



## Trashmagination Podcast #17 – America’s First Creative Reuse Business District

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I’m Carla Brown.

Today I’m going to share my Trashmagination dream which is to create America’s first Creative Reuse Business District.

- a place with businesses and non-profits that work towards creative reuse all in one place
- a place that provides employment for people who love to design & produce items from trash
- a place where people could shop, take classes and get items fixed

There is such a place in Sweden. It’s called ReTuna Återbruksgalleria (<http://www.retuna.se/>)

Video about this mall - <https://www.facebook.com/MicMedia/videos/1463234330366019/>

- Återbrukas means upcycling or reuse in Swedish
- the world’s first mall for repaired and recycled goods.
- located in Eskilstuna, Sweden, about one hour west of Stockholm
- opened in August 2015 & created 50 jobs

The shops and organizations inside include:

- secondhand items like clothing, furniture, housewares, baby items
- repair shops for bicycles, sporting goods and technology items
- craftspeople who make pottery and jewelry
- organic plants in pots made from recycled materials
- pet supplies made from recycled materials
- building materials
- moving supplies
- café with organic locally grown food
- conference space
- school that teaches skills related to recycling

It hosts events and pop-up shops:

- Hållbarhetsfestival – Sustainability Day – April
- Leksaksbytdagen – Toy Exchange Day - October
- Klädbytdag – Clothing Exchange Day – bring up to five items & get five tickets – November
- ReDesign Julmarknad – Christmas Market - December

They are looking for vendors who can do upholstery, green beauticians and people to run a tool library.

The vendors are in a building that looks like a shopping mall with internal hallways. I could imagine a business district in a place where the shops are all along a street, or in booths inside a warehouse.

My question is – **do you know of a creative reuse business district anywhere else?** It would likely include:

- a) secondhand stores
- b) stores where you can buy food in bulk, bringing your own packaging
- c) crafts people who fix things
- d) crafts people who make things from trash.

Here's why I would love to start such a creative reuse business district:

- I would love for there to be more **careers** that involve creative reuse of trash. I would love to work in a **community of people** who are just as excited about finding elegant and beautiful solutions to trash.
- While there are lots of videos about how to make things from trash, I think it is **more inspiring to see demonstrations** of people making things from trash in person – learn about how materials work.
- When people see trash being made into cool stuff, they might make **different purchasing decisions** – such as more secondhand items or more creatively made items.
- If it was a place where you could get lots of items fixed, people might **fix things instead of throwing them away**. It might cause people to buy things that are higher quality and fixable, rather than so disposable.
- I would love to **buy items without producing trash** and thus have less packaging to creatively reuse!

I thought about local neighborhoods that have these elements. One place is downtown Herndon, Virginia, which has a secondhand store called The Closet, a bicycle shop called Green Lizard, a flower shop called the Herndon Florist, a clock & watch repair shop and Artspace which offers various art classes, as well as a weekly farmer's market.

While it is cool to imagine this in a cute town like Herndon, one concern is that when you have a creative reuse business, people might dump trash on the doorstep. Part of the reason why the Swedish creative reuse center works is because it includes a drive-through facility where you get out under a roof and drop items by category. It's called the Return (<http://www.retuna.se/sidor/%C3%A5tervinningen/>). For some items, you can even get store credit. They make it so easy to bring the recycling that I would hope fewer people would do a dump and run of inappropriate items. Also in Sweden, you can get tax breaks for getting something repaired (<https://www.facebook.com/playgroundenglish/videos/341617372838266/>).

I visited a drive-through recycling place in Boulder, Colorado - Eco-Cycle CHARM or the Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (<http://www.ecocycle.org/charm>). You pay fees according to items you want to recycle. For example, it currently costs \$6.75 to recycle a toilet.

Where I live, there is a landfill complex where you bring hazardous or bulky waste. Imagine if it was a place where you learn about creative reuse of trash? Right now, it's a dreary place. It's tough to imagine it being an inspiring place.

At the Swedish recycling mall, there is a school where people learn recycling skills. That's the part I would love to run. I imagine a place like the Craft and Design Center at the YMCA of the Rockies in Colorado (<https://ymcarockies.org/activities/craft-design-center/>). Project ideas hang from the walls with prices from \$5-85. The projects include painting, mosaics, tie dye, sand pouring, leather stamping, jewelry making and basket making. In the Trashmagination version, I imagine people picking up a box with the cleaned and sorted trash items to make a project – you could take it home or make in the store. I imagine teaching people how to have trash-free birthday parties, weddings and many other special events.

So here's a checklist of activities inspired by this podcast:

- **Tell me about creative reuse business districts** – On your travels - any one-stop shop area where you can purchase items that would likely have gone in the trash if that district didn't exist.
- **Visit and donate items to a Creative Reuse Center near you** - <http://www.lancastercreativeuse.org/directory-creative-reuse-centers.html> - closest thing - all over the country & world – including 90 “Scrapstores” in the UK.

Thank you to Marna for writing a review on iTunes! She wrote: "This podcast is creative, imaginative and fun to listen to. Carla researches reuse opportunities for household items so you don't have to! Plus, her Canadian accent makes turning old socks into something new sound like poetry." I sewed Marna an organizer cube from flexible packaging. When you leave a review, it helps other people find this podcast and you might get your own organizer cube!

So until next time – May you see your trash as just another source of economic development in your life.