

## Tales from Tim's Recycling Bin – Green Doesn't Always Wash

Lately I have been getting lots of calls and emails from residents wondering why some packages with recycling symbols on them are not actually recyclable. It has to do with what we call greenwashing. That is putting an environmentally friendly label on something, so it appears to be better than it really is.

A couple of examples: Amazon Prime shipping envelopes that have big blue recycling symbols. They are made of the same type of plastic as the bags you take back to the grocery store. And just like those bags, the envelopes are only recyclable if you take them back to the store. Put them in your cart and they'll end up in the trash. Because it's someone else's trash you won't know the envelopes don't go in your recycling cart.

Don't get me started on those meal delivery service kits. Companies all say their components are eco-friendly, but most of the time they are not.

So why are companies not clear, or even misleading about the recyclability of their packaging? Because they want us to like them. Research shows consumers want to buy environmentally preferred products, that we'll pay more for them, and we're more loyal to the companies that make them. No company wants to appear to be giving us garbage.

It's tempting to throw your hands up in despair. But I have a couple of tips. First, check to see if something is recyclable. You can find a list of what we accept in your cart on the city's website or on our new Brooklyn Park HRG Recycling app. Because some of this packaging is new it may not be on the list. Being new also means we haven't had time to find businesses that want to buy the packaging and recycle it. If you're in doubt, throw it out.

Second, if you see a company making false or exaggerated environmental claims, call them out. Send them an email or tag them in your post on social media. Companies want to protect their good reputation and will respond to consumer pressure.

Until next time, don't get swept away by greenwashing my friends.

