

# The Gainesville Zero Waste News

## What Happens to Your Recyclables?

There's a lot of misleading and confusing information about the future of recycling. For instance, you may have heard news stories stating that "only around 9% of all the plastic waste generated globally is recycled." While this statistic is accurate, it doesn't mean that the materials you place in your curbside recycling bins are not getting recycled. Instead, it highlights the vast number of plastic products that exist and that only a small percentage of them are either accepted by or collected through community recycling programs.



Locally, all materials from your orange & blue recycling bins are taken to Alachua County's Material Recovery Facility, located off Waldo Road. Here, non-recyclable items, known as contaminants, are sorted out. Recyclables are then separated by hand and machines into primary groups like glass, plastic, metal, and paper. These separated materials are baled and loaded onto trucks for shipment to secondary processors and manufacturers, where they are used to create new products. It is important to note that **Alachua County does not ship any recovered materials overseas or to incinerators.**

While the end markets are subject to change, below is a list of the common end uses for your recyclables after they are reprocessed:

- **Cardboard:** Used as backing for new cardboard boxes.
- **Mixed Paper:** Newspaper, pasteboard boxes, and other residential papers are reprocessed for protective packaging uses.
- **Aluminum Bottles & Cans:** Are smelted into sheets for the packaging industry to make new beverage containers.
- **Steel Cans:** Made into new food cans and rebar for construction projects.
- **Plastic (PET):** Get converted into plastic flakes used to make new products, such as carpeting and clothing.
- **Plastics (HDPE):** Your natural (milk jugs) and colored plastic containers (shampoo bottles) are made into plastic flakes and pellets to manufacture pipes and plastic lumber.
- **Glass:** Used to make glass containers, fiberglass, highway bead, glass abrasives, and specialty glass for decorations.

Learn more about recycling and the waste management hierarchy at [gainesvillefl.gov/ZeroWaste](http://gainesvillefl.gov/ZeroWaste) and by following ZeroWasteGNV on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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