

Cities Try a New Job for Trash

Some communities are repairing, reusing, and redesigning everyday things so less ends up buried.



Hands repair everyday items on a worktable instead of throwing them away.

Science News Explores reported this week that about 100 communities are trying to become **circular** cities. A circular city is a place that keeps using materials again and again. The goal is simple. Fewer useful things should end up in a **landfill**, which is a place where trash is buried.

Imagine walking into a room with a broken toy. At one table, someone opens it with tiny tools. At another, a torn backpack gets a new strap. That is the idea behind **repair** events in Austin, Texas. The city offers toy-repair clinics, fix-it workshops, and videos. They help people keep favorite things out of the trash.

This matters because making new things takes materials, **energy**, and shipping. A shirt, a shoe, or a toy does not begin at a store. Someone must grow, mine, cut, build, pack, and move it. If people repair and share more, they may need fewer replacements. That can mean less pollution.

Landfills can also cause problems. Some give off **methane**, a gas that traps heat in the air. Some can leak harmful chemicals. Austin has a big goal. It wants to keep 90 percent of its waste out of landfills by 2040.

Other cities are testing different ideas. In Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, some sports fields use rainwater in a clever way. The water is caught under artificial grass, which is grass made from plastic. Later, the water moves upward and

dries into the air. That helps cool the field. It also sends less rainwater into the city's storm drains.

Circular thinking can happen far from city halls, too. In Nairobi, Kenya, Rum-mage Studio buys leftover clothes that might become trash. Workers turn strong fabrics, such as **denim**, into bags and backpacks. The studio tries to use as much of each old garment as possible.

This is not magic. A circular city must plan many steps. It must think about how goods are made, used, collected, repaired, and recycled. Recycling means turning old materials into something usable again. Cities can help because they buy many things. If a city asks for products that last longer, companies may listen.

A broken item can feel like the end of a story. Circular cities ask a different question. What else could this become?

Written from reporting by Science News Explores.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. Should a city spend more money on repair clinics or on recycling programs? Defend your choice.

A strong answer: A strong answer weighs which option prevents more waste, who can use it, and what costs or limits it might have.

2. What might make it hard for families to repair things instead of replacing them?

A strong answer: A strong answer considers time, tools, money, skills, safety, and whether products are made to be fixed.

3. If your school wanted to become more circular, what one change would help most?

A strong answer: A strong answer proposes a realistic change and explains how it would reduce waste or reuse materials.

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L D L L N Y R A N E H N
M R R A N L C E C E M A
P L A N D F I L L A T O
D R E P A I R T I D M X
E L E I M S C L L A G N
E M N S G M U I Z S K C
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E I H E G T N L N E N R
C C C A R I D E N I M T

