

The Circular Economy

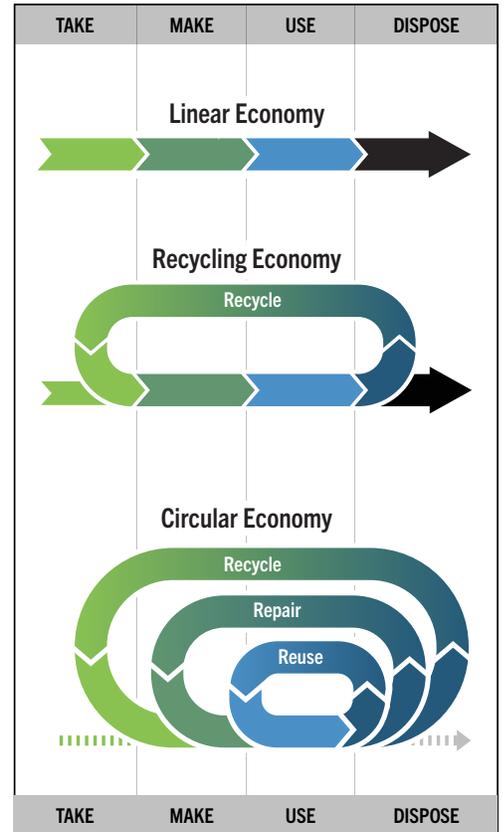
In a **linear economy**, natural resources are extracted from the environment and transformed into products that are consumed and ultimately disposed as waste. A **recycling economy** is better, but only addresses what we do with materials at their "end of life." A **circular economy** aims to eliminate waste and close the loop through product design and innovative business models, continuously cycling materials through the economy and reducing the overall environmental impact over their lifecycles.

Circular economy principles are not all new concepts, but they are receiving renewed attention from the business community. And local governments around the world are increasingly shifting their attention from waste management to a circular economy framework to maximize economic and environmental benefits. Future economic growth and global prosperity will depend not only on reducing waste at the end of life, but also designing the whole economy to eliminate the concept of waste.

Circular economy principles fit especially well with StopWaste’s comprehensive approach to waste reduction, including a shift in recent years to emphasize prevention of waste in the first place over management of items to discard. Just as comprehensive recycling infrastructure was required to scale recycling, similar systemic advances are required to scale waste prevention.

For a primer on how local governments can benefit from embracing circular economy principles in the built environment, visit:

» www.StopWaste.org/circular-economy-primer



Beyond just addressing “end of life” issues with waste materials, circular economy principles address many aspects of eliminating waste, across many lifecycles.

Guiding Principles for Circular Economy:

