1. **Why is the recycling industry in crisis?**

In 2018, China closed its doors to recycling because the materials they were getting from the United States and beyond were too contaminated. They took in about half of the world’s recyclables. As a result, the recycling market was flooded with material. Prices bottomed out. Today, the cost to sort, bale and market materials in many cases exceeds the value of the recyclables.

OCRRA has subsidized the costs of residential recycling since the agency began in the early 1990’s. Through the years recycling has both made and cost OCRRA money; overall it was a net zero impact – until 2018.

OCRRA’s financial impacts since 2018:

![OCRRA Recycling Market Support as Percentage of Operating Expenses](chart)

2. **How long will this crisis last?**

Industry experts expect it could take 2-4 years for markets to rebound. The key is developing more domestic or local markets to take recyclables.
3. Is Onondaga County blue bin material still being recycled?

Yes! Keep recycling. Unlike in some communities that have had to suspend their recycling programs because costs became too high to bear, Onondaga County recyclables are continuing to be recycled.

It is important to recycle the right things and avoid “wish-cycling” as the cleaner our materials are, the more likely they are to be accepted by a market and the more value they will generate.

Putting the wrong thing in the blue bin can contaminate the rest of the good recyclables. That’s why OCRRA asks everyone to refamiliarize themselves with the recycling rules as they have evolved over time. For instance, we no longer ask you to pay attention to the numbers on the bottom of plastic items. Instead, pay attention to the shape. If it is a plastic bottle, jug, jar or wide-mouth dairy tub, put it in your recycling. All other plastics should go in the trash (except clean and dry film plastics, they can be recycled at big box stores).

Check out this list of the items that should go in the blue bin.
While paper materials like cardboard and newspapers are not garnering much in monetary value (and in the case of mixed paper, are garnering a negative value), there are still strong markets for:

- plastic bottles,
- plastic jugs,
- plastic jars,
- plastic wide-mouth/stackable dairy tubs,
- metal cans.

4. Will OCRRA keep recycling?

Yes. The OCRRA board of director’s convened a committee to look at ways to keep recycling going in Onondaga County. The Recycling 2020 Committee released a report of their findings; it can be found here: [www.tinyurl.com/Recycling2020Report](http://www.tinyurl.com/Recycling2020Report)

OCRRA is a public benefit corporation. It is not funded by tax support; operations must cover the costs to provide services to the community. Each October, OCRRA passes a budget for the coming year. The Recycling 2020 Report is aimed at helping OCRRA, elected officials and the community make decisions on how best to continue to support our award-winning recycling program.