

Laundry offers free showers to homeless people

By [Ashraf Hendricks](#)

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LaundReCycle is energy and water self-sufficient. It has been running since 2021 at the Streetscapes Urban Farm.



LaundReCycle, a unique, self-sufficient laundry has been successfully running at the Streetscapes Urban Farm in Cape Town. Photos: Ashraf Hendricks / GroundUp

For three years now, a unique, self-sufficient laundry has been successfully running at the Streetscapes Urban Farm in Cape Town's city centre.

It uses solar power and reuses water in a closed system. The water is cleaned using a biological treatment method and reused for laundry. There are two washing machines and three large bins to treat the water. Laundry is air dried, but with more solar panels it would be possible to use an electric drier in winter.

Launched in January 2021, the eco-friendly "LaundReCycle" is a three-year research project created by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Switzerland. The project aims to provide laundry services to poor people as well as address water and energy shortages.

Andrew Tulloch, operations manager at Streetscapes, says the laundry runs weekdays and assists people living on the streets. Customers include homeless people, local residents and businesses, and some restaurants that bring their laundry and tablecloths. A one-kilogram load costs R20, but homeless people pay R10. They can also shower with the treated water.

The laundry brings in R2,500 to R3,000 a month. The single biggest expense is eco-friendly detergent.

Tulloch says the shower is the only immediate free shower in the city. Clean clothes and showers gives people “a tremendous kind of dignity”, he says.

The laundry also introduces homeless people to Streetscapes’ programmes.



The laundry is run by Taryn Faro. It contains two washing machines and three large bins which are used to treat the water.

For about nine months now, Taryn Faro has been running the laundry, something she had never done before. She was trained on the job.

After her husband died in 2010, she found herself living in a “hokkie” near the mountains in Zonnebloem for several years.

“I was an angry bird,” she says. But the Streetscapes program helped her to fix many areas of her life, including anger management, depression and excessive alcohol use. She now has a home in Delft. “I feel like I am stronger,” she says.

The laundry building was constructed by Water Rescue in Paarl. The project and Streetscapes fall under non-profit Khulisa Social Solutions.

The [final report](#) on the project was released last year. Devi Bühler, a researcher from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Switzerland said they’ve handed the project over to Streetscapes.

Bühler says the project is successful because its “still running and it seems to be well integrated into their [Streetscapes] activities”.

She says that they are further developing the concept of reusing treated water.



Streetscapes in Roeland Street, Cape Town, is home to a unique laundry that runs on solar energy and recycled water.

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