

Swap Introduction



Why Host a Swap Event?

Waste Management in Multi-Residential Buildings

The City of Toronto manages almost 1,000,000 tonnes of residential and non-residential waste each year! Multi-residential buildings—comprising condos and apartments—divert less than 30% of their waste, compared to single-family homes that divert more than 60% of their waste. With almost 50% of Toronto residents living in multi-residential units, improving their waste diversion performance is critical to meeting the city’s waste diversion goals.¹



What is a Swap Event?

Swap events are a fun way for people to get together and bring their gently used clothing or small household items that they no longer want or need and swap them for ‘new’. These social functions are becoming increasingly popular in communities in Toronto and across Canada to foster community engagement, reduce material lost to landfill, and help buildings save on waste disposal costs. Swap events can take place in building lobbies, common areas, or recreation rooms of multi-residential buildings. Nearby community centres, schools, and workplaces are also great event spaces if your building cannot accommodate a swap event.

There are typical guidelines for organizing a swap (as outlined in the Swap It Toolkit Step-by-Step Guide), however, swap events are flexible and can be adapted to best suit your building and event space.

Differences Between Swap and Donation

The purpose of a swap event is to provide an opportunity to exchange gently used clothing or items that are in good condition for someone else’s. This is a great example of reuse, the second R in the 3Rs hierarchy of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Conversely, when you donate material to a charity you can likely include all kinds of things that may not seem to have a useful second life for someone else, including damaged or heavily worn clothing, and even single shoes. It’s important to check with the charity you intend to donate to regarding the materials they accept. Charity collectors and retail stores often resell useable material to generate funds, and material that cannot be resold is sent to facilities that have the capability to recycle or repurpose them. For example, textiles that cannot be reworn can be downcycled into industrial rag or shredded and turned into insulation. Whether you swap or donate your items, it’s important that they stay out of the waste stream and landfills.

¹ City of Toronto, Tenant Engagement Guide: Increasing Multi-Residential Waste Diversion

Swap Events: The Benefits

Your Community

Swapping is a great way to promote and practice the 3Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle! These events also help your community become more sustainable:

- **Social:** Brings people together and allows residents to meet their neighbours; and offers low cost options for gently used items for everyone.
- **Environmental:** Gives clothing and other products second lives; reduces the environmental impacts involved in making new items; and avoids the impacts and costs of disposal.
- **Economical:** Clothing swaps are a fantastic way for residents to find new and unique items at no or low cost.



Your Building

Multi-residential buildings in Toronto are responsible for the costs associated with their waste removal. Property owners of multi-residential buildings pay a fee based on how much waste the building generates and the number of units in the building. There is no fee for Blue Bin recycling and Green Bin organics collection. Buildings that reduce waste by diverting more material reduce their solid waste fees. By removing textile waste from your buildings waste stream, you can reduce the costs associated with your waste collection. To see how your waste costs are calculated see the [City of Toronto's Fees, Set Out & Bins for Buildings](#).

To help reduce waste generated in your building you can also contact the city at swmsupport@toronto.ca for posters, stickers, lobby displays, kitchen catchers, recycling bags, presentations, site visits, and support.

My building doesn't receive City of Toronto collection services

Check with your service provider to see how you are billed. Usually private service provides charge multi-residential buildings for the number of pickups and/or the amount of material they remove. If this is the case removing wearable clothing could reduce disposal costs.

The Environment

Textiles Waste: The Issue

The average person throws away 37 kilograms of textiles each year, and 95% of which can be reused or recycled. Globally, textiles waste has increased dramatically due to the rise in clothing consumption and production.

We are buying more clothes than ever, wearing them only a few times, and then discarding them without giving them a chance at a second life. It takes 2,650 litres of water to produce just one cotton t-shirt, a frightening number when you realize the average Canadian buys 70 new items of clothing every year!¹

The Importance of Reuse

Reuse extends the useful life of the things we use in our daily lives, including our clothing. It also increases the value of the materials, prolongs its life to avoid producing new material, and delays its eventual end of life disposal.

Swapping items that are still in good condition is just one way we can contribute to advancing a circular economy, which keeps resources in use for as long as possible. Swapping extends product and textile lifecycles, offers a low or no cost option for users, and diverts more materials from disposal. These factors reduce the impacts associated with energy, land, and water used to make new items.



1 [Value Village](#)

Health and Safety

At an event where people are gathering to exchange items it is important to keep health and safety in mind. A major concern in multi-residential buildings is the spread of pests such as bed bugs. By putting proper measures in place you can ensure that pests and germs are not spread throughout your community:

- Communicate to swap attendees that all materials must be cleaned before bringing them to the swap.
- Encourage attendees to clean their 'new' items before use.
- Consider not accepting items that are more prone to pests, such as linens and upholstered furniture.
- Thoroughly inspect items brought to the swap to make sure nothing is soiled or in unsuitable condition.

Managing Leftover Materials

There will likely be remaining items after your swap event is over. Leftover items can find new life somewhere else by donating them to a local charity, bringing them to a thrift/ secondhand store, or posting them on a reuse site. The Swap It Toolkit Step-by-Step Guide provides organizers a list of common options for reusing materials.