

tech's next opportunity: getting wasted



From Sherrell <sherrell@sherrelldorsey.com>
To Steve <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
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REGENERATIVE
By Sherrell Dorsey

Your front row seat to the future
of sustainable innovation.

After 18 hours of travel, I touched down in Nairobi late Sunday night and somehow managed to rally for breakfast before heading to the TED Countdown Summit — TED's annual climate gathering convening scientists, environmental activists, researchers, and entrepreneurs from around the world to exchange bold ideas for a sustainable future.

I'm here on assignment for a special **TED Tech podcast series**, interviewing voices on the frontlines of climate solutions. I'll speak with a farmer who once walked miles each day to haul water to her rural Kenyan farm and, since installing a solar-powered pump six years ago, has multiplied her crop yields tenfold and helped neighboring farmers do the same. I'll also sit down with Jacqueline Novogratz, CEO of Acumen, to unpack how capital deployment must evolve — embracing longer time horizons and more patient capital for the climate technologies poised to define the next decade.

And in between podcast interviews, I'm squeezing in my final judging duties for the Miami-Dade Innovation Authority's **Solid Waste Challenge** — awarding \$100,000 to startups rethinking how we manage and monetize the recycling stream.

Solid waste management isn't typically front-page news, but it's a quiet giant in the climate economy. The global waste management market was valued at **\$1.29 trillion in 2022** and is projected to reach **\$1.98 trillion by 2032**, driven by urbanization, stricter environmental regulations, and the rising costs of landfill space and disposal. In the U.S. alone, municipalities and private haulers manage over **292 million tons of waste annually** — and less than a third of that gets recycled.

As governments and corporations double down on circular economy commitments and zero-waste mandates, this sector is primed for disruption. From AI-driven materials recovery to new marketplaces for industrial byproducts, the business of waste is no longer just about disposal — it's about resource optimization, data intelligence, and turning trash into assets.

For investors and founders alike, it's an overlooked yet vital climate tech vertical worth watching.

This week's newsletter points to how those opportunities are shaping up.

I'm on the road for a few more weeks. Reach out and say hello if you'll be in the vicinity.

Connect with me here:

- **June 14-18:** TED Countdown Summit - Nairobi, Kenya
- **June 24-July 1:** Aspen Ideas Festival - Aspen, CO
- **July 24-26:** Aspen Climate - Chicago, IL

Shirrell Dorsey

 **COMPANY TO CLOCK:**

Headquarters: Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

Why it matters: Triumvirate Environmental is a leader in hazardous and medical waste management, with an innovative approach to recycling complex waste streams—especially from life sciences, healthcare, and education

sectors. Their vertically integrated model allows for both compliance-driven disposal and sustainable reuse solutions, making them a key player in the circular economy.

Social & Environmental Impact: Triumvirate operates waste-to-energy and recycling facilities that help convert hazardous waste into usable products. Their programs reduce landfill dependence and promote safe handling of chemical and biohazardous materials, protecting both human health and ecosystems. Their sustainability services help hospitals, universities, and biotech firms meet ambitious zero-waste or LEED goals.

Global Reach Potential: While currently focused in the U.S. and Canada, their specialty in regulated industries like life sciences gives them expansion potential in other advanced biotech regions such as Europe, Singapore, and Israel. Their model could scale in areas with strict environmental and medical waste regulations.

TRACTION

Funding:

- Acquired by **AEA Investors** (a private equity firm) in **February 2024** at a reported valuation of **\$1.8 billion**. Previous backing includes investments from **Tailwind Capita**

Impact:

- They've grown into a top-tier hazardous waste firm by emphasizing both safety and sustainability—serving thousands of clients including major hospital systems, Ivy League schools, and pharmaceutical companies. Their recycling programs have helped reduce emissions from medical and chemical waste sectors.

Partnerships/Initiatives:

- Works with university labs to implement chemical reuse and inventory systems.
- Operates a **plastic-to-product recycling facility** in Jeannette, PA.
- Provides **on-site sustainable service programs** to help hospitals and labs reduce waste costs and footprint.

Major investors

- **AEA Investors** (current majority owner)
- **Tailwind Capital** (previous owner)
- Internal executive buy-in from growth rounds

NEW DEALS

- **Portland-based Birch Biosciences inked a licensing deal** with a U.S. national lab to integrate federal research into the startup's novel process to recycle plastic and build a pilot recycling facility.
- UK-based Impact Recycling **secured** £3.3 million (\$4.5 million) from IW Capital to recycle both flexible and rigid plastic consumer waste.

POLICY PLAYS

- **NY S2412**: Requires million-plus cities in New York to integrate litter-control plans (with receptacles) into solid-waste frameworks.
- **NY Senate's Packaging Reduction & Recycling Infrastructure Act**: Passed, mandates 30% cut in plastic packaging over 12 years, plus producer fees to fund recycling, with fiscal benefits of \$1.3 billion identified.
- **FL SB 200**: Florida DEP mandated to craft a statewide waste reduction & recycling plan by July 1, 2026.

INDUSTRY EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

WasteExpo 2025 (Las Vegas, now concluded): Drew 14,500+ professionals, spotlighting advances in electric trucks, AI waste sorting/route optimization, and smart bin tech wasteexpo.com. Next show: May 3–6, 2027.

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