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CENTRES FOR URBAN RESOURCES,
REUSE AND REMANUFACTURE

Tartu Selli Waste Management Centre

Tartu / Estonia

A free-access waste management centre with urban resource centre functions for promotion of the circular economy

1. Objectives of the URC

The Selli Waste Management Centre aims to provide a comprehensive and efficient solution for managing waste and reusable materials, aligning with the principles of the circular economy. By serving both residents of Tartu city and neighbouring municipalities, the Centre strives to:

- **Promote Sustainable Waste Management**: Facilitate the responsible handling, sorting, and processing of diverse waste types, including hazardous materials, biodegradable waste, construction waste, and recyclables, to minimize environmental impact.
- **Encourage Reuse and Resource Recovery**: Create opportunities for residents to donate and access reusable items, such as furniture, household goods, and construction materials, through dedicated spaces like the reuse room and the newly added material storage hall.
- **Engage the Community**: Raise awareness and educate the public on proper waste sorting and sustainable practices, fostering a culture of shared responsibility for reducing waste.
- **Support Circular Economy Goals**: Act as a hub for material redistribution and recovery, ensuring that valuable resources are reused or recycled rather than discarded.

The Centre's overarching goal is to make waste management accessible, inclusive, and environmentally conscious, contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable Tartu.

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2. Services provided by the URC

The Selli Waste Management Centre offers an array of services, that cater to both residents of Tartu city and neighbouring municipalities, promoting accessibility and inclusivity. The services are designed to ensure efficient waste & material management, encourage material reuse, and engage the community in sustainable practices:

1. Waste & materials handling: Residents can bring a variety of waste types to the Centre, including but not limited to biodegradable garden waste, construction and demolition waste, textiles, and hazardous materials such as oils, pesticides, and solvents. Clear sorting instructions are provided both on-site and online, and operators are available to guide visitors in categorizing their waste effectively, ensuring a smooth and efficient drop-off process. Additionally, operators assess incoming items to determine whether they can be classified as reusable materials.

2. Reuse rooms: Visitors can donate reusable household items in good condition — such as furniture, household appliances, children's essentials, and books — to the Centre's reuse room. Thanks to the additional material storage hall procured through the CURE+ project, the storage capacity has significantly increased, allowing for the inclusion of larger items like construction materials (flooring, doors, windows, construction boards). All reusable items are

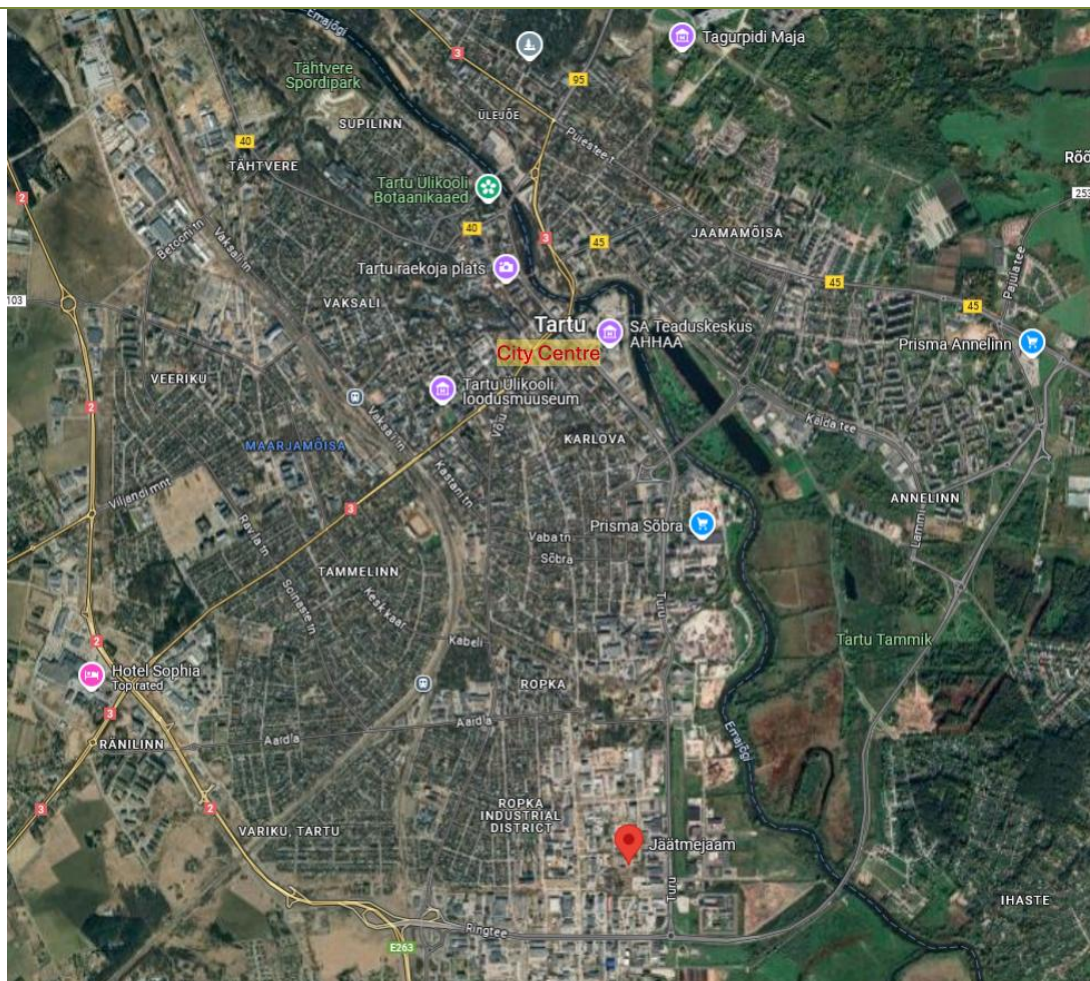
available free of charge, promoting community participation and reducing waste. Due to high demand, most items are taken within a week, ensuring efficient circulation of resources.

