



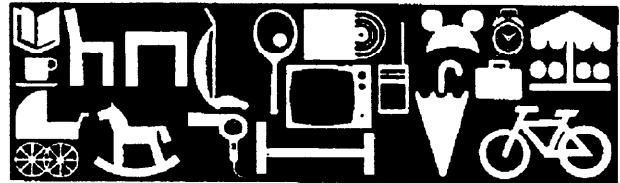
Swap Shops – Cost-Effective Residential Reuse

FACT SHEET

Purpose and Benefits of Swap Shops

Swap shops are set up to keep reusable materials out of the landfill. At a Swap Shop, citizens can leave items that they no longer need but which still have a useful life. Donated items can then be reused by others. Furniture, clothes, books, toys, and many other items can be “exchanged” at a swap shop rather than disposed in a landfill. Swap shops are especially appropriate at staffed collection centers. Many areas exchange materials on an informal basis, but an organized shed that an attendant maintains allows significantly greater diversion of reusable materials in a manner that protects public health and safety.

Reuse through swap shops provides one of the most cost-effective ways communities can reduce materials that are landfilled. For a small investment, a community can build a shed that provides years of reuse opportunities that are not dependent on fluctuating recycling markets. As citizens realize a direct, local benefit, swap shops are frequently one of the most popular components of a solid waste program.



Swap Shop Designs

Swap shops are generally three-sided sheds with a roof. Depending on a community’s need and space constraints, dimensions may range from 100 to 450 square feet. The shops can be framed out of wood or purchased as a prefabricated metal unit. They generally sit on a concrete pad and are equipped with shelves and hooks to organize materials. There is plenty of room for creativity and community input to help design a shed.

Use and Maintenance

Most swap shops operate on a first-come, first-serve basis. Swap shops work best at staffed collection centers because the attendant can help keep the shed neat and organized. Unusable materials should be discarded. If quality materials remain longer than a given amount of time, perhaps two weeks, local PTA thrift shops or missions can be encouraged to collect them. A swap shop may also contain an exchange board where people can post notices of items they have for exchange but do not want to transport.

Sample Budget

Below is a possible budget range to develop a swap shop:

Item	Estimated Cost
Prefabricated structure	\$1,500- \$3,000
Concrete pad	\$600-\$1,200
Shelving	\$500
Signs, bulletin board, and durable supplies	\$500 - \$900
Total estimated cost	\$3,100 - \$5,600

Addition Information

The following North Carolina communities have swap shops in place:

Chatham County	Lynn Weller, (919) 542-8239
Orange Community Recycling	Michelle Minstrell, (919) 968-2788
Scotland County	Jim Blackwell, (910) 277-2407

Case Study: Chatham County, North Carolina

Chatham County has installed ten swap shops at its collection centers. The shops are three-sided, roofed shelters outfitted with several racks for clothes, shelves, a bulletin board, and an area for toys and small appliances. Collection center staff monitor donated items; potentially hazardous items such as electrical appliances, gas equipment, paint, or chemicals are stored in the staff building and then transferred to the PTA Thrift Store. Unusable items are discarded. The recycling staff cleans out the swap shops every two weeks. If quality materials remain longer than two weeks, the local PTA Thrift Store or a local mission is welcome to collect the materials.

The total amount of material diverted has not been quantified; however, the staff removes a 14-foot trailer of clothes every two months from one of the more active sites. The staff estimates that 60 percent of the items that come into the swap shop is reused by local citizens, and only 10 percent has to be discarded. The remaining 30 percent is diverted to other outlets for reuse. The county has also included language in its county solid waste ordinance to support swap shops.

Chatham County offers the follow advice to other local governments with swap shops:

- Install racks and shelves to organize items.
- Encourage site attendants to think of the sheds as retail stores and to display items so they can be clearly seen. Remove unclaimed items every two weeks.
- Sweep floor regularly.
- Re-bag unclaimed clothing for charitable organizations.
- Consider putting a limit on the number of items individuals can take per day; it is five per day in Chatham. This approach limits the incentive for people to collect items for resale in flea markets or thrift stores.



The North Carolina Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and training on methods to eliminate, reduce, or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Telephone DPPEA at (919) 715-6500 or 800-763-0136 or e-mail nowaste@owr.ehnr.state.nc.us for assistance with issues in this Fact Sheet or any of your waste reduction concerns.

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