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From Curbside Recycling to Chic Countertops

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The curious journey of local soda bottles might keep granite safely nestled in the earth
Do you know where the countertop in your home came from? Chances are, it's made from a non-renewable resource like granite, probably mined in a country lax in its environmental and human rights regulations, or from petro-chemicals. That is, unless it's Vetrazzo.

Made in East Bay's Richmond, Vetrazzo is both the product and name of a company that makes countertops by taking crushed glass bottles and suspending the shards in a proprietary mixture of cement and some secret ingredients. Reusing the bottles in this way, rather than melting them down, saves that much more energy. Thus, Vetrazzo, which is as strong as concrete and as easy on the eyes as a mosaic, not only does the world a world of good, but gets people talking.



"Vetrazzo is the perfect way to bring green building to people who wouldn't normally do [it]," says Scott Barrett, Vetrazzo's vice president of marketing.

Countertops aren't the only way Vetrazzo is spreading green. They work out of a manufacturing plant in Richmond that was designed in the 1930s as one of the first "daylight factories": the west- and east-facing walls are all windows, and the ceiling is lined with skylights. "During the day, you hardly have to turn the lights on," Barrett says. And Vetrazzo chose to keep production in California and pays its employees a living wage.

Recently, Vetrazzo was given a state grant of \$1.3 million to expand the product line. In addition to the countertop slabs, the new line will include smaller pieces that can be used for anything from trivets to garden pavers. Although only distributed in California right now, the new product line will help make Vetrazzo available throughout the West Coast, the U.S., and, ultimately, the world. —*Lina Swislocki*
