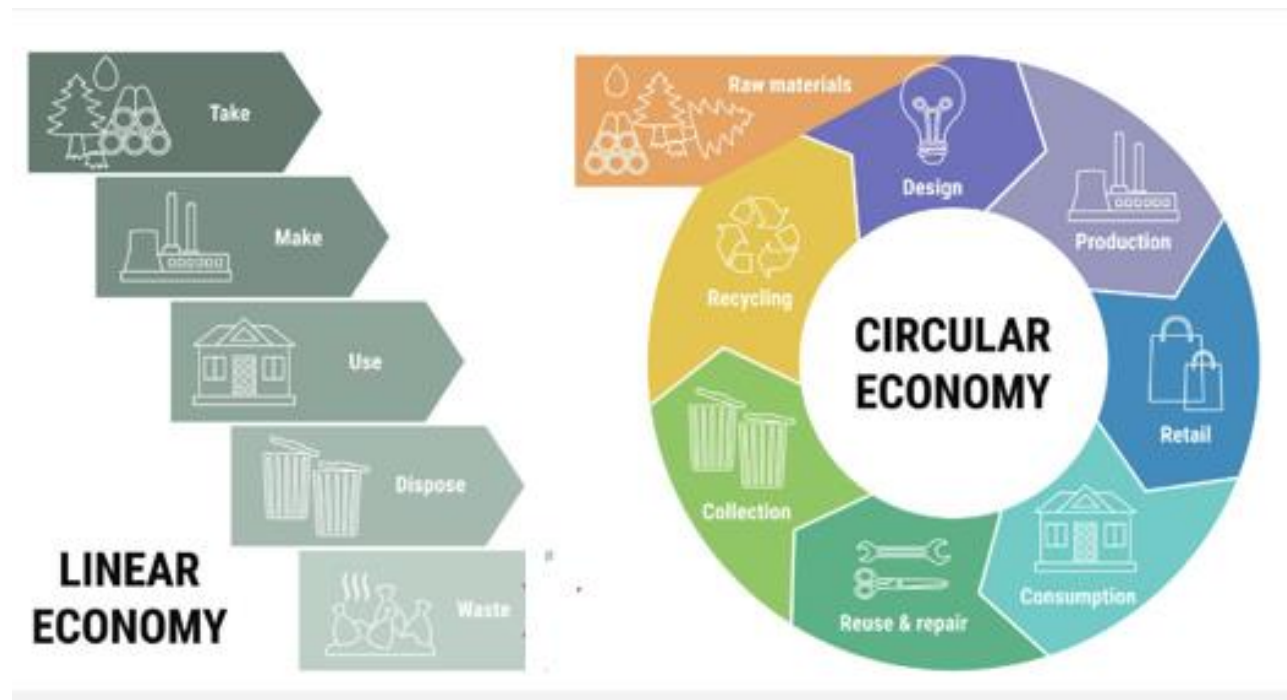


## OVERVIEW OF THE NORTHEAST WASTE AND RECYCLING MARKETS

### *Toward a Circular Economy*

Landfills throughout the Northeast are reaching their permitted capacities and closing even as broad public opposition is prohibiting the development of new disposal facilities. Connecticut has no in-state landfills; Massachusetts will close its last municipal solid waste landfill by approximately 2028, and remaining landfills in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont will be closing over the next decade.

As a result, municipal waste planners throughout the region are seeking alternatives to landfills and waste combustors. Waste reduction/reuse, recycling, Zero Waste, public education, extended producer responsibility, and packaging reform (collectively “The Circular Economy”) are all at the forefront of materials management planning throughout ME, VT, CT, MA, NY, MD, and RI.



Historically, curbside recycling has been the primary response to waste diversion. These systems suffered substantial disruption however in the late 2020’s when offshore markets for recyclables processed in the US (primarily in China) abruptly closed causing the cost of these programs to become much less stable and much higher. Aluminum, #2 waste plastic, and until recently cardboard and mixed office paper are the only recyclable materials that carry a value leaving glass and the remaining plastics (1, 3-7) carrying a cost,

In addition to preserving these traditional curbside programs, even as their net costs often exceed the cost of waste disposal, municipal waste planners throughout the Northeast are particularly focused on the development of programs to divert food wastes and other organics from the waste

steam. A myriad of organics collection, separation and processing technologies are being evaluated and, in some cases, implemented through small scale pilot programs often with temporary funding and financial incentives from State level programs.

On the Federal level, the Recycling and Composting Accountability Act of 2023 will provide an accurate reflection of recycling and composting performance nationally and at the state level. Information that will be critical to improving existing recycling and composting programs and evaluating future recycling policies.

Nevertheless, only modest quantities of organics are currently being diverted and long-haul waste transportation to remote, out-of-State landfills by truck and rail is rapidly proliferating, almost exclusively through private sector infrastructure.