CIRCULAR

DENIM

ENERGY

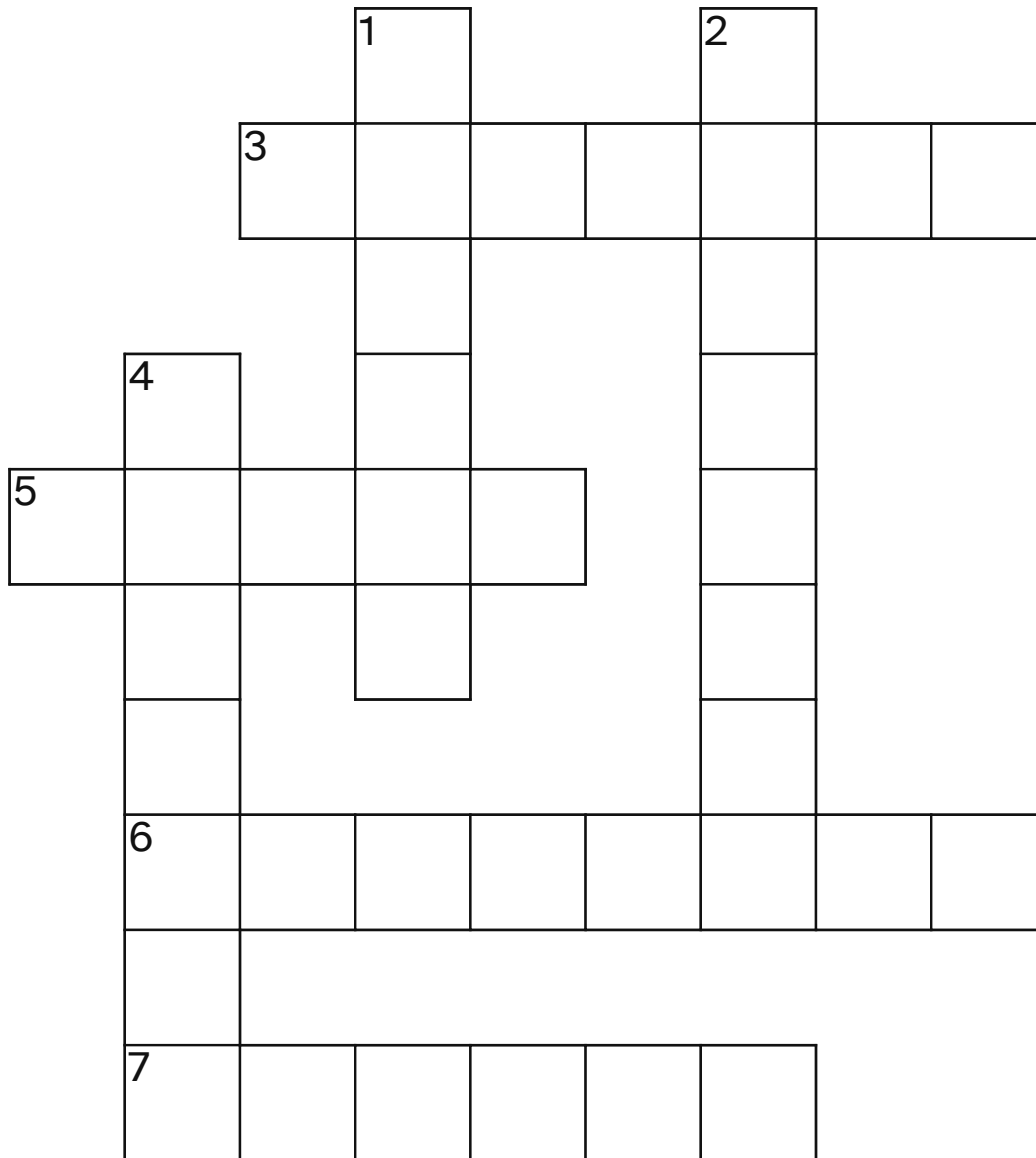
LANDFILL

METHANE

RECYCLE

REPAIR

Cities Try a New Job for Trash



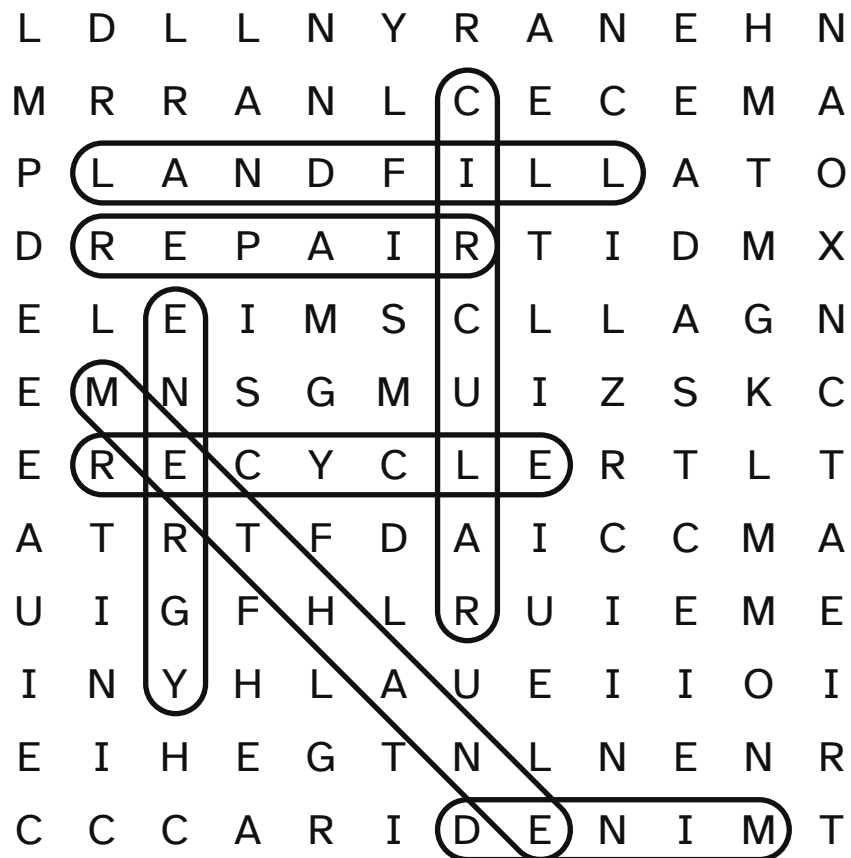
ACROSS

- 3 Heat-trapping gas in the air
- 5 Strong cotton fabric used for many jeans
- 6 System that uses materials again and again instead of tossing them away
- 7 Power for making, moving, and doing things

