



CITY OF KNOXVILLE



WestRock

Curbside Recycling Audit 2022

Waste & Resources Management, City of Knoxville

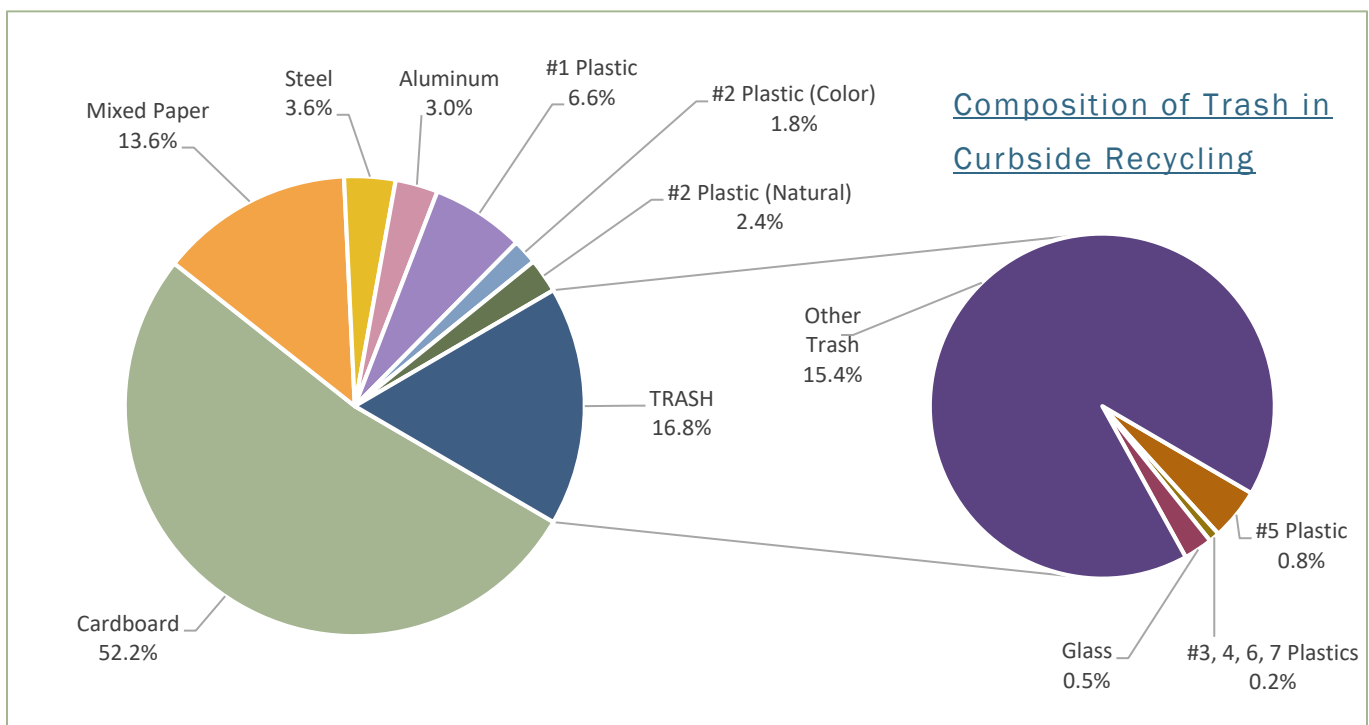
How Well Are We Recycling?

An Audit of Curbside Residential Recycling in Knoxville

On February 11, 2022, the Knoxville Waste and Resources team conducted an audit of Knoxville’s residential curbside recycling. Over the course of the two weeks leading up to the audit, Waste Connections (the City’s contracted trash and recycling hauler) collected a statistically significant sample size of curbside recycling from across five regions of the city. The City’s Waste and Resources team, along with a WestRock manager and additional WestRock staff, hand-sorted 625 pounds of collected material into the following common recycling types: cardboard, mixed paper, steel, aluminum, #1 plastics, #2 plastics (HD Natural and Color), and trash. Trash was further separated into plastics labeled #3-7, glass, and general trash.

(Unfortunately, plastics labeled #3-7 are challenging to recycle, can cause tangling on the sorting line, and lack market demand. For more information on #3-#7 plastics recycling, Please visit www.knoxvilletn.gov/recycling)

COMPOSITION OF CURBSIDE RECYCLING 2022

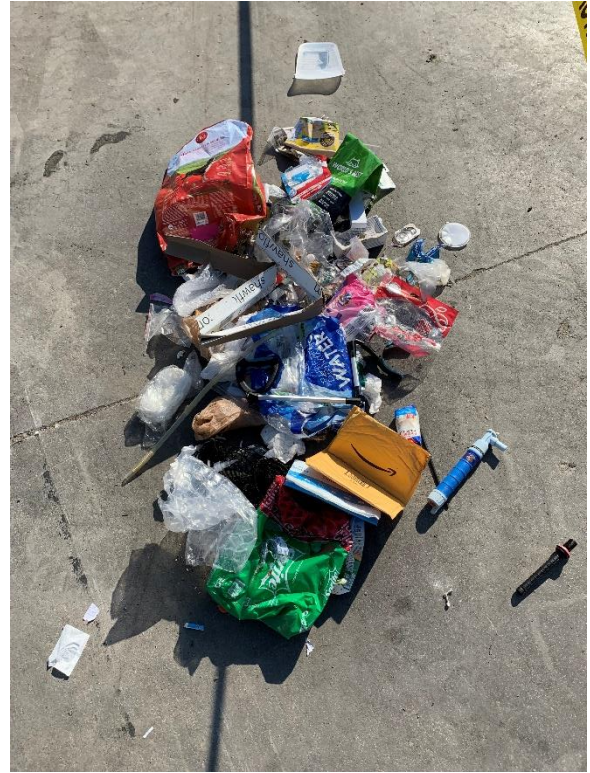


Audit Highlights

- **Participating Knoxvilleians are better at recycling than your average American:** unrecyclable materials (AKA, trash!) make up only 16.8% of the materials we put in our recycling bins. This is significantly lower than the national average of 25%.
- About 2/3 of our curbside recycling is comprised of cardboard and paper. Cardboard is one of the most in-demand recycled materials thanks to online shopping.
- Although plastics are abundant in our day-to-day lives, recyclable plastics make up a relatively small percentage of the collected material—about 11%.
- Efforts to eliminate glass in the curbside recycling collection have been largely successful: glass makes up only 0.5% of collected materials. **Residents are encouraged to take glass to any of the five City of Knoxville Recycling Centers.** To learn more about why glass was removed from curbside recycling, please visit www.knoxvilletn.gov/recycling

32,731 Knoxville households (nearly 55%) have signed up for curbside recycling since it launched in 2011—and new recyclers sign up every day.





While Knoxvilleans are doing a great job recycling, there is always room for improvement. Plastic film, plastic bags, paper towels, and food waste make up some of the most common contaminants. **One of the most important recycling rules to follow: keep recyclables loose and do not bag them.** Plastic bags are not recyclable and are actually detrimental to our recycling system—they tangle the equipment and cause sorting line shut downs. While workers do try to rip open bags as they speed down the conveyor belt, they can't get them all. When they don't, the contents of the bags are not recycled.

For more information about what is and isn't recyclable, please visit knoxvilletn.gov/recycling or use the look-up tool at knoxvilletn.gov/serviceandsort

