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A GLOBAL CHALLENGE THAT CAN BE SORTED

## TOMRA demonstrates textile sorting at Homeboy Threads in Los Angeles

A diverse crowd of textile experts, fashion designers, policymakers, recycling specialists and waste management representatives gathered in Los Angeles on February 29th to witness fully automated textile sorting by TOMRA.

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Since early January, a [TOMRA AUTOSORT™](#) unit has been installed at the premises of Homeboy Threads, a social enterprise in Los Angeles offering reuse and recycling services for apparel and textiles. [Homeboy Threads](#) is a part of Homeboy Industries, the largest gang intervention, rehabilitation, and re-entry program in the world.

Here former convicts are forging a new path after serving time. Many are involved in various forms of sorting and recycling activities, reclaiming resources that have been thrown away. At Homeboy Threads, the staff is trained to identify reusable clothes among piles of used textiles – and to handle

Supercharged by automated sensor-based technology, staff at the Homeboy Threads facility are able to identify and separate textiles by fiber type and color, at scale. The TOMRA unit can provide, for example, pure cotton or polyester materials to emerging fiber-to-fiber recyclers and clothing manufacturers.



The unit could help change the apparel industries' current take, make, waste chain – and create a closed-loop textile waste recycling model that protects our environment. Homeboy Threads is currently the only site in North America to be demonstrating textile sorting at this scale with a TOMRA Recycling sorting machine.

## Why Los Angeles?

Los Angeles is a global hub for fashion brands and apparel companies and has historically been a hub for the US textiles industry. Being both a large consumer and producer of textiles, the area has been challenged by the lack of sites that support a high-volume, transparent and efficient textile recovery process. This has led to a textile waste stream that continues to grow locally and globally. The City of Los Angeles reported in a 2022 Textile Recovery Pilot Report by the LA Department of





Now, the city has ambitions to become the home to the growing part of the fashion industry that is moving to a more sustainable future. Legislation is being drafted by California lawmakers, discussing regulations such as mandatory separate collection of waste textiles, and extended producer responsibility schemes for textiles.

## Why TOMRA?

TOMRA's technology is one of several options considered by the [California Product Stewardship Council](#) and the City of LA in its quest to implement solutions that can enable circularity at scale.

With more than 50 years of experience in circular technology, and with the capability to deliver high-volume, high-precision sorting solutions, TOMRA's solution was identified as particularly interesting.

[TOMRA Textiles](#) is on a mission to close the gap between collection of textiles waste and emerging technologies for fiber-to-fiber recycling, and the LA opportunity provides fertile ground for putting technology and organizational setups to the test.

## Collaboration is essential for a circular shift

TOMRA recently launched a whitepaper titled “[Transforming Textiles – 4 key beliefs to enable textiles circularity](#).” Collaboration across the value chain is one of the company’s key beliefs to succeed in closing the textiles circularity gap. Building circular business models requires concerted efforts and business model innovation between fashion brands, designers, retailers, consumers, reuse and repair actors, waste collectors, and recyclers. These players were all present in LA during the week of the demo, also due to the California Market Center’s fashion and textile conference, LA Textile, taking place in the city.

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In addition to the demo event, the collaborating partners hosted an panel session discussing textiles circularity, the role of technology and the path forward for cities and regions like Los Angeles. The panel featured Marisa Adler from Resource Recycling Systems (RRS), Ibby Hartley from Homeboy Threads, Manny Jackson from Threadhaus and Deb Zell, CEO of PlsReturnMe, and was moderated by Louisa Hoyes, Director of Strategic Partnerships at TOMRA Textiles.

The event at Homeboy Threads was introduced by Susana Reyes, Commissioner of the City of Los Angeles Board of Public Works and Chris Zwicke, CEO of Homeboy Threads, as well as Hege Fossum, Honorary Consul of Norway to Los Angeles.



Louisa Hoyes, Director of Strategic Partnerships at TOMRA Textiles, speaking at the Homeboy Threads event.

## Textile to Textile Circularity - Homeboy Threads and TOMRA



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TOMRA Systems ASA  
Drengsrudhagen 2  
Asker, 1385, Norway  
+47 66 79 91 00

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