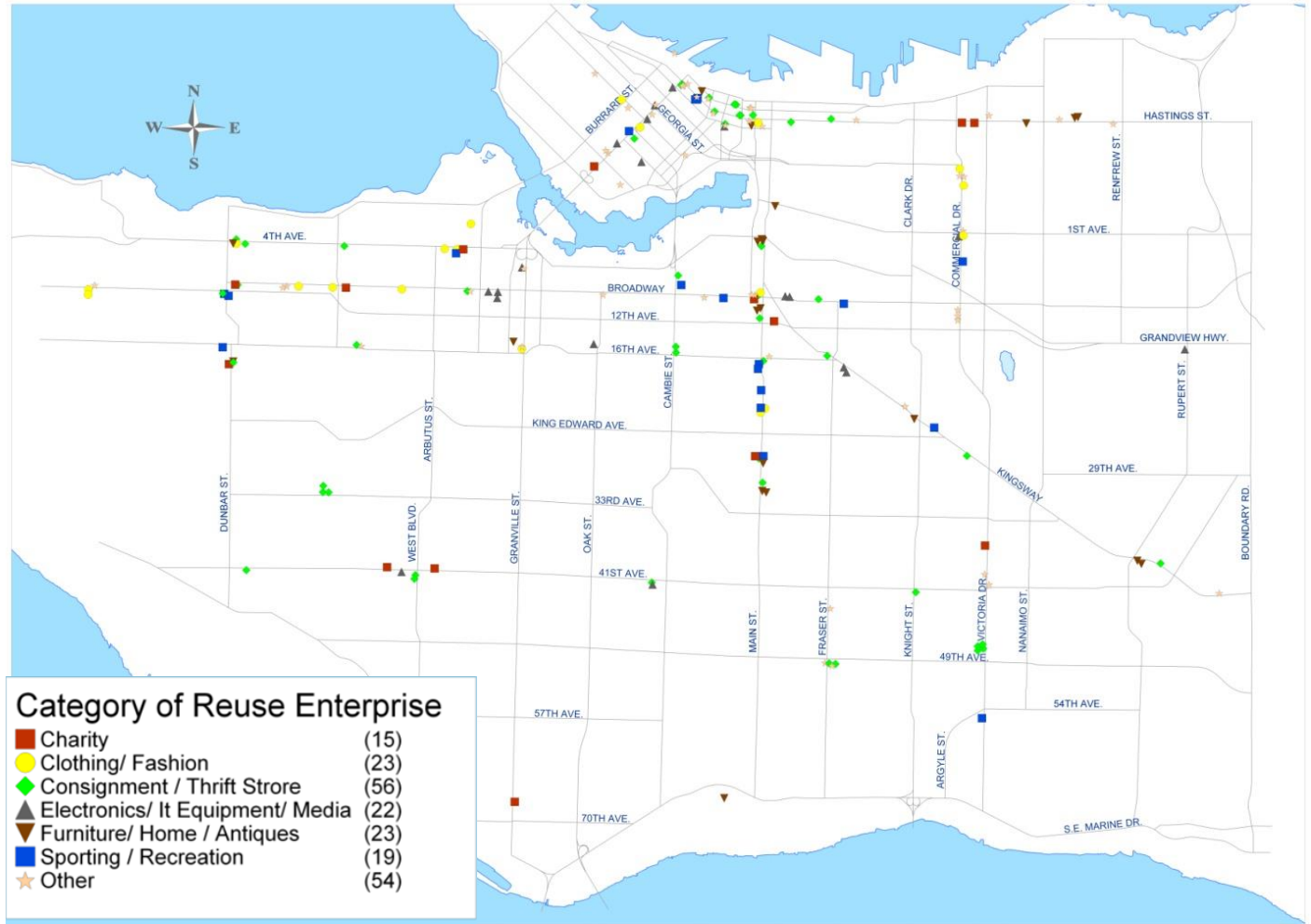
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<sup>10</sup> Classifications are based on the NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) classification guidelines for Resale establishments, under NAICS code 453310.

<sup>11</sup> See appendix for example questions.



6.1: The distribution of Reuse in Vancouver



**Map 3: Map demonstrating the distribution of reuse enterprises in Vancouver based on Business licencing data .**

The map above demonstrates the current scale and distribution of Reuse organisations in Vancouver based upon currently held business licences which were classified within the category of “second-hand retailer”. In the map above some 212 businesses are represented (pawn shops however were excluded from the sample), the majority (26%) were consignment and thrift stores with categories such as charities (7%) second-hand clothing (11%), antiques/ furniture/ home-appliances (11%), sporting and recreation (9%) and electronics (10%) each making up roughly 10% respectively of the population surveyed.

Generally speaking, Reuse stores specialising in similar fields, say antique stores, tend to cluster together along major thoroughfares – many thrift and consignment stores for example can be seen to cluster around Gastown in Downtown Vancouver, clothing stores are well represented both along West Broadway and Commercial Drive. Sporting and recreational Reuse businesses, mostly specialising in bike-resale and repair are also tightly clustered along Main Street between 16<sup>th</sup> and King Edward Avenue. However by far the

greatest density and diversity of reuse businesses find themselves located along Granville Street in Downtown Vancouver.

# 7.0: Case studies

## 7.1: Case Study 1: Our Social Fabric



Our Social Fabric (OSF) was founded in 2009 as a not-for-profit, “blended” organisation; it began life by retailing reused fabric from the film industry. After a period of uncertainty in early 2011 the enterprise has since reworked its business model with the formation of a new board of directors. OSF now relies on collecting unused, excess fabric from suppliers and craft people, and reselling it to the wider public at affordable prices. The enterprise relies exclusively on volunteer cooperation, possessing a pool of 100 volunteers, 10-15 of which are involved each month in organising and retailing donated textiles during their monthly sales. The enterprise started life operating out of a storage locker, making just \$300-\$500 a month in sales. This has since changed. Now, in one year, through sharing warehouse space with a local business, OSF has been able to increase sales to \$2000 (Gross sales) per month, in just 1 hour of operation.

OSF overall has a positive outlook for the future. In the short term OSF hopes to establish a permanent storefront to remove the constraints of per-monthly sales. This retail outlet would also allow for the development of a community of sewing groups in the Downtown Eastside and provide employment for low-barrier workers in sorting fabric and retailing. Another short-term opportunity that Andrew Bryson on the Board of Directors for OSF hopes to exploit is expansion online, he says:

*“We need to expand and ideally we would like to expand online...we discovered that people were buying fabric from us and then straight away reselling it online for twice the price”*

Through moving to online platforms such as ebay.ca Andrew hopes to remove the constraints of possessing physical retail space and take advantage of the larger, online markets in textiles. However in the long-term OSF has developed a 10 year development plan which sees itself transitioning from a middleman in the process of up-cycling and reselling unused, surplus textiles to a more wide-reaching aim of recycling used fabrics for resale. But such expansion requires additional warehousing and retail space and greater symbiosis with similar or interested businesses with whom they can co-locate with.



**Picture 9: Photograph of Andrew Bryson, member of Board of directors for OSF**

### 7.11: Limits to Growth

There are, however, a number of barriers preventing the expansion of this social enterprise. The primary concern for OSF is the lack of retailing and warehousing space, as Andrew tells us:

*“Physical space is the main problem we face – we just can’t afford to rent space. The City has control of certain spaces that would be ideal but there’s a lack of flexibility – they rent them out at market value and we just can’t afford that”*

Affordable space is at a premium in the city and appears to be a limiting factor in the growth of most Reuse and small businesses in general, as Andrew explains:

*“We can’t expand just because we’re at capacity – we just don’t have the space to take any more material”.*

The solution to this space problem, according to Andrew, would be for the City to make available affordable warehouse space for Reuse businesses whose allocation would be determined on a needs-tested basis. As Andrew says:

*“All we need is a 1-2 year agreement on a lease or something – that will just give us the foothold to grow and from there we can look after ourselves”* He continues: *“There’s a lot of talk about promoting social enterprises, but there’s not a lot of following up on that. Ideally we want the City to play a role as an incubator”.*

As this example of OSF demonstrates there is a need for the City to step in and support Reuse businesses through providing space and potentially operational funding to “incubate” Reuse businesses. Such funding and space of course would simply provide the seed capital necessary to give Reuse businesses a chance to establish themselves within the city and within a larger market.

### 7.2: Case Study 2: Tanglewood Books



Picture 10: Tanglewood books shop front at Vine and Broadway.

Tanglewood Books is a second-hand bookstore currently located along Broadway and Vine. It was established roughly 20 years ago in 1994 and in its current manifestation (there have been other outlets and locations throughout these 20 years) employs four people altogether. Its business model aims to replicate the form and feel of a new bookstore by providing high quality second-hand books to customers.

