



Changing Markets and Recycling in RI

No matter what motivates you to recycle—be it saving natural resources, setting a good example for your kids, or simply abiding by the law—we should never forget that **recycling, at its core, is the provision of raw materials to a manufacturer**. In order for a material to be recycled in RI, all of the following must be met:

1. A market must exist, i.e. companies must be willing to buy the recycled items for use in manufacturing. Keep in mind that just because a market exists now, doesn't mean it always will. Likewise, just because there isn't a market now, doesn't mean there never will be! **Markets change over time.**
2. We must be able to store that material, and specifically in the case of the mixed recycling program, we must be able to process it *within a larger mix* and sort it out from that mix using available technologies.
3. We must also be able to get a company the volume they need, in the condition they desire, on the schedule they require. **We compete with other recycling facilities.**
4. When all is said and done—after separation, collection, processing, storage, and shipping—we need to be able to pay for it. **Although environmental stewardship is a priority, recycling is not free.**

While markets can change quickly, it is not practical to change our recycling guidelines every day, week, or month. Think about it: **Can you imagine having to re-learn what's accepted in our program every month?!** Market changes may require that we store, reuse/repurpose, or even temporarily landfill a material that we cannot move to a recycler. This is an occasional, but expected part of the recycling process.

The best example of changing markets and recycling in RI is glass. You'll find a timeline below. Regardless of these changes, glass bottles and jars have always been, and continue to be, accepted in RI's mixed recycling program. **Please continue to recycle your glass bottles and jars.** If/when it ever became necessary to remove glass bottles and jars from RI's mixed recycling program, rest assured that we would inform the public.

TIMELINE: GLASS RECYCLING IN RI

1988-2006	Recycled; strong market; many items still being made and sold in glass bottles and jars
2006-2013	Reused; market dwindles in Northeast as companies switch from glass to plastic; RI DEM approves beneficial reuse of glass as landfill cover material, displacing virgin materials
Oct-Apr 2013	Landfilled; RI law passed to prohibit beneficial reuse of glass as alternate landfill cover
Apr-Jun 2013	Recycled; small local market develops, relying heavily on one glass bottle manufacturer
Jun 2013-Jan 2014	Landfilled; RI's 3-color glass mix not adequate for recycler due to contamination
Jan 2014-Jan 2018	80% recycled; recycler invests in glass cleanup operation; 20% reused to cover loads awaiting landfilling (to prevent windblown litter)
Jan 2018-Jun 2018	Local bottling plant closes; Recycler no longer has adequate outlets for all glass; Resource Recovery stockpiles glass and works to identify new options for reuse
Jun 2018-Present	Reused; RI law passed to allow beneficial reuse of glass as alternate landfill cover