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Local Hazards Grow as Americans Churn Out More Garbage.

Increasing waste, full landfills and shuttered recycling programs mean more cities are paying to send their trash out-of-state.

As U.S. cities struggle to rein in garbage while propping up pricey recycling efforts, more companies are profiting from America's growing waste problem and leaving local communities to face the environmental consequences.

At 4.9 pounds of trash per person, per day, the U.S. is the most wasteful country on the planet. Of the 292.4 million tons of refuse Americans generated in 2018, half was buried in landfills while another 32% was recycled or composted, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The rest was burned (the preferred term being "combusted") to generate electricity.

Before 1970, the U.S. dealt with its trash by dumping it in open pits. But in 1976, waste management fundamentally changed, thanks to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. That law created disposal standards for solid and hazardous waste, bolstered recycling programs and mandated landfills install better protection against seepage into the surrounding environment.

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Bloomberg Green

By Jacqueline Davalos

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