



# *Recycle Right* Mecklenburg County

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# Recycling Journey

1. Home:  
Separate and  
put in cart



2. City or Town:  
Sends a truck to pick it up



3. MRF: Recycling Center  
Materials dumped on floor



4. Sort: 400T/Day  
Machines & people separate paper,  
plastics, metals from **TRASH** (30T/hr.)



5. Baled:  
Compacted by material



6. Sold & shipped to manufacturers



7. Used to make new products



<https://youtu.be/wbTTAU0kQG8>

Video explaining the recycling journey from your home to materials being made into new products. See the machines and by hand sorting process close-up at our recycling center!



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left is the YouTube logo. To its right is a search bar. The video player itself shows a blue circular logo for Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, with the text 'MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NC' and 'Solid Waste Management Program' below it. The video title is '2019 Recycling Right In Mecklenburg County'. Below the title, it shows '347 views • Nov 26, 2019'. There are 2 likes and 0 comments. The video is from the channel 'Mecklenburg County Government' which has 608 subscribers. The video title is 'Recycling @ Materials Recovery Facility Operations 2019'. The video is currently at 0:02 / 4:07. The video player controls include play, next, volume, and full screen buttons. The video is currently playing.

# Recycle Right?!

**#1 Goal: Reduce 'contamination' in the recycling stream**

Recycle only what we can send to market:

**1** in 5 items in curbside carts are  
**NOT** recyclable!



# Are you a Wishful Recycler?

Wishful recyclers toss the wrong items into curbside recycling bins hoping they will be recycled.



Wishful recycling damages machinery, causes fires at recycling centers and ends up being sent to the landfill.

# 'Wishful Recycling' Costs Meck County

**“If I put it in the recycling bin, someone will recycle it – right?”**

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## **The costs of improper recycling:**

- 400 Tons per day x 15% rejects = **60 Tons of Trash per day to be sorted and hauled to landfill**
- 60 Tons x \$90/ton = \$5,400 processing fees + \$2,100 landfill fees = **\$7,500/day**
- \$7,500/day x 5 days/week = **\$37,500 week**
- \$37,500/week x 52 weeks/year equals = **\$1,950,000**

**Non-Recyclable Contamination Costs: Over \$1.9 Million/year**

WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU CAN DO TO HELP US?:

## “NO Plastic Bags in Curbside Carts”



# The Plastic Bag Problem



**Incoming load to the MRF –  
how many bags do you see?**

**THIS WHERE THEY END UP...**







Please **DO NOT** place the following items in your curbside recycling bin. **DO NOT** bag recyclables in plastic bags.

Anything that can get tangled in machinery!

Rechargeable batteries for electronics



PROPANE TANKS



BATTERIES



FOOD



SHREDDED PAPER



PLASTIC BAGS AND TRASH



CORDS & HOSES



ROPES



DIAPERS



SCRAP METAL

Sharp items that can cut workers!

Flammables like propane tanks or gas cans



PLASTIC CUPS & PLASTICWARE



NAPKINS



PLASTIC FOOD CONTAINERS



SPORTS BALLS



STUFFED ANIMALS



CLOTHING & SHOES



WIRE HANGERS



CAR PARTS



YOGURT CUPS



PUMP BOTTLES



ELECTRONICS



SHARPS



PLASTIC FILM & BUBBLE WRAP

Many of the unaccepted items above can be taken to retailers, or any of the four Mecklenburg County Full Service Recycling Centers where they are recycled through separate systems.