3. Community Engagement and Education: The Centre actively promotes proper waste sorting practices by providing detailed information both online and on-site, helping residents understand how to reduce contamination and improve recycling outcomes. It also welcomes visitors, particularly schools and universities, for excursions that foster awareness and a deeper understanding of waste management and circular economy principles. The Centre’s public education efforts focus on making waste management accessible and understandable, empowering citizens to participate more actively in sustainable practices.

3. Operational model

	Description
Ownership	<p>The Selli Waste Management Centre is owned by the City of Tartu.</p> <p>The premises and space are municipally owned, and the operation is procured, meaning that while the city retains ownership, the day-to-day operations are managed by a contracted service provider. This structure allows the Centre to serve residents of Tartu city and neighbouring municipalities, with services and pricing determined by municipal policies.</p>
Team	<p>The Centre operates with at least two on-site operators who manage daily tasks, such as assisting visitors with waste sorting and evaluating items for reuse. However, the exact workforce structure is determined by the contracted service provider, which has the flexibility to address staffing needs and resolve workforce-related issues. The contractor also employs a regional manager and other personnel as necessary to ensure smooth operations and oversight of the Centre.</p> <p>From the city’s perspective, oversight and strategic management fall under the Department of Communal Services, with the Environmental Services unit specifically responsible.</p>
Location	<p>Address: Selli street 19, 50106 Tartu</p> <p>The Centre is located in Ropka district of Tartu, ensuring accessibility for both city residents and neighbouring municipalities.</p>





The Stations location in Tartu (red pin). Approx 15 min car drive from City Centre. Image source: Google Maps



The Stations overhead view. Material storage hall location in red, next to the office/storage building. Image source: Maa-amet Geoportaal

Indoor space: 375 m² (office and reuse room, indoor storage space for hazardous waste), 100 m² material storage hall for reusable materials.

Outdoor space: Paved area around 3500 m²



The material storage hall for added storage capacity. Photo by Jaanus Tamm.

Strengths:

- **Strategic Accessibility:** Its location makes it easily reachable for Tartu residents and neighbouring municipalities, ensuring broad service coverage.
- **Expanded Storage Capacity:** The addition of the material storage hall has significantly improved the Centre's ability to handle larger reusable materials, addressing previous space constraints.
- **Efficient Layout:** Clear sorting areas and streamlined traffic flow for vehicles make the drop-off process convenient for visitors.
- **Flexibility for Reuse and Waste Handling:** The Centre accommodates both reusable items and various waste types, supporting comprehensive waste management.