Tanglewood currently employs multiple strategies in marketing itself, spanning from advertising in print media, to local community outreach and through collaborations with other local businesses, as the Manager of the store explained:

*“We’re looking at different ways of advertising. But it’s expensive: the Vancouver courier is charging \$300 a week for an ad. But there’s local papers... behind you the New Agora – it’s a local paper and we share some common ground with it – it appeals to those sort of sub-cultures around Vancouver... Then we just approach the local community through things like fliers. We put them up in coffee shops, like the one next door”*

Each Reuse sector faces its own specific challenges and in the case of Second-hand and Antiquarian books their main problem lies in the expansion of internet trading sites such as

Amazon.com's market place and other online platforms such as Abesbooks.com, as well as the development of e-books.

These developments have led to a series of closures of stores across Vancouver, and have been a major influence on Tanglewood's own decision to scale back its business and consolidate one of its stores:

*"Well we're...consolidating one of our stores. Problem is we just need more of a cash flow right now. We're not alone – three bookstores closed down in maybe the last three years. There was the Book and Comic Emporium – that was actually the longest standing bookstore in Vancouver at the time. Then Kestrel consolidated. There's just been this amazing decimation of second hand bookstores here. Even here we're just scaling down"*

However, despite the challenges that new technology and increasing rent are causing, Tanglewood remains optimistic, as they explain:

*"Now people are just turning back to second hand books – there is just this pleasure in browsing and the thing is with these e-books, you can't really share them with friends in the same way as a second hand book"*

Indeed Joel the owner of Tanglewood sees emerging opportunities for growth through movement towards online sales via Abesbooks.com – as the manager of the store describes:

*"[W]e're moving books online - not everything, just collectables, first editions. But the problem is when you're putting these things online it just drives down the value of the books. Books we use to sell at \$500 are worth just \$10 now – that's just some of the problems of increasing choice. But overall there are still things you can list that are worthwhile"*

Tanglewood sees the City's role as being that of a networker, providing a platform through which businesses can communicate, share ideas and advertising potential and develop symbiotic relationships with each other. The City would thus be useful in helping to market local Reuse businesses and equally in facilitating potential collaborations with other businesses within the city, for example such collaborations could take the form of shared storage spaces in warehouses, joint advertising campaigns for businesses with similar customer bases or co-location of offices for Reuse start-ups.

### 7.3: Case Study 3: Free-Geek



Free Geek presents an example of a highly successful non-profit operating out of the Downtown Eastside. Since November 2006 it has been collecting, refurbishing and re-selling computers and electronics from its retail-outlets. Free Geek has 5 permanent members of staff and utilises some 1000 volunteers a year (many of which are low-barrier workers from the Downtown eastside), altogether Free-Geek has around 6000 registered volunteers.

Volunteers are provided with extensive training on building, testing and repairing computers. They test items and determine what is salvageable, breaking down the rest into

component parts and recycling them through use of ethical recycling companies such as Encorp.<sup>12</sup>

The used electronics (E-Waste) come mainly from local businesses and individuals who live locally. Free Geek takes all forms of E-Waste for recycling purposes, but specialises in desktops, laptops, mice and cables. According to Michael DuBelko of Free-Geek roughly recycling 35 tons of E-waste every month and since 2007 50,000 computers have been refurbished altogether.

Despite Free Geek's many successes the enterprise does face some challenges. One of the major problems is the nature of changing technology – smart-phones, tablets and ipads. Lack modularity and their complex designs make them difficult to repair and refurbish. But demand for refurbished computers is set to persist, which is spurring the development of a new facility in the coming years. But again funding and availability of affordable spaces present problems to expansion. Aside from this the problem, a problem specific to this field is the lack of quality assurance for the recycling and refurbishing industry in general – through numerous rogue traders consumer confidence has been affected, which has led to a stigma being attached to used electronic goods. Free Geek has attempted to buck the trend through the introduction of warranties and life-time assessments for the products they retail in their thrift store, as Michael DuBelko explains:

*“We provide guarantees for every unit we refurbish – we say just how much usage you’re gonna get out of this stuff. But most thrift stores you go to, you buy electronics from them you don’t have any kind of warranty”*

There is potential for the City to provide some form of support for businesses such as Free Geek through endorsing the products they sell in the form of developing used electronic Certification certificates which reward good practices within this industry and assure the customer of the safety and reliability of the products they are purchasing. The New York Reuse Network as well as networks in the European Reuse Network have already begun such programs of establishing industry standards and setting up guidelines for best practices. These guidelines are taught to workers operating within Reuse enterprises through workshops, at the end of which they receive certificates of course completion and Industry recognised qualifications. The City of Vancouver could potentially adopt similar programs, borrowing from the New York Reuse model which could legitimate the operations of many Reuse businesses and lead to a shift in the perception of reused electronic products, thereby improving the public perception of the field in general. Michael sums up the mood of many of the workers in the Reuse industry when he says:

*“I firmly believe in reuse. I think our culture now is just obsessed with buying new things every 6 months. In Vancouver especially there’s just a shift towards gentrification and overconsumption and I just want to see more local businesses getting excited about reuse...We just need more organization and just more exposure to reuse in Vancouver”*

<sup>12</sup> See Encorp website: <http://www.return-it.ca/> Circuit boards are sent to specialist recyclers called Hallmark Refining in Washington state to recover the precious metals on the boards, see <http://www.hallmarkrefining.com/>

## 8.0: Interview Summaries for Local Businesses

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### 8.1: Range of businesses

Because of the types of businesses in this study there are difficulties in making generalisations. Many problems which face Reuse businesses are often specific to the businesses themselves and the types of reused commodities they retail. There are however several commonalities shared by the organisations interviewed and it is for these more general concerns which the city may play a role in providing a solution.

### 8.2: Challenges and solutions

The overriding concern for 50% of the businesses interviewed was the lack of storage space available to them. Space in Vancouver, especially warehousing space, is currently at a premium. In the case of Our Social Fabric and Urban Reuse the limited storage capacity is limiting the growth of these organisations. This could be ameliorated by making available affordable warehouse spaces, providing rent relief for Reuse enterprises or fostering sharing between organisations to utilise under-utilised spaces in the city.

Rent and tax burdens have also taken their toll on Reuse businesses, second-hand and antiquarian bookstores have been disproportionately affected, especially those in Downtown Vancouver. It was suggested by Don Stewart of Macleod's Books that the City may be able to play a role in offering rent or tax relief for struggling Reuse Businesses who operate on City-owned property. He identified one situation that he was aware of in which the city had reduced rent for another antiquarian bookstore on City-owned property.

Lack of consumer confidence in Reused products has proven to be a major hurdle for electronic-resellers and to some extent used clothing retailers. This lack of confidence is born of negative stereotypes of Reused items being perpetuated by unscrupulous retailers dealing in stolen merchandise.

Over-regulation and complicated bureaucratic procedures have led to many Reuse enterprises such as Cheapskates and Macleod's Books being unfairly targeted. Such legal issues include legislation which prevents the sale of stolen goods which has prevented many Reuse organisations selling certain types of products – such legislation can be relaxed for businesses which are known to operate legitimately as in the case of Cheapskates. Health and safety regulations regarding combustible material has also affected antiquarian bookstores such as Macleod's which has led to a number of fines from the fire department. Another problem faced by Strathcona BIA has been with building regulations which have prevented them using structures over 100 sq. ft. in size. More transparency in regulation and more flexible legislation for the field can help.

The bed bug problem has been identified as concern by a number of businesses such as Macleod's, the Salvation Army and Value Village. This problem has substantially reduced the ability for many reuse businesses to collect items from certain areas of the city which are

known to be infested. There is however no solution to this problem and it is a problem which is only set to grow worse in the coming years as the infestation spreads. This problem however has contributed to the negative stereotype of Reused items as being dirty and dangerous.

A negative perception of the field has been inculcated by bad practices by some businesses. The trade in stolen merchandise by some pawnshops has been a major contributor to this negative perception. Bike-shops, used computer shops, and sports goods seller are disproportionately affected by this. A solution could be to create a Certification system which rewards good-business practices as well as ethical and responsible Resellers. A best-practice set of guidelines can be drawn up by the City which can stimulate improvements in quality control for the sector in general and help develop consumer confidence.

### *8.3: Benefits*

100% of the businesses interviewed have a very positive perspective on the work they do and their contribution to a more sustainable city. The vast majority of Reuse workers and organisations have a positive outlook for the field in general, despite in many cases lack of return in investment.

