HANDUP
MATTRESS RECOVERY CASE STUDY
APRIL 2025

Since the implementation of the Massachusetts mattress waste disposal ban in November 2022, HandUp mattress resale and recycling has worked to divert mattresses from disposal by providing mattress recycling services and giving new life to mattresses through their resale service. Their mattress recycling service allows any individual to drop off an old mattress or box spring at their facility, or to schedule a time for an at-home pick up. A small number of the mattresses they collect are cleaned and sanitized to be resold, providing retail customers with a high quality, gently used mattress at an affordable price. The Massachusetts department of environmental protection (MassDEP) awarded HandUp with two grants to advance this work as part of the recycling & reuse business development grant (RBDG) program.

BACKGROUND:

- Massachusetts residents and businesses discard an estimated 600,000 mattresses and box springs annually.
- More than 400,000 of these mattresses are now recycled or reused each year.
- More than **75 percent** of mattress components can be recycled, diverted, or put to an alternative use.
- On November 1, 2022, mattresses were added to the Waste Disposal Bans at 310 CMR 19.0170, banning these materials from disposal or transport for disposal in Massachusetts.
- Mattresses are a bulky item and Massachusetts has experienced a reduction in landfill capacity in recent years.

BUSINESS OVERVIEW:

Mattress Recycling

- HandUp conducts regularly scheduled curbside pickup of mattresses and box springs in more than 50 Massachusetts municipalities.
- Drop-offs at their facility are also permitted at a fee per mattress or box spring.
- Mattresses are deconstructed by hand by team members. They break the mattresses down and are able to recycle all of the major components:



Case study: HandUp Mattress Recovery

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

MassDEP: Sowayib Sikder, sowayib.sikder@mass.gov
https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-recycling-reuse-business-development-grant
HandUp: Erik Dyson, erik@handupus.org
https://handupmattress.com

- **Steel:** sent to scrap yards where it is ground up to be resold and reused
- **Foam and Cotton:** compacted into 1,000 lb. bales and sent to be cleaned and shredded into stuffing for items like dog beds or for use as carpet padding
- **Wood:** ground up to be used as industrial mulch or biofuel

- Through this process, ***75-80 percent*** of the mattress' weight is diverted from the waste stream and disposal which has limited available capacity.

Mattress Resale

- A select number of mattresses (less than five percent) they receive still have years of sleep ahead of them, as many mattresses are returned within three months of purchase and can no longer be sold as "new."
- HandUp sells these high quality, gently used mattresses from leading brands and manufacturers for a fraction of the normal retail price.
- Prior to resale, the mattresses undergo a thorough sanitization process using industry-leading standards.
- Qualifications for Resale:
  - ***Age*** – less than three years since it was manufactured
  - ***Brand*** –only the best brands
  - ***Condition*** – minor wear and tear
- The mattresses are sold online and in the physical resale store located in historic Kilburn Mill on Rodney French Boulevard in New Bedford.

WORK WITH MASSDEP:

- MassDEP awarded HandUp two Recycling and Reuse Business Development grants in 2022: a **$32,500** grant for collection equipment and a **$192,900** grant for processing equipment.

RESULTS:

- **2023:**
  - *More than* ***63,000*** mattresses and box springs **recycled**
  - *More than* ***2,000*** mattresses and box springs **resold** or **upcycled via resale**
  - *More than* ***2.6 million*** **pounds** of mattress components **diverted** from landfills
  - ***301 tons*** of additional metal **recycled** (***86 tons*** *of pocket coils* + ***215 tons*** of scrap metal)
- **2024:**
  - More than **67,000** mattresses and box springs **recycled**
  - More than **4,400** mattresses and box springs **resold** or **upcycled via resale**
  - More than **3.3 million pounds** of mattress components diverted from landfills
  - ***487 tons*** of additional metal **recycled** (***183 tons*** of pocket coils + ***304 tons*** of scrap metal)

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114
Produced by the Bureau of Air & Waste | April 2025
This information is available in alternate format. Please contact Melixza Esenyie at 617-626-1282.
TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370
MassDEP Website: www.mass.gov/dep

EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT:

- The organization consists of a highly diverse team of 24 people who hail from 10 different countries.
- Three full-time machine operator positions have been created in the past two years
- Mattresses are now sold online and shipped anywhere to the continental U.S.



COMMUNITY IMPACT:

HandUp takes seriously both its responsibility to environmental preservation and to uplifting its community and its members. The organization ***donates 60 percent of its net profits*** *to sister non-profit* ***HandUp Community Impact****, which works to provide a "hand up" to the most vulnerable in its community. Central to its work are the* ***direct wrap-around services*** *the organization provides to support immigrant and refugee neighbors. These include:*

- ***Education****: scholarships, English classes, technical training and certifications, as well as school and daycare enrollment assistance*
- ***Healthcare****: enrollment support, locating doctors, accompaniment to appointments*
- ***Driver's License****: securing appointments, serving as a sponsor, help with documentation*
- ***Legal Support****: legal counsel, name changes for minors*
- ***Notary Services****: free services to certify documents for legal purposes*
- ***Small Business Support****: mini-grants to grow immigrant businesses, marketing assistance*
- ***Financial Services****: help opening bank accounts, tax preparation / financial literacy services*
- ***Case Management****: enrollment assistance for utility subsidies, passport applications for minors*
- ***Mattress Donations****: donations to charity partners, upcycling mattresses at a reduced cost to furniture banks*

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114
Produced by the Bureau of Air & Waste | April 2025
This information is available in alternate format. Please contact Melixza Esenyie at 617-626-1282.
TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370
MassDEP Website: www.mass.gov/dep

*In 2024 alone, HandUp **donated over $150,000** in cash and products to its non-profit partners to support the immigrant community and continue providing these services.*

"We are fortunate to operate in Massachusetts as there is a clear and positive working relationship between private businesses and MassDEP. While other states have chosen to look for one-size-fits-all solutions to mattress recycling, MassDEP understood that the wide range of cities and towns needed flexibility and took the leadership to create an open-market solution that encouraged private business, like HandUp, to establish operations to service this emerging market. Added to this, MassDEP, through its RDBG grants, has been essential to allow us, and others in the mattress recycling space, to scale operations to meet the demands of the Massachusetts market. In its second year since the mattress ban took effect, in 2024 over 300,000 mattresses were recycled in Massachusetts. This is far better, on a per-capita basis, than any other state currently recycling mattresses in U.S. and a testament to the value of MassDEP's model."

- Erik Dyson, CEO and Co-Founder of HandUp

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114
Produced by the Bureau of Air & Waste | April 2025
This information is available in alternate format. Please contact Melixza Esenyie at 617-626-1282.
TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370
MassDEP Website: www.mass.gov/dep