

Recyclables going to landfills as economics erode

By Bob Tita, Wall Street Journal

The U.S. recycling industry is breaking down.

Prices for scrap paper and plastic have collapsed, leading local officials across the country to charge residents more to collect recyclables and send some to landfills. Used newspapers, cardboard boxes and plastic bottles are piling up at plants that can't make a profit processing them for export or domestic markets.

U.S. recycling programs took off in the 1990s as calls to bury less trash in landfills coincided with China's demand for materials such as corrugated cardboard to feed its economic boom. Shipping lines eagerly filled containers that had brought manufactured goods to the U.S. with paper, scrap metal and plastic bottles for the return trip to China.

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