Many of the reuse enterprises interviewed were aware of their role in preventing waste being sent to landfills and were also actively involved in recycling and producing as little waste as possible. Free-Geek, Computers for Schools and the Salvation Army were keen to promote the level of recycling that they undertook as they strove towards zero waste targets.

The social justice and ethical side of the Reuse sector is also a key point to bring to attention. 75% of the Reuse organisations interviewed, Our Social Fabric, Free-Geek and Computers for schools especially rely heavily on volunteer participation. These organisations provide skills and training for low barrier workers, serving to provide many young adults with their first experience within the world of work. Many if not all the organisations interviewed highlighted their primary purpose was in the service of communities and helping others in need. Their role in catering and caring for excluded social groups is a key motivation for many workers and is a major factor that should come into play when making the decision to support this sector of the economy.

### *8.4 The Question of being Green*

75% of businesses saw their business as being “Green”<sup>13</sup> or sustainable in some way, but few had exploited this marketing angle because of lack of certainty whether their business fitted into an official definition. But the question must be asked: what is the official definition of a “Green job”. Two of the clearest definitions come from World watch and the Copenhagen Consensus which have worked towards standardising the definitions. The Copenhagen Consensus Centre report defines “Green job” as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> See the Copenhagen Consensus report for standard definitions:  
[http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/CCC\\_Green\\_Jobs.pdf](http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/CCC_Green_Jobs.pdf)



*“Jobs involved in economic activities that help protect or restore the environment or conserve natural resources” as green jobs, which includes recycling, pollution reduction, organic farming, and similar non-energy activities” (Copenhagen Consensus Centre 2010:10)*

World Watch takes a similar definition:

*“We define green jobs as positions in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, installation, and maintenance, as well as scientific and technical, administrative, and service-related activities, that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality. Specifically, but not exclusively, this includes jobs that help to protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high-efficiency and avoidance strategies; de-carbonize the economy; and minimize or altogether avoid generation of all forms of waste and pollution” (World Watch report 2008:35-6)*

World Watch explicitly makes reference to Reuse<sup>14</sup> three times during its report. Reuse fits in with this classification through reducing energy being consumed in making products as well as serving to avoid waste production through diverting goods from waste streams. This report therefore recommends that the City recognize the role of Reuse enterprises within the “Green Jobs” category. Such a reclassification will not only serve to increase the number of Green jobs in Vancouver’s economy, but also raise awareness of the role of Reuse enterprises in promoting sustainability through lighter carbon footprints and reducing waste being sent to landfills.

### *8.5: Effect of the internet*

The effect of internet trading platforms such as ebay.ca or Kijiji.ca is dependent upon the specific business, their modes of operation and the sector concerned. Over all sites such as ebay have stimulated a greater interest in Reused items and hence have attracted a new demographic to the market. Used book stores have suffered from the development of the internet with sites such as Amazon Marketplace widening the market and decreasing the value of used books. As Don Stewart from Macleod’s books says the internet has led to books once valued at \$50 now are just worth \$5, through sellers competing in a much larger market there has resulted a race to the bottom. But overall, sites such as AbeBooks.com has allowed some second hand book stores such as Tanglewood Books to capitalise on these larger, global markets.

Many Reuse enterprises, especially thrift stores are fairly insulated against competition via the internet. In the case of the Salvation Army, Dan Kinsey (Terminal Manager Salvation

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<sup>14</sup> For example in the following quote: *“Greater efficiency in resource inputs (energy, materials, water) and greater reliance on recycling and reuse open the door to potential employment gains through what economists refer to as “re-spending.” For example, if energy inputs needed in the manufacturing and use of products and production equipment can be reduced through higher levels of efficiency (more-efficient motors, appliances, and equipment; reduced transmission losses; or recycling steel and aluminum instead of producing these materials from virgin ores), then the money saved—the avoided fuel and materials costs—can in principle be re-spent elsewhere in the economy. To the extent that this re-spending benefits segments of the economy that are more labor-intensive than the conventional energy sector, it generates additional employment” (World Watch report 2008: 45) See [http://www.unep.org/PDF/UNEPGreenJobs\\_report08.pdf](http://www.unep.org/PDF/UNEPGreenJobs_report08.pdf)*

Army NRO Western Region) says that the internet is serving different customers and demographics. Thrift stores are still frequented by an older demographic, or else members of low-income households who do not have access to the internet. Many people also visit thrift and consignment stores for different reasons compared to the internet, enjoying the more natural experience of browsing and the excitement at chance discoveries and impulse purchases.

### *8.6: Potential for collaboration*

75% of businesses in Reuse would like to see some kind of collaboration with other Reuse businesses and also with businesses in general. Many see the potential for developing mutually beneficial relationships through sharing resources, expertise, advertising costs and space. This model of symbiosis has already been exploited by Our Social Fabric who share warehousing space with a company in the Downtown Eastside. Free-Geek and Computers for Schools also enjoy collaboration with each other and with businesses through creating donation networks and also through diverting donations between them during gluts in supply. Tanglewood Books and Macleod's books especially are interested in the idea of exploiting cross advertising potentials.

### *8.7: Outlook of reuse*

The outlook for Reuse in Vancouver is overall very positive. Many businesses are predicting growth within the coming five years due to a shift in consumer demand towards reuse. Don Stewart at Macleod's books characterises this shift as being primarily among consumers aged between 20-35 years of age who are concerned with ethical and sustainable consumption. The rise of the "New Antiquarians" – individuals concerned with quality, reused, vintage products – has led to a growth in the appeal of used goods especially antiques and vintage clothes, resulting in further popular interest in Reuse enterprises in the city.

Many businesses however do face numerous problems as outlined above, the used and Antiquarian book market especially. Changing consumer habits, and technological obsolescence has meant that many used items no longer possess markets as consumer demand wanes and eventually disappears, as a result Reuse enterprises adapt, rebrand or face extinction.

### *8.8: How Green is Reuse in Vancouver?*

Workers within the Reuse sector recognise the "Green credentials" of their businesses, despite lack of official acknowledgement of the fact. Overall, workers within the Reuse enterprises interviewed are well educated with regards to the benefits of their businesses to the environment, and for many this was a major motivation for entering the field. Companies such as Free Geek and Computers for Schools recycle 100% of the E-waste they receive and make a conscious effort to use ethical recyclers and minimise the environmental impact of their operations. Many such companies do not brand themselves as Green businesses, although in the Case of Macleod and Tanglewood books they have thought about the possibility of doing so.

### 8.9: Should we reclassify Reuse?

There does appear to be a need to reclassify Reuse businesses within the “Green-Jobs” category, both in terms of demand from workers within the sector as well as from the recycling operations that many undertake.

### 8.10: Is there a demand for a reuse network?

Once the concept of a Reuse Network was explained 90% of businesses interviewed provided a positive response to the implementation of the idea in Vancouver.

As Don Steward of Macleod’s Books says:

*“If the City had a directory that people could use to show where an item could go where it would do the most good then that would be a good idea, but I’m open to suggestions”*

Marissa Kielman from Value Village is on a similar line when she says:

*“We would love that reuse and recycling become a bigger part of people’s lives and would love for Value Village to potentially be a part of that network. But the City can help us in encouraging people to reuse and attract people to our stores, that’s all I can really think about right now”*

A demand exists for integrating customers, local businesses and Reuse enterprises together. Reuse businesses are optimistic about the prospect of potentially gaining access to larger markets and sharing resources with other businesses. By identifying businesses with shared ideologies and customers a more efficient means of advertising can be developed which can prove a benefit to many businesses who have “niche” clientele. Identifying business partnerships can also be a consequence of such networking, allowing businesses to share warehousing space and circulate unsold inventory between them. But overall this network will be most useful in terms of giving the customer access to information and details about Reuse businesses which may not advertise online. The customer/user will hence benefit from gaining access to a wider market, thereby encouraging the likelihood of Reuse.

### 8.11: What would local businesses want the City to do?

Many local businesses were sceptical at first whether the City should play a role within Reuse out of fear of further regulation on their activities and due to a lack of attention being paid to them in the past. However many businesses did present a number of ideas on what would be potentially useful to their growth:

- Andrew Bryson of Our Social Fabric suggested providing seed capital/ operational funding to Reuse businesses –support and can be provided through the initial development stages of a business through giving more funding to (Business Improvement Associations) operating in BIAs.
- Clint from Space Labs suggested providing Zero-interest/ low-interest loan through BIAs to allow for improvement and expansion – this strategy had already taken place in Chinatown.
- One re-seller suggested the City provide affordable storage space which could be allocated on a needs-tested basis.
- Don Stewart of MacLeod’s books suggested provide rent relief on City-owned property – citing Albion books as an example of where this is already taking place.

