

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Section 4

CLOSING THE LOOP

Even if your shopping center is already collecting recyclables, there is much more you and your tenants can do to benefit the environment. Recycling involves more than simply collecting materials—recyclables must be used again as raw materials in new products. Opportunities abound for integrating recycled-content products into shopping center and retail store construction, renovation, landscaping, maintenance, and operations.

Using recycled products not only saves landfill space by diverting raw materials from solid waste, but also reduces mining and processing of natural resources, reducing energy use and environmental impacts. At the same time, buying recycled products helps foster local and regional recycling businesses and manufacturing plants, helping to create and retain jobs. A healthier economy means more business for the retail industry. Furthermore, you do not have to sacrifice product integrity or pay premiums to buy recycled-content items. Buying recycled simply means adding environmental considerations to purchasing decisions.

Generally, recycled products are made from materials that otherwise would be discarded. In addition to “postconsumer” material recovered from consumers, recycled products can also contain “preconsumer” materials generated by manufacturers, distributors, and converters, such as trimmings, damaged or obsolete inventory, and overruns.

Experience shows that it is best to start with the most widely-available recycled items to achieve early suc-

cess. For example, if you are renovating the dining area of your food court, consider purchasing recycled-content “plastic lumber” tables and chairs. Renovating the parking lot? Specify cement and concrete containing fly ash (a recovered material generated in coal burning electric utility plants) if it is locally available. Or call the department of transportation to find a local source for recycled asphalt. Mulching the shopping center's landscaping? Call the city or county recycling office to find locally-produced mulch or compost. Re-carpeting your business office? Purchase recycled-content carpeting. Contracting for a new roof? Specify recycled-content roofing materials; they are readily available nationwide.

Examine the shopping center's existing purchasing specifications and policies. Let your suppliers know you want to buy recycled. Refer to the list of recycled-content products in [Appendix B](#) as a guide and use it to help direct your buy-recycled activities.

Visit EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG) searchable supplier database at www.epa.gov/cpg (select the “Supplier Database” button) to find recycled product manufacturers and distributors.

Tenants, employees, and customers alike will appreciate knowing that the materials they are sorting and recycling at home and on the job are being put to good use. Be sure to inform them about the shopping center's buy-recycled activities. Closing the recycling loop is something that people intuitively appreciate.

