

Bottled up

Recycling is a tough business. And glass bottles in particular don't recycle well. Most of the time they're "downcycled" into products that have less value than the original bottle.

Hess had another idea when he launched Evolution Glass.

"There is no market for glass recyclers. They have to pay to get it hauled away, so by recycling with us they save money," he says. "We take it for



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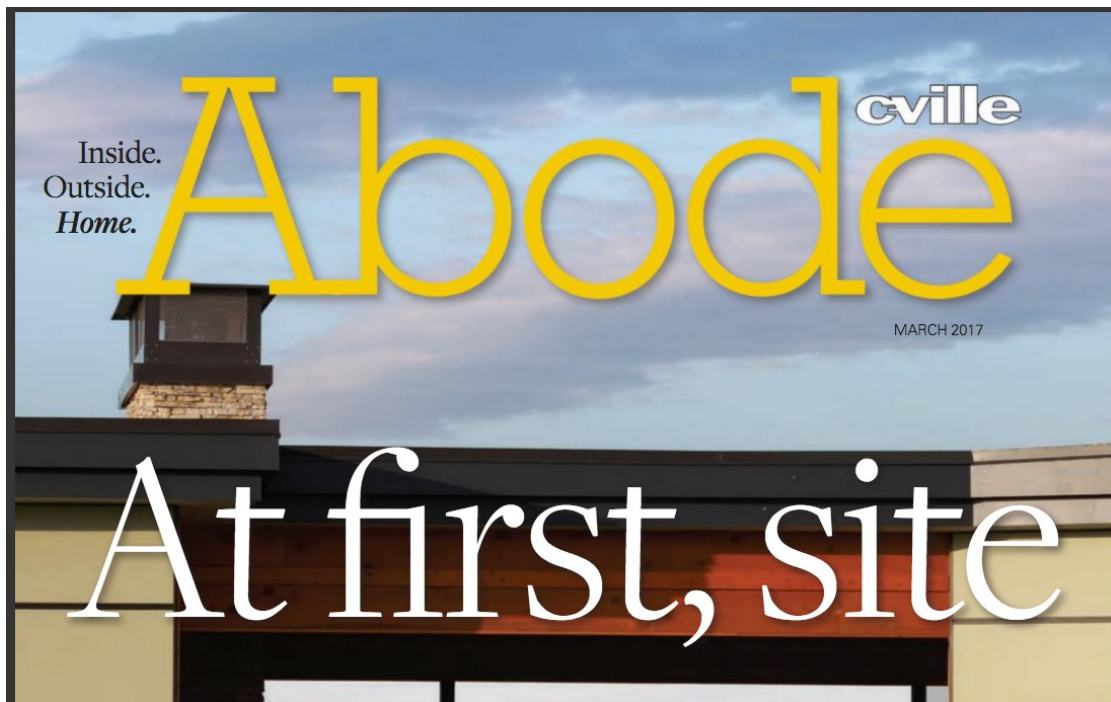
First working with a landfill in Ivy and later establishing a relationship with the University of Virginia, he's come up with a way to melt and combine clear and colored glass bottles discarded locally to produce rich, swirled glass countertops and tables.

"We use varying amounts to create different looks," Hess says. "Our process is totally unique. There is no other countertop in the world made like ours."

On top of the signature look, Evolution's glass offers structural properties comparable to stone, Hess says. The glass isn't tempered, but its thickness makes it difficult to break. And it's scratch resistant without requiring maintenance or a sealer like many stone materials.

Hess says he's done more tables than counters since launching his material a year and a half ago, but his recent collaboration with Wes Carter of Albemarle Countertop Company is helping him move into more kitchens. Eventually, he believes he'll be able to produce a material strong enough to serve as wall panels and stair treads.

"Stair treads are a cautious area—we have to be absolutely sure it's going to work, but with the wall panels, we're just waiting for the right customer," Hess says.



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