



Tips for Better Recycling in Decatur

This guide was developed by Public Works and the Environmental Sustainability Board with two goals in mind. The first goal is to reduce contamination in the City's recycling stream by keeping out items that are not currently recovered by our local recycler, Pratt Industries. The second goal is to increase recovery of hard-to-recycle materials by providing residents with tips for how to properly recycle these items. This guide will be updated periodically as recycling guidelines change and/or new outlets and resources are identified. Please check back frequently and feel free to contact Sanitation Services with any questions or comments.

Paper and Cardboard

Paper is one of the most valuable commodities in our recycling stream. Nearly all paper and cardboard can be recycled at the curb in your commingled bin. This includes grease-stained pizza boxes, as long as all solid food residue is removed. Exceptions include metallic wrapping paper, store receipts, and shredded paper. These items should be disposed of with your household waste. Food and personal hygiene paper products, such as paper plates, cups, towels, napkins, and tissues, should also be kept out of the recycling stream. These items should be disposed of in your household trash or composted through a paid service such as CompostNow. If the food-related items have a wax or plastic coating, they must be disposed of in your household trash.

Cartons

Food and beverage cartons, even those with a wax, foil, or plastic lining, are recyclable at the curb in your commingled bin. These include gable top cartons that are typically used to hold refrigerated items like milk, cream, and orange juice, as well as aseptic cartons that are used to hold shelf-stable foods such as broth, soy milk, and coconut water. All cartons should be emptied and rinsed.

Glass

Glass bottles and jars, no matter the color, are recyclable at the curb. These items should be emptied, rinsed, and placed in a separate bin. All collected glass is delivered directly to Strategic Materials in College Park, where it is converted into powder or cullet (broken glass of a specific size) for use in new glass containers, fiberglass, reflective paint, abrasives, industrial fillers, or specialty glass. Tempered glass, windowpanes, mirrors, bulbs, drinking glasses, and other similar items cannot be recycled. Consider donating these materials to a second-hand store if they are in usable condition or dispose of them with your household waste.

Plastic

Curbside plastic recycling is limited to bottles and jugs with necks. These items are typically made from Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) or High Density Polyethylene (HDPE), which are

among the most valuable and easily recycled types of plastic. Bottles and jug should be emptied and rinsed before being placed in the commingled bin.

Other types of plastic should be discarded or recycled as follows:

#1 Plastics (PET) PET is used in a wide variety of food and drink containers. Only PET bottles and jugs with necks are recyclable at the curb. Other items, such as clamshell containers, cannot be recycled at the curb because they are difficult to mechanically sort from the commingled stream and therefore end up in the landfill or burned as fuel. These items can be recycled at the Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (CHaRM) in Atlanta or Your Dekalb Farmers Market (YDFM). Otherwise, they should be disposed of with your household trash.

#2 Plastics (HDPE) HDPE is a very sturdy material used to manufacture a wide variety of household products, including bottles for cosmetics and household cleaners, water, juice, and milk jugs, planters, and some plastic bags. Only HDPE bottles and jugs with necks are recyclable at the curb. All other items can be recycled at CHaRM. Plastic bags made from HDPE can also be recycled at Kroger, Publix, or any other local store with a dedicated collection bin in or near the front entrance.

#3 Plastics – Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) PVC is often found in shower curtains, pipes, and some food packaging. This type of plastic contains toxic compounds and is among the most difficult types of plastic to recycle. PVC should be disposed of in your household waste.

#4 Plastics – Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE) LDPE is used to make grocery bags, dry cleaning bags, bread bags, paper towel and toilet paper packaging, sealed air pouches for shipping, shrink wrap, sandwich bags, and other common flexible thin-film items found around the home. These items are not recyclable at the curb because they get tangled in the sorting equipment used by our recycling processor. They should instead be recycled at CHaRM or any of the local stores with a dedicated collection bin for plastic bags.

#5 Plastics – Polypropylene (PP) PP is often used to manufacture food-grade tubs and containers, such as yogurt cups, cottage cheese containers, deli containers, and reusable food storage containers. PP is not recyclable at the curb because of limited demand for this material in the post-consumer market. PP items should be recycled at CHaRM or disposed of with your household trash.

#6 Plastics – Polystyrene (PS) – PS is often used to produce foam packaging and insulation. Common household items made from PS include foam drinking cups, foam egg cartons, foam trays, CD/DVD cases, and some restaurant take-out containers. This material is very difficult to recycle and is not accepted at the curb. PS plastic should be recycled at CHaRM or disposed of with your household trash. The same rules apply to Expanded Polystyrene, commonly known as styrofoam. These items should be recycled at CHaRM or brought to Decatur's semi-annual Electronics and Styrofoam Recycling Day.

#7 Plastics – This is a catch-all category that includes a wide variety of materials, including bioplastics, polycarbonates, and mixed plastics. Items marked as #7 are not recyclable and should be disposed of with your household trash.

Metal

All aluminum and steel cans are recyclable at the curb in your commingled bin. All other metals items, including pots, pans, pipes, scrap metal, loose foil, and foil trays, should be recycled at CHaRM or disposed of with your household trash.