- Barry Gilpin at Cheapskates suggested reducing regulation surrounding used sporting equipment for reputable businesses. This regulation was built around stolen merchandise traded by pawn-shops (and requires businesses to hold onto stock for 30 days before sale), but he argues that it is unnecessary when the provenance of the goods is already certified.
- Harvinder Aujala of RCBC suggested advertising the benefits of Reuse on for example utility bills or on City-owned websites.

## 9.0: Current infrastructure in Vancouver

### 9.1: Overview

Most of the architecture needed to develop Reuse in Vancouver already exists - it simply lacks the support needed from the City. Through the Recycling council of BC<sup>15</sup> (a non-profit charity specialising in Recycling and Reuse) a number of Reuse initiatives have been established across different municipalities in BC. These include:

- The Recycling hotline<sup>16</sup>: <http://www.rcbc.ca/services/recycling-hotline>
- Recyclopedia website and smart phone app<sup>17</sup>: <http://www.rcbc.ca/recyclopedia>
- RCBC Materials exchange (MEX) composed of:
  - Residential materials exchange: <http://www.rcbc.ca/services/residential>
  - BC Industrial Materials Exchange (BC IMEX)<sup>18</sup> <http://www.bcimex.ca/>
- BC Electronics materials exchange<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bcemex.ca/>

### 9.2: Existing online Reuse infrastructure: A Comparative study

The architecture for reuse already exists, with the materials exchange being in operation since 2006. More recent developments include the Municipal Reuse websites (formed in 2010), designed by a company called *IwasteNot*<sup>20</sup> and administered by the BC Recycling council. The websites offer a fully customisable trading platform similar to that of commercial companies such as Kijiji.ca or craigslist.ca. The websites provide a user interface through which individuals living in Vancouver or other Municipalities can list items they want to exchange (either for free or for monetary benefit). The sites shown below have a high degree of functionality, providing a range of Reused-good search criteria and further divided into a range of Reuse-categories. The site simply requires users to register through inputting their name and email address.

<sup>15</sup> The Recycling council, which was established in 1974, provides a range of services from advice and education in recycling and reuse as well as providing practical tools such as the materials exchanges and the reuse hotline.

<sup>16</sup> The RCBC Recycling Hotline is a free, province-wide live information service for recycling, pollution prevention, waste avoidance, safe disposal options and regulations. The hotline handles some 120,000 inquiries per year and provides residents with a database of recyclable and re-useable products as well as organisations involved in their collection.

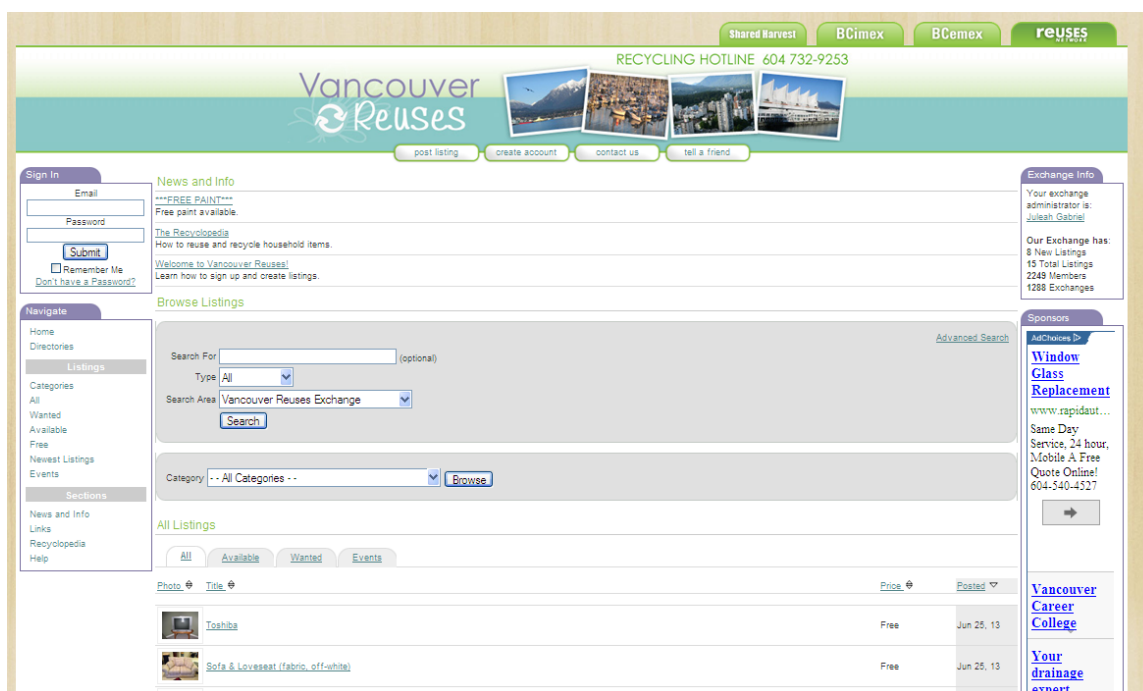
<sup>17</sup> This provides an easy means of looking up a potentially reusable item and giving the locations of nearby outlets which accept them for reuse and recycling.

<sup>18</sup> This is a free online listing services which helps businesses find surplus materials and industrial by-products which may prove useful to them.

<sup>19</sup> The BC EMEX provides 30 categories of electronic items through which members can sell, give away or trade reusable electronics.

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.iwastenotsystems.com/about-us>

The site's functionality is further enhanced by its ability to provide local Reuse news to community users, as well as providing resources which help promote reuse to the wider public. The simplicity in the website's design enhances its appeal although the lack of investment has a consequence of reducing unique content which acts as a disincentive to web-users unsure whether to invest their time in exploring the site. Below however is a comparison between the Vancouver Reuses site and the Surrey Reuses sites – both sites are identical in terms of design and functionality – their only point of difference is the degree



**Picture 11: Vancouver Reuses website, administered by RCBC. Gives example of Craigslist style interface, allowing trading of reused items: <http://www.vancouver.reuses.com/>**

of support received from the Municipal governments. As a point of comparison Surrey has a population of 492,000<sup>21</sup> as of 2012, compared to Vancouver's 603,502<sup>22</sup> - the expectation is therefore for parity to be achieved.

<sup>21</sup> See City of Surrey's population statistics: <http://www.surrey.ca/business-economic-development/1418.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> See City of Vancouver's census statistics: <http://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/population.aspx>

The screenshot shows the Surrey Reuses website interface. At the top, there are logos for 'Shared Harvest', 'BCimex', 'BCemex', and 'reuses'. The main header features the 'SURREY Reuses' logo and a 'RECYCLING HOTLINE 604 732-9253'. Below the header, there are navigation buttons: 'post listing', 'create account', 'contact us', and 'tell a friend'. On the left, there is a 'Sign In' section with fields for 'Email' and 'Password', a 'Submit' button, and a 'Remember Me' checkbox. Below this is a 'Navigate' menu with options like 'Home', 'Directories', 'Listings', 'Categories', 'All', 'Wanted', 'Available', 'Free', 'Newest Listings', 'Events', 'Sections', 'News and Info', 'Links', 'Recyclopedia', and 'Help'. The main content area is titled 'Browse Listings' and includes a search bar with a 'Search' button, a 'Type' dropdown menu, and a 'Search Area' dropdown menu. Below the search bar is a 'Category' dropdown menu and a 'Browse' button. The 'All Listings' section shows a table of items for sale:

Photo	Title	Price	Posted
	2 copper clad coffee tables 1900s	\$75.00 total	Jun 27, 13
	2 rattan bar stools	\$25.00 total	Jun 27, 13

On the right side, there is an 'Exchange Info' section with the text: 'Your exchange administrator is: [Julieah Gabriel](#)'. Below this is a 'Sponsors' section with logos for 'RCBC' and 'CITY OF SURREY'.

Picture 12: Surrey Reuses website, administered by RCBC: <http://www.surreyreuses.com/>

The table below demonstrates the power of a municipality promoting a Reuse site. As can be seen from the table and the two simple pie-charts below, the Surrey site receives significantly more traffic in comparison to Vancouver's. On all metrics Surrey's site far surpasses Vancouver's, being more than 10 times the size in terms of number of new listings and 33 times the size of total listings.

Exchange information	Vancouver	Surrey	Size Difference (as a multiple)
Number of New Listings	8	92	11.5
Total Listings	15	504	33.6
Members	2,249	11,519	5.1
Exchanges	1,288	19,434	15.1

**Table 3: Table demonstrating comparisons in total exchanges between Vancouver and Surrey Reuse websites as a result of support by municipal authorities.**

The following simple pie-charts make this size disparity all the more stark, with the ratio between the total number of listings being shown to be 1:33 between Vancouver and Surrey and the Total number of exchanges on the Vancouver site falling at 1/10 that of Surrey. An immediate recommendation to promote Reuse in Vancouver would therefore be to make a small investment in supporting the Vancouver Reuse materials exchange website.

