



CITY OF SALEM

TEXTILE COLLECTION EVENT CASE STUDY

April 2026

Offering many options for residents to donate their old textiles is a great way for your municipality to support Massachusetts's [Waste Disposal Ban](#) on Textiles. Currently, 241 Massachusetts cities and towns have a drop-off option, 10 offer exclusively curbside pick-up, and 50 offer both options. In addition, 89 municipalities offer one-day collection events. The City of Salem is one of them. This Case Study will help you learn more about the key practices they've adopted over the years to host a successful annual Textile Collection Event.

BACKGROUND:

- The City of Salem, MA has a population of nearly 45,000. In 2024, Salem residents produced 11,600 tons of trash and collected a total of 63 tons of textiles.
- Salem has textile collection bins through Bay State Textile at all 8 of the City's public schools. Additionally, Helpsy and Planet Aid bins are located at private properties around the City.
- Helpsy allows residents to schedule home pickups which accounted for 5,256 pounds of textiles collected in 2024.
- Since 2008, Salem has had an active Recycling Committee known as SalemRecycles with a team of dedicated volunteers. In 2026 the Committee changed their name to Zero Waste Salem. The City's Waste Reduction Coordinator serves as a City Liaison to the committee.
- In addition to the annual Textile Drive, the committee hosts events such as Book Swaps, Repair Cafes, and other waste reduction initiatives. [Visit GreenSalem.com to learn more.](#)



Volunteers load bags of textiles onto the vendor's truck.



Event participant donates a trunk full of textiles.

EVENT DETAILS:

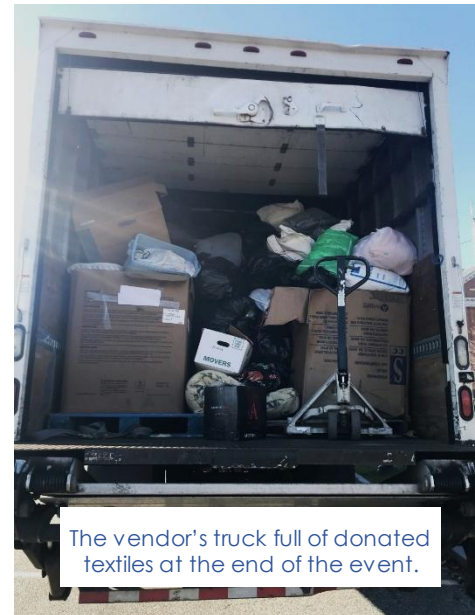
In 2024, Zero Waste Salem hosted their 14th annual Textiles Drive. This drive-through event is typically held on the Saturday before Thanksgiving; the consistency of the date helps residents to remember it and keep coming back. Since its inception, the event has been held at Riley Plaza, a large parking lot right downtown. This year, they switched it up and ran the event at a parking lot on Bridge Street, which was well attended despite a location change. Visit Zero Waste Salem's website to see [the event invite and other details](#).

EXECUTION:

Planning an event like this one doesn't happen overnight, and while Zero Waste Salem has had 14 years to perfect it, there are a few key takeaways that have helped make it successful. The

City's Waste Reduction Coordinator starts reviewing the to-do list at least one month before the event to ensure plenty of time to prepare:

- **Contact the vendor** – Over the past few years, the City has partnered with Helpsy for this Textile Drive. The Waste Reduction Coordinator requests the biggest truck available and asks that Helpsy's driver arrive half an hour before event start time to set up.
- **Secure the location** – Connecting with the City's DPW or Parking department is important to make sure you can host the event on the desired date. Salem's Parking department will put out cones or parking horses to block parking spaces, so the textile vendor's truck has space to park on the morning of the event.
- **Request volunteers** – A very important step! The Waste Reduction Coordinator has a list of several hundred local volunteers that they've recruited for prior events over the past several years. They will send out an email describing the event and volunteer roles and include a sign-up link. The main role will be unloading bags of textiles out of car trunks and loading them into the vendor's truck. Volunteers who are unable to lift heavy items can hold signs or direct traffic through the parking lot. Salem's five-hour event is broken into two shifts for volunteer convenience. Event organizers remind volunteers to bring snacks and water as necessary.
- **Publicity** – It's important to get the word out so more residents can take advantage of this opportunity. Zero Waste Salem advertises this event through their popular social media channels, specifically through Facebook Events. City channels, press releases with local media, and flyers go out to promote the Textile Drive. The materials include details to ensure attendees have all the information they need.



RESULTS:

Textiles Diverted in 2024 Textile Collection Event: 6,257 pounds (over 3 tons!)

It's such a great feeling for the Recycling Committee and all its volunteers to see a truck full of textiles after a hard day's work. The community appreciates this unique way to donate textiles. Rather than just dropping them off in a donation bin, they get to see friendly volunteer faces and say hello. Participants feel a sense of purpose as they watch their donation bags pile up in the truck, along with their neighbors' donations. We hope this inspires you to try an event like this in your community!



Volunteers stand in front of the truck that they helped fill with textiles at the end of the event.