DOWN

- 1 Mend something broken so it works again
- 2 Place where trash is buried underground
- 4 Make old materials into useful new things

Cities Try a New Job for Trash — answer key



CIRCULAR

DENIM

ENERGY

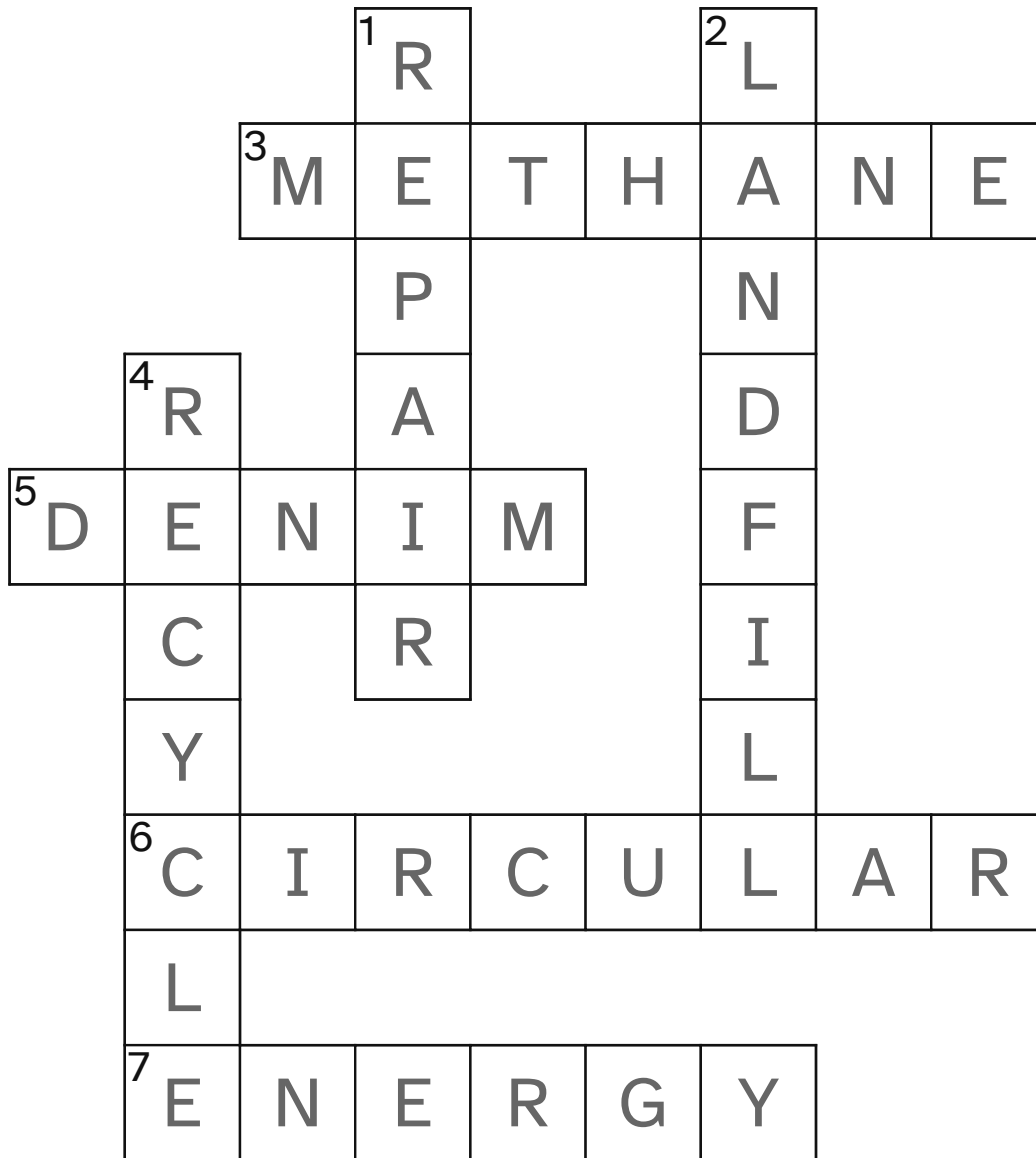
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Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

Science News Explores

“Circular cities go ‘green’ by reusing things over and over again”

Published Thursday, October 22, 2026

Read by us on Friday, October 23, 2026

<https://www.snexplores.org/article/circular-cities-go-green-reuse-recycle>

WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET

The article with a note on each question, a word search, a crossword, and the answer key to both.

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