### 9.3 Why not Craigslist?

Of course the question must be asked: why not Craigslist? The Craigslist site already has a high degree of functionality, has a range of reused goods, and already possesses a large market. Craigslist is already a part of an informal and relatively unregulated economy which has great popularity throughout North America. By contrast the Vancouver Reuses website has very few users and doesn't facilitate anywhere near as many transactions. Why should the City therefore invest in a service which doesn't provide that much net benefit? The answer to this question is that the site itself can be used for many other purposes other than exchanging reused goods, and the Reuse market is by no means cornered by Craigslist – there still exists excess capacity to be utilised. The Vancouver reuses site has the potential to construct a community around the idea of Reuse if it is administered well. The site in contrast to craigslist can simply be utilised as platform for communities to organise their own Reuse events such as garage sales. Unlike Craigslist the site can be personalised and thus can be transformed into a hub around which reuse organisations across the city can advertise and network with each other. Where the RCBC sites do have great potential is in their catering to businesses and industry through the Industrial Materials Exchange (MEX and the electronic goods equivalent EMEX), the Vancouver reuses site can thus offer a platform over which certain types of goods with commercial value may be redistributed to the public (depending on demand and health and safety considerations). Thus for very little investment large gains in promoting Reuse can be made.



### Comparison of Number of Total Listings Between Vancouver and Surrey Reuses Sites

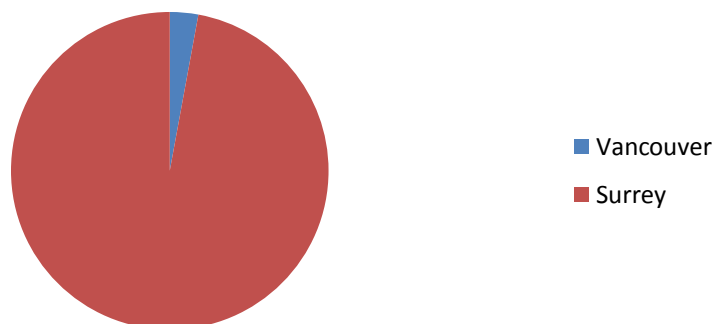


Diagram 6: Pie chart comparing differences between the total number of listings between Vancouver and Surrey Reuse sites.

### Comparison of Number of Exchanges Between Vancouver and Surrey Reuses Sites

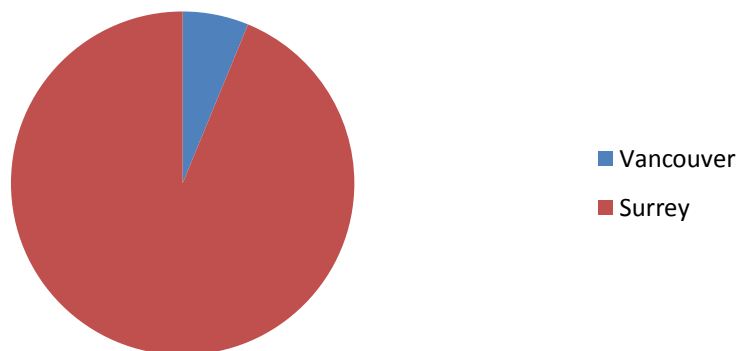


Diagram 7: Pie chart comparing number of exchanges carried out on Vancouver and Surrey Reuses sites.

#### 9.4: Existing Metrics

Part of the emphasis of this project is to explore ways of measuring the success of Reuse organisations and also the Reuse initiatives that may be implemented by the city. New York, London and European are already developing methodologies for measuring Reuse and are coordinating with Reuse organisations in data collection. Through the RCBC, data is already being collected using the materials exchanges. The number of transactions across the varying websites, the weight of material and type of product are collected by the RCBC

in order to calculate GHG emissions<sup>23</sup>. Below is an example table of collated data from the materials exchanges within the lower-mainland:

Annual totals for Lower Mainland	Successful Exchanges	Weight of Diverted Material (kg)
Annual Total – 2010	2085	49394
Annual Total – 2011	1798	49942
Annual Total – 2012	1502	42153

Table : Data tables showing number of successful exchanges carried out throughout the Lower Mainland as a result of RCBC’s material exchanges. Data Provided by RCBC.

The following table shows that year on year the number of successful exchanges is decreasing within the lower-mainland, possibly as a result of lack of promotion of the Reuse sites. As Harvinder Aujala, Information Services Manager at RCBC says:

*“In Vancouver the website has virtually no traffic, that’s just because the City isn’t really promoting it. Surrey Reuses however is by far the best in terms of traffic – we have something like 50,000 people logging on and about 19,000 transactions currently since Surrey began promoting it”*

One of the main limiting factors in the growth of the Vancouver site is the lack of listings which creates a self-reinforcing cycle of decline, serving as a disincentive to further activity on the site, Harvinder explains:

*“The sites need constant traffic to sustain them – listings will attract other listing and... just ensure that people will be more likely to log back on the next time and browse”*

To ensure that browsers are more likely to be users the network in Vancouver needs to be promoted by the City. According to Harvinder, RCBC takes over the administrative work, requiring a small fee to cover the costs of tech-support, design and site maintenance run by *Iwastenot* – this fee is determined by basis of population size of the Resuse site’s area of coverage. However the City may also be able to play a role in supporting the Reuse site through various advertising campaigns:

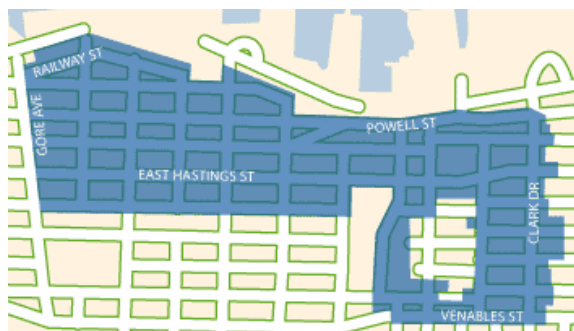
*“Just advertising that this system exists and spending a little money on promoting it... It’s fairly easy and cost effective to promote the website – just through advertising on utility bills*

<sup>23</sup> Based upon existing, standardized methodologies for GHG calculations.

*for example. Surrey, for example, invests through Billboards and just little things like getting the word out there on the back of bills. We just need different ways of getting the message out there...”*

Through utilising the infrastructure that RCBC has already created, and promoting it, it is possible to increase the current level of Reuse in Vancouver by a significant amount.

### 9.4 Strathcona Business Improvement Association (SBIA) Green Zone and Resource Park



Map 4: Map of Strathcona Business Improvement Area

#### 9.41 Background

Strathcona BIA serves 850 businesses and commercial property owners within the East Hastings/ Powel Street corridor as far as Clark drive to the east and Gore Avenue to the West. The SBIA seeks to revitalise commercial enterprises and the area through a range of activities including providing security, cleaning, marketing and organisational support. SBIA is also one of the few BIAs in Canada that supports the position of a Sustainability coordinator whose responsibilities involve promoting

sustainability in business operations and creating a Green Zone for businesses (through seed funding through the City of Vancouver and Vancity).

The aim of this Green Zone is to foster a sense of community in the Strathcona area through bringing together businesses and residents. The Green Zone initiative raises awareness of environmental issues and promotes the concept of sustainability by highlighting key concepts such as GHG reductions, energy conservation, efficiency, resource sharing and waste reduction. Part of this initiative involved the development of the Resource Park and Materials exchange.



Picture 13: Logo of Strathcona Business Improvement Association's Green Zone project showing pictures from its Resource Park.

This materials exchange is a similar concept to RCBCs discussed earlier in so far as it provides a platform which allows businesses in the area to divert materials, which would otherwise go to landfill, to a new purpose. The materials exchange links donors to recipients and actively facilitates the exchanges between concerned parties. However the Materials exchange is limited by its storage capacity. Within the overall context of the Resource Park the Materials Exchange takes up just of two Eight by Ten ft. sheds. This limited storage however is a product of limitations placed on the site by over-stringent building and health and safety regulations.

