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**DATE:** January 14, 2016

**TO:** Programs & Administration Committee  
Planning & Organization Committee/Recycling Board

**FROM:** Wendy Sommer, Executive Director

**BY:** Wes Sullens, Program Manager

**SUBJECT:** Recycling in the Age of Product Transparency

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## **SUMMARY**

StopWaste has partnered with the Healthy Building Network and the San Francisco Department of the Environment to identify, evaluate and compare health hazards associated with various recycled content raw materials. At the January 14 committee meetings, staff will present the research findings. Any input from Board members will be used to help adjust strategic plan targets for recycled content products.

## **DISCUSSION**

Over the past 20 years, recycled content has become the most recognized symbol of sustainability in consumer products, packaging, and building materials. This emphasis has been driven by waste diversion goals, regulations, manufacturer leadership, and—in the green building sector—by rating systems like LEED and GreenPoint Rated. But not all recycled content raw materials are created equal. Some materials—due to their contents, their prior usage or their collection and screening programs—may pose greater environmental and health concerns than others. These uncertainties of recycled content have led to media attention, scrutiny, and even the avoidance of recycled content in some product categories. Specifically, in the leading commercial construction markets of the Bay Area and the nation, a drive towards product transparency and healthy materials have led to deeper questions about the supposed benefits that recycled content has enjoyed for so many years.

To shed light on these issues, StopWaste partnered with the Healthy Building Network and the San Francisco Department of the Environment to conduct the research needed to better understand the health hazards associated with recycled content raw materials, or “feedstocks.” Outcomes of this

partnership include technical reports that rank and evaluate recycled content feedstocks and provide recommendations for optimizing and prioritizing recycled content in building materials.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

This item is for information only, however discussion and feedback from Board members will be used to help adjust strategic plan targets for recycled content products.