

Current Trends in Recycling and the Importance of Recycling Right

Residents of Fort Collins have long shown support for recycling and waste reduction – 96 percent of households have a recycling bin! And for the most part, the community is doing a fantastic job of putting the correct materials in those bins.

Why is keeping recyclables separate from trash so important? If trash is included in recycling, or if food or medical waste are in recycling, an entire truckload of recyclables can be “rejected” and sent to the landfill instead. Recyclables are commodities. That means we need to provide just the materials that have markets and can be made into new products.

Like all commodities, the market value for recyclables fluctuates. Right now, many recyclable commodities are going through a market downturn. Prices matter because they help the industry recapture some cost of transporting and processing these materials. The environmental and social benefits of recycling remain, and markets are likely to improve in the future.

In the meantime, the contents of your recycling bin are more important than ever before. Here’s a list of items commonly found in curbside recycling that should NOT be in the recycling bin (* indicates items that can be recycled somewhere else):

- These damage recycling sorting equipment:
 - Plastic bags*
 - Tangles: hoses, wires
 - Shredded paper*
 - Bagged recyclables
 - Scrap metal*
 - Large plastic items
- These have no market for recycling:
 - Styrofoam
 - Coffee cups
 - Disposable plates, silverware, napkins, straws
 - Wrappers
- Don’t even think about it:
 - Food waste
 - Liquids
 - Needles & medical waste

When in doubt, check out a full A-Z list of recycling options at www.fcgov.com/recycling. Resources are also available for renters and businesses: The City’s Environmental Services Department offers a Waste Reduction and Recycling Assistance Program (WRAP) that provides free onsite assessments for starting/improving recycling and compost systems. Recycling is the third “R” in Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Buying products with less packaging and remembering to bring your own shopping bag and coffee mug can make a big difference to avoid waste. By reusing and recycling right, we can ensure our recyclables become new products and provide benefit to our environment and beyond.