#### 9.42: Key findings

- The Resource Park and Materials Exchange was developed after Receiving a \$48,000 grant from Vancity's Envirofund<sup>24</sup> project as well as a \$15,000 grant from the City of Vancouver. Roughly \$60,000 is therefore necessary to establish similar projects at other BIAs around Vancouver.
- There are currently 34 Exchange members participating in the project, carrying out 74 exchanges between September 2010 and June 2011.
- Altogether 4,5 tonnes of waste have been diverted within the first year of operation.
- Organisational capacity needs to be developed, but a lack of funding makes this difficult. BIAs are ultimately responsible to their Businesses and time diverted to Materials exchange needs to be justified.
- The SBIA is willing to provide operational advice and outreach to other BIAs to promote the Resource Park concept, however it needs additional funding to make it possible.
- SBIA has designed its Materials Exchange and Resource Park to be as replicable as possible. A checklist approach however cannot be used when implementing the project within other neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood assessments by individual BIAs must be conducted to determine the applicability as well as the shapes that the projects should take within each new context.

#### 9.43: Challenges

One of the main challenges faced by SBIA's Materials Exchange was overcoming the complicated health and safety as well as building regulations associated with building the Resource depot. Small, expensive Cedar sheds (of dimensions Eight by Ten feet) had to be constructed in order to prevent them from triggering building codes – under 100 sq. ft. and the buildings are considered as auxiliary structures and so are not subject to stringent regulation. The original plan had been to reuse shipping containers, which were readily available in the area, however a health and safety assessment by the City determine that these containers had to be retrofitted to meet building standards, as Joji Kumagai Executive Director of SBIA explains:

*"[Our] original plan...was to just use old shipping containers to store things in. But the City wanted to us to put in lighting, insulation, fire-proofing and windows – refurbishing a container like that would cost something like \$15,000 and we were working with a budget of just \$60,000 so it was unfeasible" he goes on ". So we built them out of cedar – but the irony is that we had to consume a lot of new resources to build those structures when we could have reused old shipping containers for free"*

Such building by-laws thus prevented SBIA not only from increasing its storage capacity, but also meant that potentially reusable containers could not be used.

Another key challenge other BIAs should consider, according to Joji Kumagai and Meg O'Shea (Sustainability Coordinator) of SBIA, is the amount of time and energy that needs to be put into making this type of project a reality. There are often numerous challenges to overcome which take time and can easily lead to failure. As Joji says:

<sup>24</sup>See: <https://www.vancity.com/AboutVancity/InvestingInCommunities/Grants/enviroFund/>

*“Projects like this require dedicated staff to identify problems and allow things to happen naturally, [you need to] allow mistakes to be made. It’s not a matter of a checklist of things to be done – sometimes it’s about adapting to change and being prepared to let the project evolve and run where it wants to run”*

Meg continues:

*“One of the main problems is that this job of running the Exchange is pretty time consuming, it’s a very hands on process at the moment which requires a lot of running around. But we have to look to focus on the average business when we’re promoting this concept.”*

The Exchanges thus need dedicated staff and hence must invest time and energy in developing organisational and administrative capacity. Organisers need to have the energy and expertise to adapt to challenges and develop effective strategies to overcome the inevitable barriers which present themselves during the implementation phase. The hands-on approach which the current system requires however does create its problems, in terms of hours invested in the system, as Meg explains:

*“Our online platform is an active exchange – but to set up just a single exchange requires a lot of work – it took 16 emails to set up one exchange, and we don’t even see the items that are being exchanged. We don’t have the staff or funding to keep the site open 24 hours a day, you can’t just drop off stuff here. But we don’t want something like Restore where you can drop off things and pick up things – to create a reuse bank – the fact is that they pick up a lot of junk”*

Strathcona’s BIA has had time to iron out most of the issues it faced in implementing the Materials Exchange. It thus offers important insights into the problems other BIAs will face in developing their own Exchanges and Resource Parks and it can then act to champion the Reuse cause and advise other groups in the future.

#### 9.44: Recommendations

One of the main insights that SBIA offers us is the point that legislation needs to be relaxed when it comes to developing a Reuse Park. The current building codes present difficult challenges for organisations trying to develop innovative reuse strategies. Such laws serve only to stifle innovation and discourage the growth of Reuse in Vancouver. A more flexible of adaptable legislative framework needs to be developed in order to provide a more Reuse-friendly means of developing Resource Parks. As Joji says:

*“One way in which the City could help us would be to relax the by-laws on these kind of projects and make them much more adaptable so that projects like this can happen. If it wasn’t for people here just being very determined this wouldn’t have happened at all”*

Another key recommendation from this analysis of Strathcona’s BIA is to provide the SBIA with further funding to help promote, educate and advise other BIAs in Vancouver in developing Resource Parks. SBIA has already developed a tool-kit for replicating its Materials exchange model and so greater promotion from the City will allow it to be considered more widely. The BIAs possess the organisational and infrastructural tools to develop the Reuse capacity in the city. Their links to local businesses and their role in

community engagement also provide the on-the-ground experience and networks necessary for promoting Reuse as a concept. Joji recognises the potential that BIAs can play in promoting Reuse when he says:

*“The BIAs are a good medium to use just in terms of providing organisational capacity and support for developing it. You need that kind of capacity to see a project like this through”*

## 10.0: Detailed Recommendations

### 10.1: Keys to success – What can other Cities teach us?

Other cities have a lot to teach us with regards to how best to develop Vancouver's Reuse infrastructure. From the models outlined it can be seen that Reuse as a concept has proven to be of great benefit in terms of environmental stewardship, social-welfare and economic development. In New York and London especially the concept of the Reuse network has brought about substantial reductions in waste going to landfill (with ambitious targets of around 1 million items being diverted from landfill by 2015 in London). Reuse business provide employment to some 42,000 people throughout Europe and provide volunteering opportunities for 200,000 more. London's Reuse Network will directly employ 220 individuals and provide volunteer work for 250 others when it is fully developed. The social missions of many of the network members demonstrate that the Reuse sector is not just about being environmentally conscious, but it fulfills a number of other mandates and serves a larger goal of promoting social justice and equality in society. In London alone the Network of enterprises provide affordable commodities for 2 million disadvantaged Londoners. These figures alone provide compelling evidence why Reuse should be supported in Vancouver – but the question is: do we need our own Reuse network?

### 10.2: A model Reuse City: Blended models.

If Vancouver does decide to pursue Reuse as an option towards meeting its Zero Waste objective, then the best fit model for the City would be a blend New York's and London's models. The City should develop a Materials Exchange similar to that which New York already possesses.

The best immediate course of action is to promote the existing infrastructure developed by *Iwastenot* and the Recycling Council of BC. The cost of developing an internet infrastructure from scratch would be far too expensive for the City (roughly of the order of \$250,000 - \$500,000 per annum) – promoting the RCBC Vancouver Reuses site is substantially more cost effective at around \$15,000 per year (mainly for maintenance and advertising costs). Through personalising the site communities of re-users can be created, transforming the site into a much more versatile tool. This personalisation can take the form of:

1. Providing a forum for discussion and disseminating news and advice on reuse.
2. Providing information on upcoming events within the city.
3. Allowing members to begin their own events such as garage sales.
4. Providing a platform through which Reuse businesses can advertise.
5. Providing links to Reuse businesses to users.
6. Developing a separate Reuse Business member area to give networking opportunities for Reuse enterprises who wish to create collaborations and exploit cross advertising potentials.

The City of Vancouver can learn from the data collection and research tools that New York City College and the Bureau of Waste management have already developed. The tools will allow for better monitoring of waste being produced by businesses and give a better understanding of the success of many Reuse businesses. With the extensive outreach and



educational programs undertaken by New York such skills in data recording can be taught to Reuse workers here. The overall focus on education, development of quality assurance practices as well as certification for Reuse businesses is something which would greatly benefit enterprises here in Vancouver.

New York's strategy of networking commercial carriers and transportation with Reuse businesses to utilise spare capacities is something which may prove useful here in Vancouver. A system of sharing services with commercial enterprises will greatly reduce fuel costs for Reuse businesses and through providing tax benefits to commercial carriers it becomes cost effective for these businesses as well. As for developing resource hubs, fleets of reuse vehicles and creating Reuse outlets – this is a needed infrastructural development, however it requires a large capital investment on the part of the city (of the order of \$1 million over 5 years), nevertheless as London has shown, the benefits in developing such infrastructure outweigh the initial costs.

The London model provides exciting opportunities in terms of creating funding structures which promote growth in Reuse enterprises. The 50-50 strategy employed in the LRN in which funding is allocated 50% through a low interest loan and 50% through a government grant allows for businesses to expand and at the same time provides incentives to use money efficiently as capital still needs to be paid back. Many businesses in Vancouver currently cannot afford loans from banks for expansion, so this funding structure would move towards overcoming their barriers to growth. Capital however must be allocated according to need, on a proposal-by-proposal basis and according to a Development plan to ensure that funds are used effectively. Operational support and advice needs also to be given to Reuse businesses who often struggle after the initial start-up phase.

