



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO 2019-2020 CIVIL GRAND JURY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

A Recycling Reality Check: What Actually Happens to Things We Put in Our Blue Recycling Bins?

San Francisco, CA, October 1, 2020 –

The 2019-2020 Civil Grand Jury (SFCGJ) today released a report focusing on a simple question: When San Franciscans put things in their blue recycling bins, where do those items end up? Are they really recycled, or just incinerated or landfilled? The SFCGJ investigation found that while this material does for the most part get recycled, more communication to educate residents on how the process works would increase buy-in and participation in recycling programs.

San Franciscans deposit an average 500 tons of material into their blue bins every day. What happens after that is a mystery to most of us. The material is processed at Recology's "Recycle Central" facility at Pier 96. The San Francisco Office of the Environment and Recology have developed a sorting process that results in over 80% of the material being recycled. This is considered to be the highest recycling rate of any large city in the US and is a testament to the commitment of San Francisco to sustainability.

However, the Grand Jury recommends that the San Francisco Office of the Environment enhance its educational efforts by providing more information about where the blue bin material goes, as well as explaining what items should *not* be put in the blue bins at all. This education would increase residents' buy-in and support of the program, and it would also decrease the level of contaminants in blue bin material, making it even more viable for recycling.

The report includes a variety of information about the process so that residents can make better choices in how they dispose of their trash. The report also includes a short video that shows the process used by Recology to sort the material we put in our blue bins. There is also a short quiz residents can take to test their knowledge.

The Superior Court selects nineteen San Franciscans to serve year-long terms as Civil Grand Jurors. The Jury has the authority to investigate City and County government by reviewing documents and interviewing public officials and private individuals. At the end of its inquiries,



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the Jury issues reports of its findings and recommendations. City and County agencies identified in the report must respond to these findings and recommendations.

Civil Grand Jury reports may be viewed online at <http://civilgrandjury.sfgov.org/report.html>.

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