



# RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### DOES DECATUR REALLY RECYCLE GLASS?

YES! All glass bottles and jars collected curbside are hauled to Strategic Materials in College Park. The City collects about 1 ton of glass each day.

### WHY WAS MY GLASS NOT PICKED UP?

The City uses a separate truck for glass collection in order to eliminate contamination. Glass collection may occur before or after commingled recycling is collected. If your glass was left on the curb, it may be for one of the following reasons:

- **Contamination by non-recyclable materials**  
Strategic Materials cannot accept broken picture or dishware glass, mirrors, light bulbs, windows or similar products. Sanitation crews will not collect your glass if any of these items are found.
- **Contamination by recyclable materials** -  
Sanitation crews are instructed to not remove items from glass bins for safety reasons. Your bin will be left uncollected if it contains plastic, aluminum, or other non-glass recyclable materials.

If your glass bin was sorted properly and not collected, please contact the Sanitation Department at 404-377-5571 or simply save your glass until your next scheduled pick-up day.

### CAN I RECYCLE PLASTIC BAGS?

Plastic bags should never be placed in curbside commingled recycling bins because they clog the machinery at the material recovery facility (MRF). Clean and dry plastic bags and film with the #4 recycling logo should be taken to grocery stores that offer plastic bag collection. **Remember, commingled recycling should never be bagged!**

### CAN I RECYCLE PIZZA BOXES?

YES! All *empty* pizza boxes - even those with grease stains - can be placed in commingled recycling. Grease will not interfere with the separation of paper fibers during the recycling process. **Please remove all food and paper from the pizza box before recycling!**

### CAN I RECYCLE STYROFOAM?

**Please save your clean #6 Styrofoam for the City's biannual recycling events.** At these events the Styrofoam is collected by DART Container Corporation to be converted into higher value products. Foam peanuts and other packaging materials are not accepted at the events but can be taking to local shipping stores for reuse.

Styrofoam should not be placed in the commingled recycling bin because the physical properties of this material make it very difficult and uneconomical to recycle. If placed in the commingled recycling bin it will be diverted to the landfill or burned for energy at the MRF.

### WHAT HAPPENS TO MY YARD WASTE?

The City works closely with DeKalb County Sanitation to manage yard waste collection. Typically, the yard waste is collected in a separate truck to be converted into mulch. This mulch is then made available for free to county residents or used as a landfill cover to deter birds from flocking around the garbage. At times, the County will ask the City to collect yard waste with household waste due to mechanical or storage issues at the landfill. Regardless of how yard waste is disposed of, residents are strongly encouraged to compost their own lawn clippings and leaves at home.



## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE COMMINGLED RECYCLING AFTER IT'S COLLECTED?

Decatur's commingled recycling is hauled to a Conyers-based MRF operated by Pratt Industries.

Once this material arrives at Pratt, it is mechanically sorted for resale to various industries. Pratt recovers the following commodities based on current market conditions: paper and cardboard, cartons, metal, and plastics #1 and #2. All other items, including hard-to-recycle plastics such as bags and yogurt cups, are diverted to the landfill or burned as fuel at the MRF."

## WHAT IS RECYCLING CONTAMINATION?

Contamination refers to any unwanted material that enters the recycling stream. This can include both non-recyclable materials and hard-to-recycle materials that require special handling. While MRFs are designed to accommodate a certain level of contamination, it remains a huge challenge in the recycling industry - driving up handling costs, slowing the sorting and recovery process, and damaging equipment.

According to a recent independent analysis of Decatur's waste stream, the most common contaminants in our commingled recycling include the following materials:

- Bagged recyclables
- Plastic bags, wraps, and films
- Compostable paper
- Ceramics
- Foam
- Textiles and Clothing

## HOW CAN I HELP REDUCE CONTAMINATION?

Prioritize *quality* over *quantity* when deciding what to place in your curbside bin. Focus on recycling empty, clean, and rinsed metal, plastics #1 and #2, paper, cardboard, and cartons.

## WHAT GOODS & MATERIALS ARE PRODUCED FROM OUR RECYCLING?

**Glass** - Strategic Materials converts glass 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.

**Paper** - paper is used as feedstock for Pratt's paper mill to make containerboard, which is then converted into corrugated cardboard for use in shipping and retail packaging. Tetra Pak cartons are sold to specialty paper mills capable of converting the material into new paper products.

**Plastic** - Plastics #1 and #2 are separated into commodity bales and sold to industrial manufacturers such as:

- Mohawk Industries - carpet
- Unifi - fiber products
- Custom Polymers - plastic feedstocks
- Plastics #3- #7 are currently sent to the landfill or burned as energy at the MRF.

**Metal** - Metal and aluminum are separated into commodity bales. Aluminum is sold to Alcoa, and others, for reprocessing into new aluminum products

