

Zero Waste Center

The Kamikatsu Zero Waste Center challenges the perception that waste disposal facilities are dirty, smelly places. It is a fully outfitted center with a secondhand shop, community hall, laundromat, laboratory, and even a hotel in addition to the waste station.

Designed to Inspire

The Zero Waste Center opened in April 2020. The building was constructed with locally sourced Japanese cedar and the windows, doors, and furniture were donated by local residents. The structure was built in the shape of a question mark to remind people to keep asking themselves: Why are we buying this? Why are we throwing this away? Why are we producers selling this? These questions have been driven into the minds of the people of Kamikatsu to make them more conscious of what they use and how they discard it. Residents also clean and dry all of their non-organic waste before bringing it to the center, and organic waste is composted at home, which helps keep the center free of unpleasant odors.

Educational Sorting

Each of the bins for the 45 waste separation categories has a sign showing if recycling the item brings in money or is an expense for the town, as well as the amount of income or expense, and where the item will be sent. For example, glass bottles are sorted into clear bottles, brown bottles, and other colored bottles. Although the glass is recyclable, the town incurs a cost in dealing with it. On the other hand, metal bottle caps bring in a profit. In general, metal and paper create income, while plastics and bottles become expenses. People can learn which garbage causes expense and which is profitable by checking the signs, so they can rethink their purchases.

A number of companies endorsing Kamikatsu's Zero Waste Declaration have installed boxes to collect their products at the center, making recycling more convenient and effective. A consumer goods company, for example, collects empty shampoo and detergent refill packs, which are difficult for households to clean completely.

Kuru Kuru Shop

Kuru Kuru Shop at the waste center is a drop-off station where residents can leave items they do not want but that are still usable. Anyone, including non-residents, may then take the items for free. The shop can even provide an emergency umbrella for those caught in unexpected rain!

Hotel

The hotel making up the dot of the question mark design opened in May 2020. It offers four rooms, for two to four guests per room. Guests get the “zero waste” experience by sorting waste into different categories, or cutting soap and weighing coffee beans to obtain just the amount they need.

Collaborative Laboratory

This co-working space is a place where companies, universities, and others committed to bringing change can come together. They can brainstorm innovative waste solutions that are attractive and sustainable and demonstrate the benefits found when business interests and environmental concerns align.