Affordable warehousing and retail spaces should be provided by the City, something that has already been done in London. Such spaces should be provided on a competitive basis, through submission of business proposals as to how the space will be used. Such spaces should be used to incubate Reuse organisations, allowing them to increase stock and capital to become self-sufficient, they however should not be used as a permanent solution to Reuse organisation's space problem. Instead spaces should be leased out on a 6month basis and cycled round to keep organisations dynamic and competitive, allowing them to exploit the added capacity to the best of their abilities.

The task of administering a Reuse Network can be handled by existing organisations, through allocating more funding to organisations such as BIAs or the RCBC. Forming a separate limited company as with London Reuse Limited is not necessary as the infrastructure already exists. The role of the City is mainly as a facilitator, providing space, infrastructure, tax-incentives and policy provisions to support Reuse, rather than as an overseer of the network (A limited company could be formed as with LRN, from which city staff will provide guidance and recommendations via a board of directors). A website will need to be developed to promote the concept to a wider public, acting as a central node through which Reuse businesses can promote themselves. Dedicated training programs in reuse however will take time to develop – utilising experts currently within the New York network is the best option, either through teleconferencing or through inviting leaders and professionals from the network to run courses within the City.

### 10.3: Keys to Success - What can Reuse business teach us?

Reuse businesses have already given us a sense of what challenges exist within the sector as a whole. They provide an understanding of the very real and practical problems faced in the day to day operations of buying and selling Reused goods. From these practical insights this report has understood the challenges which are currently being faced, and has attempted to develop recommendations based upon the specific problems faced in Vancouver today. In pursuing this study further however a greater quantity of Reuse businesses need to be surveyed in order to establish statistically valid conclusions. What this report has given is simply a sense of the problems and not an exhaustive description of them.

### 10.4: The Next Steps: Recommendations

If promoting Reuse is to prove a viable method of reaching our Greenest City 2020 Zero Waste goals then the task of building a network must begin as soon as possible. Richard Featherstone at the London Reuse Network says that:

*“We are about 2 years into a 7 year development plan. This is not unusual. We learnt that in Brussels and other countries on the European continent that it takes at least 5 years to build and introduce a re-use infrastructure into a major city”*

If Reuse infrastructure is to be built then it will take at least 5 years for it to be established and begin to see noticeable results. Building capacity for Reuse in the form of resource hubs or redistribution points and retail outlets will undoubtedly benefit Vancouver’s Reuse enterprises and stimulate many other enterprises into “Greening” and reassessing their Reuse-policies, but in order to begin thinking about such investments a larger assessment needs to be undertaken.

#### **The next steps involves:**

1. First of all undertaking a quantitative analysis of Reuse enterprises in Vancouver, sampling at least 25% of businesses (roughly 50 businesses) across all Reuse categories. This survey should seek to collect economic data on the operating costs, profitability and impact of the Reuse as a sector on the Vancouver economy.
2. Local businesses not within the Reuse sector also need to be assessed to determine the degree of wastage and the potential and willingness for partnerships within the Reuse sector.
3. A final survey aimed at the General public will also be required to determine the demand for reused commodities, and the public perception of the field.
4. Once this initial surveying has been accomplished advice should be sought from experts at London, Brussels and New York.
5. Participant observation should be undertaken in New York to learn from experts within the field and also to get an in-depth understanding of what a Reuse network looks like and functions in practice.
6. Following this, pilot programs can be launched within Business Improvement Areas to assess the impact of developing reuse. These studies could for example provide selected Reuse businesses in a given area with funding and storage space and assess the growth of the business over a year.

But failing this, this report has a number of other, more immediate recommendations:

- The City can for example promote the Recycling Council of BC's Materials exchange program to facilitate peer-to-peer transfers of Reused items via the website [www.vancouverreuses.ca](http://www.vancouverreuses.ca). Through simply advertising the existence of the service through the City's website or printed on utility bills, as is the case for the City of Surrey, it is possible to increase Reuse exchanges on the site by a factor of ten.
- The City can support its own Reuse initiative in the City Stores at Manitoba road through providing funding of the order of \$50,000 per year. This would provide a full time position for a "Reuse worker" who will be trained in continuing to facilitate Reuse within and between City departments. This post will involve maintaining the current level of sales of Reused goods as well as potentially expanding the operation to exploit more online capabilities through for example Craigslist.
- A promotional campaign can help make the City Store's Reuse program more widely known by individual departments in the City.
- Strathcona's model for Reuse can easily be developed and exported. Strathcona is able to provide organisation support and advice on implementation, if greater funding is provided on the part of the City. SBIA's model for a Resource Park and Materials Exchange requires \$60,000 of seed funding to establish, however providing a more efficient depositing system and distribution need to be developed within Resource parks.

More medium term recommendations can be divided into several categories:

#### **Reclassification and Promotion**

- Currently many Reuse organisations are finding it difficult to brand themselves as being "Green" as a result of confusion about the current definition and an uncertainty as to where the category of Reuse falls within that definition. The City should support the classification of workers within Reuse businesses within the "Green jobs" category to provide them with new opportunities for branding.
- Promoting Reuse through outreach and educational programs to the general public will encourage individuals to donate more items. An increase in quality donations will have the effect of providing a higher value Reuse market which is more likely to attract customers to Reuse outlets.
- Local businesses outside of Reuse need to be made aware of the potential for donating surplus stock and supporting Reuse enterprises.
- Reuse workers also can be provided with instructional workshops in a similar way to New York, run by the City in which experts in Reuse or belonging to successful Reuse firms can be invited to provide advice and skills for running and working within a successful Reuse enterprise. Such workshops will provide individuals with exportable skills and give workers opportunities to develop social and professional networks within the field.

In the long term a number of other strategies can be implemented:

#### **Infrastructural developments**

- Infrastructure needs to be developed to help build up Reuse Capacity within the city. Underutilised spaces owned by the City need to be made available for the

purpose of storing Reused items held by businesses in need. Resource hubs should be created, similar to the Vancouver City stores, to allow potentially Reusable items to be stored, sorted and redistributed according to Reuse business involved. Examples of such hubs can be taken from London where infrastructural capacity is already being developed.

- The potential for the excess storage capacity at the City stores to be exploited can be explored through opening up the City stores to Reuse organisations as alternative warehousing space. Problems of security, access and liabilities of course will need to be addressed if this recommendation is to be explored.
- Business partnerships should also be created which allow Reuse organisations to share warehousing space with other businesses who have excess storage capacity. Many reuse experts talked to suggest that the businesses involved could be provided with tax incentives or rent-relief if they are based on City-owned property, allowing both organisations to benefit from the symbiosis.

### **Policy and taxation tools**

- Affordable spaces in the city are the number one problem for businesses in general. This report recommends rent reductions for Reuse organisations and the allocation of City-owned spaces on the basis of need.
- Relax by-laws and building codes as well as health and safety regulation to promote the development of Resource Parks, as was discussed in the Strathcona BIA example.
- A system of quality control and best-practice principles for businesses within Reuse needs to be created through developing a Certification program. This will develop consumer confidence and help legitimate many businesses. The certification process will help keep track of the growth of the Reuse sector and provide incentives for businesses to improve their services.

### *10.5: Conclusion: Does Vancouver need a Reuse Network?*

The simple answer to this question is: YES. A Reuse network appears to be the most cost effective way of reducing waste going to landfill and meeting a range of Greenest City goals. The initial heavy capital investment will yield substantial returns year on year after the infrastructure has been developed. Such infrastructure investments will create a positive net effect, raising public awareness, attracting new members and development amidst member organisations. One large project this report argues will benefit from greater coordination between smaller projects and between different levels of organisation. Efficiency savings will be made in the long run through organisations being conscious of working towards similar goals within a larger structural framework.

There are two main approaches “Reuse Lite” and “Reuse Max”.

#### **Reuse Lite**

The first model, Reuse Lite, involves numerous small capital investments in small scale projects throughout the city allocated on a project by project basis. Such a project may take the form of sponsoring Strathcona’s Resource Park – this small capital investment of \$60,000 will yield a net return of 4-10 tons of materials diverted after one year of operation.

The operation can then be replicated amidst the other BIAs. Small investments in existing communications infrastructure in the form of the RCBC Vancouver Reuses site will promote the concept of Reuse and allow communities of Reuse to develop organically.

**Benefits:**

- Inexpensive – low capital investments.
- Infrastructure already present just requires expansion.
- Administrative burden taken off municipal government.
- Concept already tried and tested.
- Easily exported.
- Expertise available from SBIA.

