

Why don't we recycle #3-#7 plastics in St. Louis County?

The number one reason is that we do not have a market for them. In order to complete the recycling circle we need to have a place to send collected material that will make something new from it. There must be a market for a material to be recycled. Right now, there are no regional markets for #3-#7 non-bottles and bags. Most #3-#7 plastics are actually going to China to be remanufactured. The bad news is that China does not have human & environmental regulations like we do in the US and there are few ways to track what really happens to recycling. They are working on establishing regulations, but for the time being they have greatly restricted the amount of waste materials they are accepting at their ports. The responsible thing to do is to use regional markets and develop local markets, not to ship our resources overseas. The reason that corrugated cardboard, newspaper, #1 and #2 plastic bottles, etc., are commonly collected materials, is that there is a recycling infrastructure—processors and manufacturers—who want these materials and make them into products that are sold for profit and sold locally. Without this infrastructure—or market--recycling cannot be sustained.

You can make a difference by telling manufacturers to take responsibility for their unrecyclable plastics and packaging.