

Where Do Curbside Recyclables Go?

Following the crash of the international recycling markets, many articles and news reports have stated that only a small percentage of plastics are recycled, or that materials sorted for recycling are not always recycled. While this may be the case in some communities across the nation, solid waste agreements and processing capabilities differ across every community and as a result, what may not be recyclable in one location, may be recyclable in another (e.g., in El Cerrito).



The City of El Cerrito operates our own curbside recycling collection program, delivering the materials collected for processing to Napa Waste & Recycling Services (NWRS). According to data from NWRS, 90% of curbside materials received at their facility are sorted and captured for recycling. This means that on average, there is just 10% of “contamination”, or materials that get sent to the

landfill either because they are soiled with food waste or there is not a sufficient end market for the material.

After processing, NWRS sends the sorted materials to a variety of markets within the United States, and some are sold outside of the U.S. Below is a list of current markets for the curbside program.

- Aluminum – Muscle Shoals, Alabama
- Cardboard – Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand & Vietnam
- Glass – Fairfield, California
- HDPE (#2) plastic color – Delta, British Columbia
- HDPE (#2) plastic natural – Delta, British Columbia
- Milk/aseptic cartons – Mexico
- Mixed paper/newspaper – South Korea
- Mixed rigid plastics – Los Angeles, California; Malaysia
- PET (#1) plastic – Turlock, California; Calhoun, Georgia; Southern California; Mexico
- Tin Cans – Washington State

For more information on what materials are accepted in the curbside recycling container, please visit el-cerrito.org/CurbsideProgram or contact Laureteen Brazil, Waste Prevention Specialist, at lbrazil@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 559-7686.