Downsides:

- **Distance for Some Residents:** Its location on the outskirts may pose challenges for residents without access to a vehicle. The existing bus connection is not sufficient.
- **Peak Time Congestion:** High visitor numbers, particularly during weekends, can lead to queues and extended wait times.
- **Weather Dependency:** The outdoor nature of many activities can be impacted by adverse weather conditions, potentially affecting operational efficiency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No (indoor) spaces (e.g. classrooms) for communal and educational activities.
Material flow	<p><u>Supply</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source: Materials brought to the Centre are supplied by residents of Tartu city and neighbouring municipalities. Types of Waste Accepted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodegradable Waste: Garden waste, including branches and leaves. Household Waste: Mixed waste, textiles, paper, plastics, and metals. Construction and Demolition Waste (CDW): Includes glass, wood, and mixed CDW. Hazardous Waste: Oils, pesticides, solvents, batteries, fluorescent lamps, and old medicines. Reusable Items: Furniture, appliances, books, and construction materials such as doors and flooring. Seasonal Variations: Supply fluctuates, with an increase in garden waste during spring and autumn and bulky waste during designated collection events. <p><u>Demand</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reusable Items: High demand for furniture, household appliances, and children's items in the reuse room. These items are typically taken within a week of being donated. Bulky Materials: Construction materials, such as flooring and wooden boards, are also in demand, particularly among residents undertaking home improvement projects. Hazardous Waste Disposal: A growing awareness of proper hazardous waste disposal has increased the amount of oils, paint, batteries, and chemicals brought to the Centre. <p><u>Type of Materials</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Recyclable Waste: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper and cardboard, metals, plastics, glass. Sent to sorting facilities in Tallinn for further processing. Biodegradable Waste: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small volumes are processed locally; larger quantities are sent to a composting facility. Hazardous Waste: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed by an external contractor, with costs subsidized by the municipality. Reusable Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furniture, household goods, and construction materials stored in the reuse room or material storage hall for redistribution. <p><u>Logistics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-Site Operations:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Waste is pre-sorted by residents before being dropped off to streamline unloading and categorization. ○ Operators inspect materials to determine if they are reusable or need to be directed to waste processing. ● Transport and Processing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recyclable materials are regularly transported to sorting facilities. ○ Biodegradable and mixed waste is transported to regional waste treatment facilities. ○ Hazardous waste is collected by a specialized contractor, ensuring compliance with safety and environmental regulations. ● Storage and Redistribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reusable materials are stored in the reuse room and material storage hall, with a fast turnover due to high demand.
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5. Budget

The Selli Waste Management Centre is owned by the City of Tartu, which oversees its operations through a public tender system. Currently, the operator is contracted for a two-year term. Looking ahead, the city aims to transition to managing the Centre directly, with the possibility of procuring specific services as needed. This shift is expected to provide greater flexibility and alignment with municipal goals.

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Operation (yearly)	CURE+ funding (EUR)	Municipality's budget (EUR)	Other
Operator procurement costs	-	150 000	-
Increasing URC capacity	CURE+ funding (EUR)	Municipality's budget (EUR)	Other
Setting up and furnishing the material storage hall	36 360	11 600	-

5. KPIs and impact assessment of the URC

The Selli Waste Management Centre currently tracks visitor data and waste flows by type, as required by the current tender. In 2024, the Centre recorded a total of 40,016 visitors. Visitor data is collected digitally via ID card scans when customers deliver waste, and the system records the waste type for reporting purposes. However, no specific data is tracked

for reusable items brought to or taken from the reuse room, as maintaining such records would require additional staffing, which is not feasible under the existing tender conditions.

The reuse room operates on a self-service basis: customers are directed by operators to leave suitable items, and others can freely take what they need. Construction and bulky waste volumes (such as furniture) are tracked based on container loads, and the Centre does have data on waste flow numbers by type. However, detailed information about these flows cannot currently be disclosed, as it is considered a trade secret under the operator's terms. Instead, the Centre can report general trends or changes in KPIs, such as percentage increases or decreases in waste flows.

The addition of the Material Storage Hall creates opportunities to improve tracking of construction and bulky waste reuse in the future. However, any additional responsibilities for operators must align with the existing procurement structure. To support more detailed KPIs and effective tracking, future tenders should include requirements for enhanced data collection and reporting.

