

Berkeley Transfer Station and Recycling Center

What is It?

Berkeley's publicly-owned Transfer Station and Recycling Center provides our residents and businesses with convenient, reliable, and affordable access to recycling, composting, and proper disposal. This key green infrastructure site prepares many types of discarded products and packaging for reuse or shipment to appropriate processing facilities.

Need for Updating

The transfer station was built more than 30 years ago by the Berkeley Public Works Department, first to handle Berkeley's trash, and then to handle curbside recyclables (e.g., glass/metal/plastic containers; newspaper; cardboard; etc.), and then yard trimmings and food scraps for composting, construction and demolition materials for recycling, plus other items. The facility needs updating to maintain a safe and efficient facility for the public and its workers, and to meet current and future needs.

The Berkeley Transfer Station/Recycling Center is a Tremendous Public Asset

1. Climate Change Response: The facility is the City's single most vital property for making meaningful differences in resource consumption and reduction in greenhouse gas generation.
2. Centerpiece of Local Environmental Linkages: Hub for addressing important local and global issues, including climate change, local economic development, sustainability and community resiliency.
3. Waste Reduction and Recycling (Resource Conservation): Accepts reusable, recyclable and compostable materials.
4. Local Revenue and Cost Savings: No other City facility generates as much revenue as the transfer station. The facility generates revenue for the City from facility usage fees ("gate or tip fees") and from selling recyclables.. Through in-house operations, the City avoids paying the profit margin any private company would charge to perform the same functions, and keeps those funds for use within our community instead of flowing to distant corporate shareholders.
5. City Jobs: The facility employs approximately 100 full-time unionized City workers.
6. Public Control: Public control of the transfer station means public control over decision-making regarding this basic infrastructure. Communities that cede this control risk service cutbacks and labor disruptions that clash with City values, in addition to risking possibly extreme cost increases that near-monopolistic waste management industry players can impose over time.
7. Local Non-Profits: The Community Conservation Corps (CCC) operates the City's buy-back and recycling center. It employs 40 full-time equivalent workers, most of whom are union members. The Ecology Center, under City contract, collects and delivers recyclables from Berkeley residents to the transfer station; this work employs approximately 20 people.
8. Local Environmental Businesses: The City contracts with a local reuse business to recover valuable products (e.g., furniture, windows, and lumber) that otherwise would be landfilled.
9. Environmental Education: Once re-built, the facility plans to provide environmental education tours as a regular feature of its services. Everyone, especially school children, should learn about where things come from and where they go after use, and how our actions matter.
10. Support for Local Economy: The facility is a nearby, reliable, and reasonably priced destination for self-haulers, especially local landscapers and building contractors. Less driving time and lower gate rates translate into cost savings that boost the local economy.