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Founder of FabScrap Discusses New York City Textile Recycling

FabScrap aims to mitigate the issue of textile waste by streamlining material recycling processes for New York-based businesses.

By [Tracey Greenstein](#) on March 2, 2018



📷 Jessica Schreiber, the founder of FabScrap. Photo courtesy of FabScrap.

As deploying [sustainability](#) methods continues to gain traction throughout the fashion industry, brands and retailers are adopting greener [practices](#) to improve organization-wide values and procedures. And companies such as FabScrap, a textile reuse and recycling resource, aim to mitigate the issue of waste by streamlining material recycling processes for [New York](#) City-based businesses.

FabScrap founder Jessica Schreiber worked for the [New York](#) City Department of Sanitation as a senior manager in the Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability. In that role, she helped launch and manage New York City's e-waste and clothing [recy-](#)

ESSENTIALIST

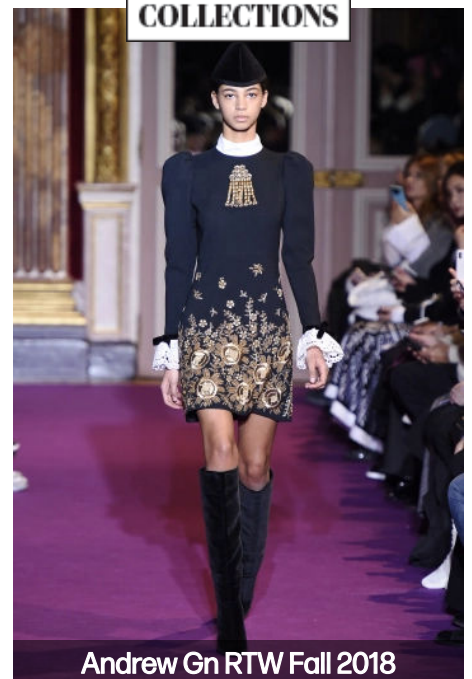
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[cling](#) contacts, including the city’s first curbside clothing collection pilot and Re-fashionNYC, a residential clothing reuse program, which recycled more than 6 million pounds of clothing. Schreiber’s experiences led her to ponder the ongoing effects of commercial waste and gave rise to the development of FabScrap.

“I think people are very aware of postconsumer waste, because we wear and use clothing, and that’s gotten a lot of attention,” Schreiber told WWD. “But separating commercial waste from consumer waste and [looking at] what businesses are throwing away and what businesses can do before it even gets to the consumer, I thought was really interesting.”

“It was expressed to me as a need,” she added. “Brands were wanting to do something sustainable and didn’t have the option to do it.” To date, FabScrap works with more than 100 brands in the New York City area that pay a nominal fee for its services, including Marc Jacobs, Oscar de la Renta, Eileen Fisher, Mara Hoffman, Tracy Reese, Steven Alan, Express, Nautica and J. Crew.

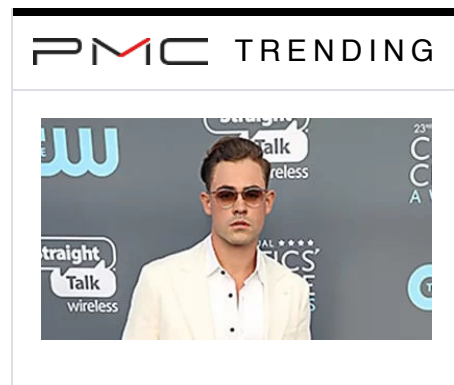
And statistically, the need is crystal clear: The textile industry is the second most polluting industry in the world after gasoline. The never-ending list of frightening facts and figures have influenced shoppers to think twice before purchasing goods and apparel, resulting in an increased consciousness about the clothes we wear. Throughout the U.S., 48 percent of customers check tags for [sustainability](#) information, according to FabScrap. Savvy brands and retailers now market sustainability efforts to entice consumers, as demand for responsible fashion has risen dramatically in recent years.



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Sorting bins at FabScrap. Photo courtesy of FabScrap.

FabScrap arranges to pick up material waste directly from each company, weighs the full amount and separates all incoming [textiles](#) by brand. Once the materials are sorted, they become anonymous and smaller pieces are shredded to become insulation, while larger pieces are recycled and sold in FabScrap's online thrift store. Its recycled [textiles](#) are free for students, nonprofits and FabScrap's volunteers, who sort approximately 750 pounds of fabric per week.

In the initial stages of the sorting process, data is collected for each brand and purposed into a report that notes each recycled material and its end uses. "As much as they pay to get [materials] removed, they're also paying for that information because that [data] has never existed before," Schreiber said. "We give them their data and all of FabScrap's data as a whole so they can see a snapshot of the [entire] waste issue."

And "tweetable" figures can also be shared, such as saved carbon dioxide emissions, the number of trees planted and tonnage diverted from landfills to show brands the impact of their recycling initiatives. FabScrap reported that each pound of waste from apparel production equates to 2.06 pounds of CO₂-e ("e" for equivalent).

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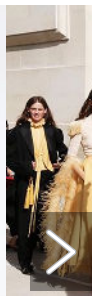
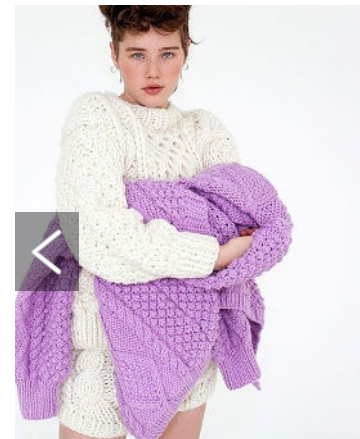


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If 10 percent or more of commercial waste is textile material, New York-based businesses are required by law recycle it. And the apparent lack of regulation has had serious consequences, such as pollution of local water systems contaminated by textiles disposed in landfills, as textiles are chock-full of dyes and harmful chemicals within fabrics that can moisten into soil.

Scott Cassel, the founder of the Product Stewardship Institute, told WWD, “There are millions of pounds of textiles right now that are being disposed of every year in the United States, and we need solutions now for those textiles. There’s costs that are incurred by taxpayers and governments every day by these textiles being thrown in the garbage.”

And Schreiber noted that, “We definitely need more enforcement and there needs to be more knowledge of what the requirements and regulations are.”

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