KPI	Sources of information	Results
Visitors	ID card-based digital system	
Bulky waste flow	Container load reports (m ³)	
Construction waste flow	Container load reports (m ³)	

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6. Implementation

The Selli Waste Management Centre was developed as part of Tartu's commitment to sustainable waste management and circular economy principles. The Centre's implementation involved several key steps:

1. Establishment of the Facility:

The Centre was established to address the growing need for efficient waste sorting and material reuse in Tartu and surrounding municipalities. Its location was selected strategically to balance accessibility for residents and logistical convenience for waste processing.

2. Operational Framework:

The operation of the Centre is managed by a contracted service provider under the oversight of the City of Tartu. This structure ensures that daily tasks, such as waste handling and community engagement, are executed efficiently while aligning with municipal policies.

3. Expansion through CURE+ Project:

In 2024, the Centre's capacity was expanded with the procurement of a 100m² material



storage hall funded by the CURE+ project. This addition enabled the storage and reuse of larger items, such as construction materials, which were previously difficult to manage due to space constraints.

4. **Community Integration:**

Public education campaigns and community engagement initiatives were implemented alongside the Centre's operations to ensure that residents understood the importance of proper waste sorting and reuse practices. The Centre also introduced accessible services, such as a reuse room and annual free bulky waste container distribution.

7. Visitors' testimonies

*“The service at the station is always quick and friendly, making every visit a pleasant and efficient experience.” - Sangla 29
Apartment Association*

8. Ensuring continuity

To ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the Selli Waste Management Centre, several strategies and practices are in place:

1. **Operational Stability:** The Centre operates under a procurement model, allowing the City of Tartu to contract experienced waste management providers. This ensures consistent and professional operations while maintaining flexibility to address staffing or operational challenges.
2. **Adaptability and Infrastructure Development:** The recent addition of a 100 m² material storage hall demonstrates the Centre's ability to adapt to changing needs by expanding storage capacity and accommodating larger reusable materials. Future upgrades or expansions will be planned to meet evolving demands.
3. **Public Engagement:** Ongoing educational campaigns and excursions for schools and universities aim to foster a long-term cultural shift toward sustainable waste practices in the community. By engaging residents in proper waste sorting and reuse practices, the Centre builds a strong foundation for continued participation.
4. **Municipal Commitment:** The Department of Communal Services, through its Environmental Services unit, ensures strategic oversight and alignment with municipal policies. Continued support from the municipality secures funding and operational guidance for the Centre.
5. **Community-Driven Sustainability:** The reuse room's high demand and efficient material turnover highlight the community's active participation in circular economy practices.

Encouraging this engagement through improved access and additional services will ensure ongoing relevance and impact.

9. Lessons learnt and conclusions

Topic	Learning points
Objectives of the URC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reusing building and demolition materials, along with bulky waste like furniture, has proven to be an effective way to promote circular economy practices due to their significant volume and potential for reuse. These waste streams are among the most impactful because of their size, material composition, and high demand for reuse. While there is no direct connection between the two, they are often brought to the station simultaneously during renovations or clean-outs, making it practical to handle them together and encourage visitors to consider reuse options for both. Clear communication and accessible reuse options encourage greater community participation.
Operational model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current private operator model works but lacks flexibility. Transitioning to a city-operated model could provide more adaptability and better alignment with municipal goals.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing approximately €45,000 in infrastructure and capacity improvements has been essential for accommodating larger materials and enhancing operations.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff have successfully supported innovation and new initiatives without the need for additional hires, demonstrating the importance of a skilled and adaptable team.
Daily work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplifying the process of giving away reusable materials has significantly improved convenience for citizens, increasing reuse rates. Enhancing accessibility to the URC's facilities has made the site more user-friendly, especially for visitors with limited mobility. Digitalizing has streamlined daily operations has reduced workload stress on operators and improved overall efficiency.
Tracking KPIs and impact assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly monitoring of material turnover has and will continue to provide valuable insights into reuse efficiency, highlighting the need for continuous data tracking. Establishing clear and detailed KPIs ensures better evaluation of the URC's performance and impact.

10. Contact details

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[Selli Waste Management Station webpage](#)