**Challenges:**

- Impact Low – Tonnage of waste diverted remains low.
- Impact on Public awareness will also remain low.
- Growth in Reuse as a sector will be slow.
- No funding is provided to developing Reuse organisations.
- Infrastructure will still remain undeveloped; excess warehousing capacity will remain undeveloped.
- Reuse businesses will still lack platforms to form relationships and advertise themselves.
- Reuse will remain an informal economy.

**Reuse Max**

We can compare this with London's Reuse Max, which required a large capital expenditure of \$3 million in the first two years (\$13 million in all). Vancouver will need to spend \$1 million (over 5 years) for a like-to-like investment per head of population, when this number is scaled back to match the population differences between London and Vancouver.

**Benefits:**

- Large capital investments will rapidly improve the infrastructure of Reuse benefitting all Reuse enterprises in the city. The magnitude of such improvements will lead to the exploitation of economies of scale.
- Development of Reuse as a concept will be accelerated.
- The scale of investment will attract new businesses into Reuse.
- Funding will incubate new Reuse enterprises, enhancing the sector as a whole.
- Public engagement and awareness will be increased significantly.
- Will greatly facilitate the formation of Reuse communities, can instantiate a new culture of Reuse and responsible consumption.
- Businesses will be provided with platforms to network, advertise and create synergies with other businesses.

**Challenges:**

- Requires large capital investment of \$1 million
- Demands greater intervention on the part of the City.
- Requires formalising of a currently informal network.

- Administrative machinery needs to be developed.
- Feasibility studies need to be carried out.

If the City is serious about reducing waste and GHGs as well as hitting its lighter Footprint Targets then it should consider the development of a Reuse Network. The Reuse network concept creates a benefit several orders of magnitude above anything that is currently being undertaken in Vancouver. As Richard Featherstone from the LRN told me:

*“We decided from the beginning that the way to develop re-use was not to advocate ‘more of the same’. We had to give the re-use sector a make-over. We would do this by restructuring the re-use activities from every member project working independently into an integrated structure for specialising in collections/processing/redistribution”*

If Vancouver wants to be a leader then *more of the same* will not work – something just as radical as the London and New York Reuse networks must be considered.

## 11.0: Appendix

### 11.1: Interview questions for Reuse organisations template

#### **Reuse Businesses in Vancouver Survey for City of Vancouver**

**Introduction:** My name is Lorenzo Lane and I'm a graduate student in Linguistic Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. I'm currently working in conjunction with the City of Vancouver's Sustainability department as part of Vancouver's Greenest City 2020 sustainable city initiative.

Overall the Greenest City initiative aims to promote green economic development, reduce carbon emissions and waste and make Vancouver one of the World's most sustainable cities. I am exploring the extent and growth of the secondhand reuse economy in Vancouver.

I hope that by speaking to you I can gain some insight into how your business is developing, the challenges and opportunities you have encountered and your own personal perspectives on the Secondhand economy. I'll be trying to find out what trends you have observed in Vancouver's second-hand economy in general and also specifically in the case of your own business, in order to build a picture of what the secondhand economy actually looks like in Vancouver.

**Anonymity and confidentiality:** All information in this interview will of course be held in the strictest of confidence. No names will be used in the report, unless specifically requested by you, the interviewee. If a specific quote is sought it will be attributed to the particular organization you belong to after express permission has been given by you on behalf of the organization.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this project is voluntary; as such you are free to refuse to answer any question you do not wish to. The interview can also be terminated at any time and any information you have provided will be deleted upon your instruction.

**Freedom of information:** All data collected is fully publically accessible on demand at City Hall in Vancouver.

**Interviewer Contact details:** If you have any further questions or concerns feel free to contact me at the following:

Email: [Lorenzo.lane@vancouver.ca](mailto:Lorenzo.lane@vancouver.ca)

Tel: (604)8716993

**Supervisory team:** If you have any concerns regarding the interview process please contact my supervisors for this project:

Amy Fournier: T: 604.871.6814 | [amy.fournier@vancouver.ca](mailto:amy.fournier@vancouver.ca)

Monica Kosmak T: 604-829-4351 | [monica.kosmak@vancouver.ca](mailto:monica.kosmak@vancouver.ca)

#### **Background**

**Name of Business:**

**Interviewee:**

1. How long has this business/organization been in operation?
2. Which of the following best describes the structure of your organization? ( not-for-profit, registered charity, social enterprise, Coop, proprietorship)

3. How many people do you employ?
4. Do you depend on volunteers? What proportion of your “workforce” is volunteer time? 0-25%, 26%-50%, 51-75%, 75%,100%
5. How do you source the items that you sell within your store?
6. Are you able to sell all of your stock or do you need to dispose of certain unsold items? What types of items are typically discarded? How are they disposed of? What proportion of your stock do you typically need to dispose of? (0-20, 21-40, 40-60,60-80, 80-100%)
7. How do you reach your customers?
8. Are you interested in expanding your customer base? If so, what type of potential customers would you like to target?

Focused questions:

9. How has internet shopping impacted your business? (Is it affecting your organization’s ability to compete with online businesses?)
10. Have you considered listing your inventory online? Or allowing people to make purchases from your store online? If not, why not?
11. Are you interested in potentially collaborating with other businesses to develop and manage an online shopping or browsing platform?
12. How are other buy and sell online platforms such as Cragislist, Etsy and kijiji impacting your business? (In terms of Online inventory/ ability to complete transactions online)
13. Are such classified advertisement websites competing against your business or are you using these platforms?
14. Is your outlook for growth for the next 5 years positive or negative?
15. If you were considering expanding what are the challenges and opportunities you face?
16. Do you see yourself as a green business? If so why, if not why not?
17. Do you advertise as a Green business?
18. What are some of the specific challenges you face as a secondhand dealer at the moment? (What scares you?)
19. What are you proud of?
20. What are some of the things that have helped you succeed?
21. Do other local secondhand stores support one another? Is there some kind of informal network/ community of secondhand stores already in Vancouver?
22. Have you seen anything in other cities in terms of opportunities or support networks for secondhand businesses that you’d like to see developed here in Vancouver?
23. In London in the United Kingdom a network called the reuse network exists which tries to link businesses, charity shops, volunteers and customers together. Would participating in a network like this be of interest to you?
24. Who else should we be talking to? Are there any champions or leaders in the secondhand economy in Vancouver that we should be talking to? Or people you know who have faced particular challenges?

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<sup>i</sup> Arjun Appadurai (1988) once wrote that things, like people can have social lives. Things circulate within social networks, they change hands and are put to new uses. Things are never simply static – they have charm, character and histories. But often the significance of things gets lost or else



forgotten as the thing is no longer considered of value by the consumer. The focus on consumption transforms the good into a disposable commodity whose value is solely determined by the initial consumer. When the consumer thus determines that the commodity no longer possesses value, it is reclassified as waste and hence disposed of.

But what if we were to reimagine the life of a thing – not as something which belongs to one person alone, but whose value is determined by a wider social network. What if the thing was not something that could be used up and consumed, but something that could be re-used and re-valued by other people? In short what if the purchased thing no longer belonged to a consumer, but instead was simply a thing utilised by a User? Such a reconceptualization of commodities would of course require an ideological shift from a consumer-based to a user-centric society. Although this seems like a far flung idea it is not beyond the realms of possibility. If we are to become stewards of the environment, then just such a reconceptualization is necessary.

## 11.2: Resources

<sup>ii</sup> See news update on LCRN.org website:

<http://www.lcrn.org.uk/sites/lcrn.org.uk/files/bookFiles/NEWS - London Re-use Network exceeds targets again o.doc>

### **Reuse websites**

<http://londonreuse.org/>

<http://www.lcrn.org.uk/>

<http://www.lwarb.gov.uk/>

<http://www.wrap.org.uk/>

<http://www.rreuse.org/t3/>

<http://www.reusenyc.info/resources>

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/stuffex/html/home/home.shtml>

<http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/>

<http://www.oecd.org/>

### **Literature Resources**

[www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Energy\\_Resources\\_Materials/Environment/A\\_new\\_era\\_for\\_commodities\\_2887](http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Energy_Resources_Materials/Environment/A_new_era_for_commodities_2887)

[www.mckinseyquarterly.com/The\\_second\\_economy\\_2853](http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/The_second_economy_2853).

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[www.chinaenvironmentallaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/circular-economy-law-cn-en-final.pdf](http://www.chinaenvironmentallaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/circular-economy-law-cn-en-final.pdf).

[www.sita.co.uk/downloads/SITAUK-nmw-vision-web.pdf](http://www.sita.co.uk/downloads/SITAUK-nmw-vision-web.pdf).

<http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/circular-economy>