



Shopper Rita Martinez browses among the decorative items at the Texas Disposal Systems resale center near Creedmoor last month. The center allows people to shop for useful discards that would otherwise end up in the landfill.

PHOTOS BY SARA DIGGINS/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Treasures for thrifters

Trove of rescued vintage pieces can be found at shop near Creedmoor landfill

Heather Osbourne
Austin American-Statesman
USA TODAY NETWORK

You can't get more trendy in 2022 than saying your shirt, dresser or jewelry was a find from one of the many thrift stores in Austin.

But thrifting-obsessed 20-some-

things might be surprised to find one store on the outskirts of Austin that many don't know exists. This outdoor shop is stuffed to the brim with trendy items different from others in the area.

The things for sale were rescued only moments before being thrown into a landfill at Texas Disposal Systems in Creedmoor.

"It's eye-opening to see the things that citizens would have thrown away," said Leticia Mendoza, who runs marketing and communications for Texas Disposal Systems. "We're able to provide them new life by allowing others to come look through the resale shop and pick through them."

What types of finds can I expect?

Bicycles, vinyl records, lawn furni-

See **TREASURES**, Page 4B



A giant stuffed dragon sits in the well-stocked book portion of the Texas Disposal Systems resale center in March. As people arrive to drop off items at the landfill through the Citizens Convenience Center, staffers sort through and remove those that are reusable, in good condition or repairable.

"We call them treasures. We divert items that would have otherwise made their way into the landfill, or perhaps they could not be recycled, so we separate them out and resell them."

Leticia Mendoza
Runs marketing and communications for Texas Disposal Systems

Treasures

Continued from Page 1B

ture, vintage clothing — and lots of hardcover books — are just a handful of the items for sale at Texas Disposal Systems' thrift store on a recent Tuesday.

Customers might feel out of place when first driving up to the Texas Disposal Systems entrance, as large trucks wait to be weighed before dumping loads of waste. However, road signs guide thrifters around the long line and to the store just ahead.

As a way to divert as many unwanted items from the landfill as possible, Texas Disposal Systems opened the thrift store in the early 1990s.

Thrifting as a choice and not for necessity has skyrocketed in popularity among Austin's younger generations, particularly those who are environmentally conscious.

Articles and documentaries continue to encourage the nation to shy away from fast-fashion or brand-new home decor and opt instead for Facebook marketplace finds, dumpster flips and resale shops such as the trusty Savers, Goodwill and Texas Thrift in Austin.

The front of the thrift shop looks like any budget-friendly parent or new homeowner's dream, with lines of used bikes, helmets, baseball gloves and battery-powered toy cars, and dozens of vintage Tonka trucks, along with lawn furniture, rows of front door options, plenty of plant pots and barbecue grills.

It is barely noticeable from the front, but the narrow entrance to the covered portion of the thrift store opens into a labyrinth of items that would catch the eye of analog tech-obsessed Gen Zers.

Inside, crates upon crates of vinyl records sit waiting for sorting, while a few racks of clothing — even retro pieces — are lined in the center. Also in stock on a recent Tuesday are vintage rattan dining chairs and small, gold-framed mirrors.

Then there are always the unique



Texas Disposal Systems employees help James, left, and Lisa Brown unload their truck and trailer, sorting out items that are in good condition to take to the resale center. SARA DIGGINS/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

items.

It might take a few laps around the store before your eyes adjust to so many objects from decades past and zero in on some of the smaller, quirky, coveted pieces.

A few eye-catching vintage items on display are a baby blue wig box still containing the wig and a classic bonnet hair dryer from the 1960s.

In a glass case, but still very reasonably priced, are several pairs of cowboy boots, a leather jacket and dozens of earrings that appeared to have been transported straight from the 1980s.

"We call them treasures," Mendoza said of all the finds at the store. "We divert items that would have otherwise made their way into the landfill, or perhaps they could not be recycled, so we separate them out and resell them."

The resale shop was not something set up for profit, she added, "but it's

really just another way to make sure items that don't need to go to the landfill can find a new life and purpose."

Why is buying used items important?

Austin-area residents still have much to learn about what does not belong in their recycling bin, with many erroneously adding battery-operated children's toys, hardcover books and small plastic trinkets.

Austin has a diversion rate from the landfill of 41.96%, meaning that items such as glass, paper and plastics (like laundry detergent jugs) and things that should be put in composting (including pizza boxes, food scraps and lawn debris) are being unnecessarily sent to the dump and buried underground without the opportunity to properly break down or be turned into new items.

Austin's goal by 2040 is to divert 90% of the city's trash from the landfill to composting and recycling centers, a goal that can also be achieved by residents limiting their use of items such as single-use plastic bags, cutlery, freezer bags and to-go containers.

Instead, residents can bring their own reusable cutlery when dining out, bring a reusable coffee cup for businesses that allow them, put their unwanted clothes in a donation bin instead of the trash and recycle items that actually are accepted.

People also can shop second-hand before buying something new.

"We sometimes like to think of our resale center as a hidden gem, but we've really tried to get the word out," Mendoza said of the thrift store in Creedmoor. "We love being able to provide new life to items that could have ended up in our landfill."