# 6 RECYCLABLE CATEGORIES



**PAPER & MAGAZINES**



**CARTONS**



**CARDBOARD & SMALL BOXES**  
(Clean Pizza Boxes)



**METAL CANS**  
(Empty)



**GLASS BOTTLES & JARS**



**PLASTIC BOTTLES & JUGS** with Necks

**CLEAN**

**DRY**

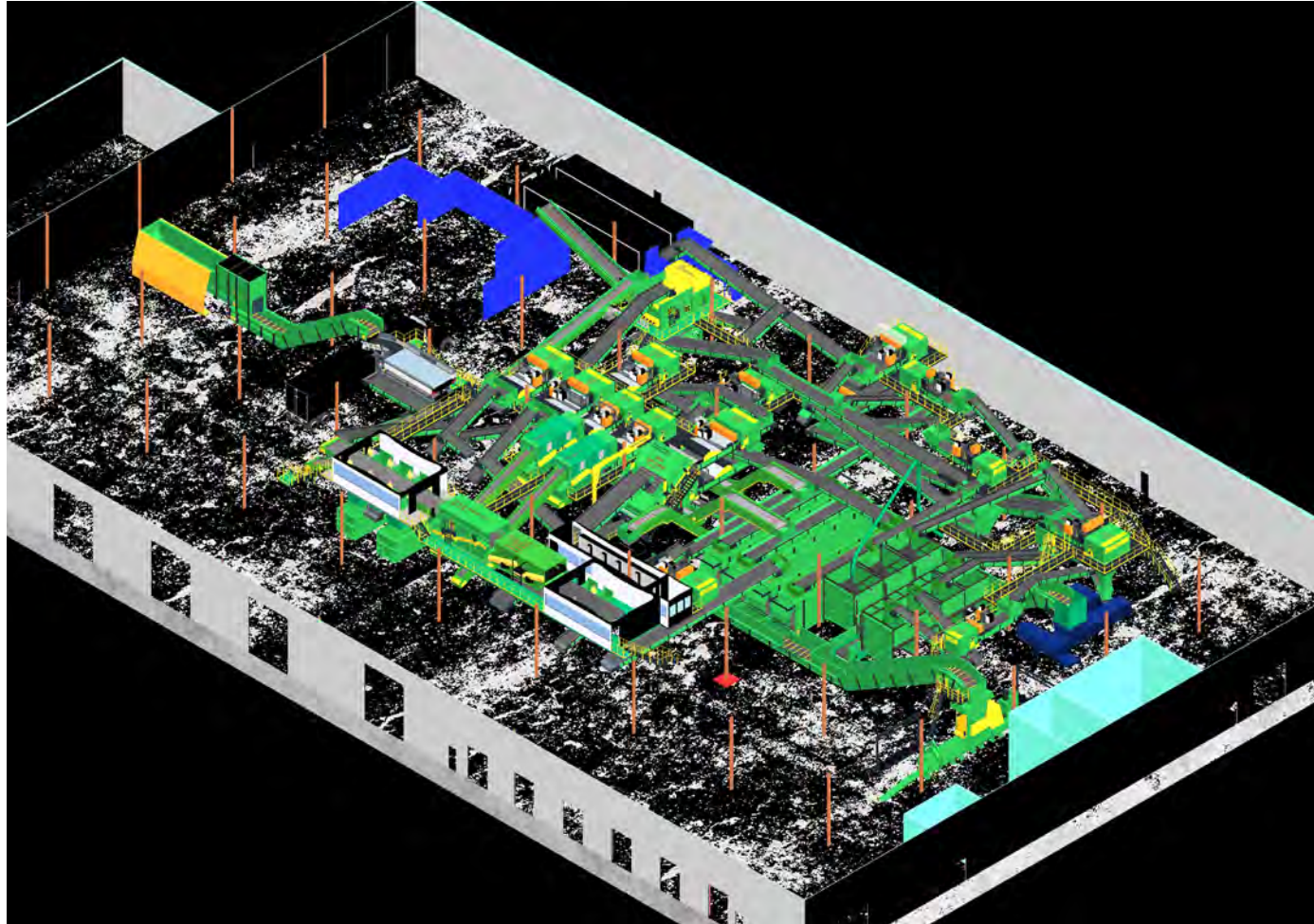
**EMPTY**

**IF it is not pictured on this slide, please do NOT put it in your cart.**

# The Future

Everyone wants more materials in the curbside single stream bin.....Polypropylene, clamshells, plastic cups, paper cups.....

