

Mendon Public Library

Sustainable Purchasing Policy

1. Purpose

The Mendon Public Library is committed to being a responsible steward of public resources and reducing its environmental impact. This Sustainable Purchasing Policy establishes guidelines to promote environmentally preferable procurement practices that align with the Library's mission, support community well-being, and encourage sustainable use of materials and public funds.

This policy encourages - but does not require - the selection of environmentally preferable products and services whenever suitable, efficient, and cost-effective options are available.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Mendon Public Library staff, Mendon Public Library board members, and Friends of the Mendon Public Library involved in the selection, purchase, or acquisition of materials, supplies, equipment, furnishings, promotional items, and contracted services.

3. Guiding Principles

In making purchasing decisions, Library staff/board/Friends shall consider environmental impacts alongside price, performance, durability, and user needs. Sustainable purchasing practices shall be informed by the following principles:

1. **Environmental considerations alongside price and performance**
Consider total environmental impact throughout the product life cycle - from production to use to disposal.
2. **Pollution prevention and waste reduction**
Evaluate packaging waste, toxic materials, and opportunities to reduce pollution or excess consumption.
3. **Life-cycle analysis**
Consider durability, repairability, recyclability, reusability, and disposal impacts.
4. **Comparative environmental impact**
When multiple choices are available, prefer the option with demonstrably lower environmental impact.
5. **Accurate and meaningful information**
Seek credible environmental information. Use recognized certifications, reputable sources, and transparent product information.

4. Sustainable Purchasing Considerations

While not exhaustive, the following factors should guide procurement decisions:

4.1 Product Attributes

- Recyclability or compostability of items and packaging
- High post-consumer recycled content
- Reduced or non-toxic chemical content
- Energy efficiency and water efficiency
- Durability, repairability, and potential for reuse or refurbishment
- Minimal or reduced packaging, especially plastics

4.2 Supplier and Vendor Practices

- Demonstrated environmentally responsible business practices
- Use of sustainable materials and waste-reducing processes
- Transparent environmental reporting or certifications (e.g., Energy Star, FSC, Green Seal)
- Local or regional suppliers to reduce transportation emissions
- Fair labor practices and social responsibility commitments

4.3 Operational and Disposal Impacts

- Ease of recycling, repurposing, or environmentally sound disposal
- End-of-life take-back programs (e.g., for electronics, batteries, toner cartridges)
- Compatibility with existing equipment to reduce unnecessary replacement

5. Sustainable Swag and Promotional Materials

In alignment with the Library's educational mission and community leadership role, purchasers are encouraged to consider:

- Whether promotional items are useful, durable, and not single-use throwaways
- Opportunities for locally sourced, recycled-content, or biodegradable materials
- Overall environmental and social impacts of items (using sustainability self-evaluation checklists when applicable, inclusive of materials provided by the Sustainable Libraries Initiative)

When possible, the Library should favor experiences or educational materials over physical swag items.

6. Exceptions

Nothing in this policy prohibits the Library from:

- Selecting products or vendors that are more suitable for the intended use
- Prioritizing cost-effective options when sustainable alternatives are cost-prohibitive
- Making emergency purchases where sustainability considerations are impractical

These guidelines are aspirational, recognizing budget constraints and availability in the regional marketplace.

7. Education and Continuous Improvement

The Mendon Public Library will strive to:

- Stay informed about best practices in environmentally preferred purchasing
- Educate purchasers and patrons on sustainable consumption when appropriate
- Periodically review and update this policy to reflect emerging practices, improved products, and community goals