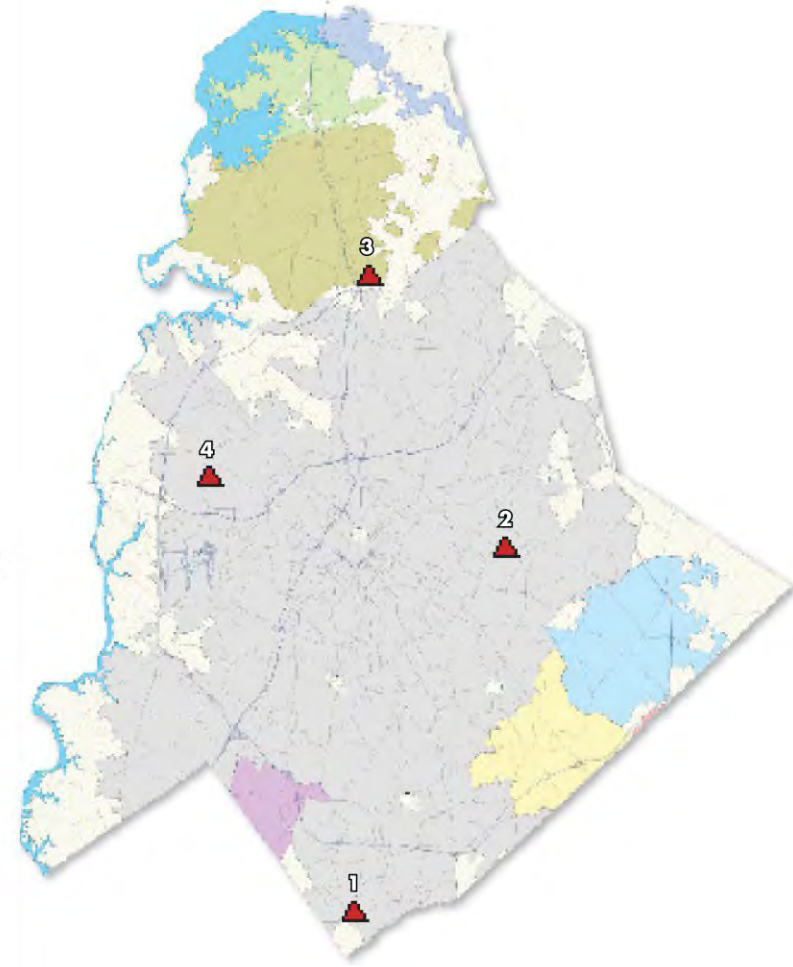
# The Retro Fit MRF





## Staffed, Full-Service Drop-off Centers

- ▲ 1. Foxhole Recycling Drop-off Center  
17131 Lancaster Highway
- ▲ 2. Hickory Grove Recycling Drop-off Center  
8007 Pence Road
- ▲ 3. N. Mecklenburg Recycling Drop-off Center  
12300 N. Statesville Road
- ▲ 4. Compost Central Drop-off & Recycling Center  
40 Valleydale Road



# Enhanced Recycling at Full-Service Centers

Expanded Polystyrene Foam (EPS)

Hard and Soft Back Books

Shredded Paper

Textile Recycling

Started Mid-November 2022



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**WHITE RIGID FOAM**

Started the process over 1 year ago

We developed Foam-A-Saurus REX storyline

Won a \$50,000 Grant for Foam Densifying Machine

Repurposed old “Dumpsters”

Utilized our relationship with the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) to fix/paint the Dumpsters

Now we use to CEO to help us process the Foam Materials



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CEO Thanks!

Repurposed Old Recycling Cans for Foam Collection



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# “Refreshed” Cans for Foam Collection





**Above:** CEO Staff feeding the Foam Densifier at our Hickory Grove Site

**Side:** Our shop after dropping off a load of EPS foam



# Foam Metrics

We are averaging 10 containers un-densified foam/week.

- 10 containers/ week = 350 yds
- 350 yds/ week = 1400yds/ month = 16,800yds/ year

Not a significant weight, but a **HUGE** volume and cost saved at the Landfill.

- Trash(1400lbs/yd) x 16,800yd = 11,760 tons of trash
- 11,760tons x \$57 = \$670,320 saved per year in landfill cost.

Side: Photo of finished foam to ship







**BOOKS**

Hard and Soft Back Books  
are  
Collected Separately in  
Large Boxes (Gaylord Boxes)

**Combination of:**

Repurposed (Promising Pages)

Children's Books

Books with no repurpose are ground into  
mixed paper

Total Material Collected = 89,198lbs/ 44.60 tons in 8  
months





**SHREDDDED PAPER**

Shredded Papers are also Collected Separately in Large Boxes (Gaylord Boxes)

Quick Numbers:

- Average 6 Gaylords per month shredded paper
- Average 8 Gaylords per month books
- Total Material Collected = 17,155lbs/ 8.58tons in 8 months





# TEXTILES

Special collection boxes are used for Textiles.

Textiles are repurposed back to the community or ground and processed as rags or animal bedding.

January 2, 2023 was our start date.

Total Materials = 32,580 lbs/16.29 tons







**Any Questions?**

**We will answer!**

