



# Environmental Standard

Working towards a sustainable future

**W**elcome to the latest issue of the City of Houston’s environmental e-Newsletter. We thank you for your continued interest in the activities and initiatives of the City of Houston in regards to our environment. This issue features the following: A look at recent awards in energy efficiency the City has

won, and exciting news about the City’s upcoming Building ReUse Warehouse. The special features in this issue is an article about how and why you should recycle that old TV set, and a look into the City’s new Green Houston Web site.. Also, be sure to check out the PBS Planet Forward program mentioned below, and the previous issue report.

## Way to Go Houston

*The City of Houston’s Environmental Progress*

### Awards

**T**he City of Houston and Mayor White was recognized by the U.S. Conference of Mayors with a Climate Protection Award this past summer. (The award was accepted by Jedediah Greenfield, from the Mayor’s Office. He is the Environmental Communications Manager.)



From left to right: Miami Mayor Diaz, Wal-Mart President & CEO Eduardo Castro Wright, Jedediah Greenfield, Mayor White’s Office, Trenton Mayor Palmer, and Seattle Mayor Nickels

recognized for programs that represent best practices in the U.S. in regards to sustainability.

The Mayors’ Climate Protection Awards were jointly presented at the Conference by Conference President, Trenton Mayor

Douglas H. Palmer and Eduardo Castro Wright, President and CEO of Wal-Mart.

The U.S. Conference of Mayor’s annual meeting was held June 20-22 in Miami. During the conference, five large city Mayors and five small city Mayors were

Mayor White was recognized for the Comprehensive Renewable Energy Program. Through this program the City has purchased over 350,000,000 kWh of

wind energy for City facilities, making the City of Houston the largest municipal purchaser of green power in the U.S.

With the City’s current purchase it eliminates – according to the EPA’s Green Power Partnership calculator - 212,183 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is the equivalent of eliminating over 38,000 cars from the road, or over 28,000 homes from off the grid, annually, according to the EPA’s Web site.

This program was also recognized by the EPA with a Green Power Award in October. The City of Houston was the only governmental entity to receive that honor.

**ReUse Warehouse**

The ReUse Warehouse accepts donated construction materials from builders, supply companies, remodelers, contractors, and individuals. These materials are made available at no charge for use by any nonprofit

organization.

The Warehouse benefits the community by providing storage space for excess building material that would otherwise be dumped in local landfills. The City of Houston will store the material until it can be used by local organizations.

More than one-third of the waste stream in the Houston area is made up of construction and demolition material,

much of which could be diverted and re-used. By storing the materials until they can be used by community groups, the Warehouse will keep these valuable resources out of our local landfills.

Other local organizations solicit donations of certain reusable building materials, but are more selective in what they accept and store because they actually sell the material at discounted prices. The Warehouse fills a void in the community by accepting a wider variety of building materials at no charge and giving them away for free.

The ReUse Warehouse only accepts building material that is in suitable condition for reuse. Cabinets, commodes, copper, doors, electrical fixtures and equipment, fans, flooring material, glass, gutters, hardware, lighting, lumber, metal, mirrors, pipe, plumbing, plywood, PVC, roofing material, screens, sheetrock, sinks,

showers, trim, tubs, wall coverings, or windows

All the material in our inventory will be

available for free, on a first come– first serve basis. You will just need proof of your nonprofit status.

The warehouse is located at 9003 N. Main, Houston, TX 77022

For more information, please contact Sarah Mason.  
[Sarah.Mason@cityofhouston.net](mailto:Sarah.Mason@cityofhouston.net)



ReUse Warehouse, 9003 N. Main, Houston, TX 77022

## What to do with that old TV?

### Answer: Recycle it!

By Jedediah Greenfield

You have probably heard by now about the digital TV conversion that will be taking place in a few months. Congress has set June 12, 2009 as the final deadline for terminating analog broadcasts. Under the law, on Feb. 17, some full-power broadcast television stations in the United States may stop broadcasting on analog airwaves and begin broadcasting only in digital. The remaining stations may stop broadcasting analog sometime between March 14 and June 12. If you would like more information about the switch, visit <http://www.dtv.gov/index.html>, which is a Web site set up to answer questions about the digital changeover.



While some will choose to purchase the converter box that will allow them to convert their analog TV to receive the new digital signal, others will choose to upgrade their TVs to new digital TVs. If that is you, or you know someone who will be ditching their old sets, then this is an article to read.

Americans purchased roughly 3.9 million TVs just for this year's Super Bowl, according to the National Retail Federation. That's up more than 50% from the 2.5 million Americans bought for last year's Super Bowl. The Consumer Electronics Association predicts that in 2009, Americans will buy 32 million digital TVs in the U.S.

If you plan on getting a new TV or have already purchased one, recycling your old set is a responsible option.

There will be a large number of TVs being disposed of in conjunction with the digital conversion, both now and in the future. Consumers have a lot of TVs in storage, and once the digital conversion happens, any expectations of someday reusing or donating those analog TVs will disappear, since few people will want analog TVs.

The EPA estimates that in 2007, Americans got rid of 26.9 million TVs, either by trashing or recycling them. That is equivalent to 910,600 tons. That number will skyrocket with analog TVs becoming outdated this year.

Television displays contain an average of six pounds of lead each, when these components are disposed and crushed in landfills, the lead is released into the environment. Lead can cause damage to the central and peripheral nervous systems, blood system and kidneys in humans.

Lead accumulates in the environment and has highly acute and chronic toxic effects on plants, animals, and microorganisms. Other hazardous materials used in televisions and other electronics include cadmium, mercury, hexavalet, chromium, PVC plastic and brominated flame retardant. The presence of these chemicals also makes waste collection particularly hazardous to workers.

In a 2006 report, the International Association of Electronics Recyclers projects that with the current growth and

obsolescence rates of the various categories of consumer electronics, roughly three billion units will be scrapped during the rest of this decade, or an average of about 400 million units a year.

In 2006, Americans generated 2.9 million tons of electronic waste in the U.S. Of that amount only 330,000 tons or 11.4% was recycled, according to the EPA. The rest was trashed in landfills or incinerated.

Let's do our part to ensure that the recycling numbers raise while the trashed numbers fall, this is especially important with the increased units that will be discarded this year due to the digital conversion.

The City of Houston has provided three locations for citizens to discard of the electronic waste – including TVs. Residents can take electronic items to the West Park Recycling Center – opened Monday through Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., 5900 Westpark, Houston, TX 77057 – the North Environmental Service Center – opened every 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., located at 5614 Neches, Building C – or the South Environmental Service Center – opened Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., located at 11500 South Post Oak.

More information can be found at [www.houstonsolidwaste.org](http://www.houstonsolidwaste.org)

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## Green Houston Online

By Jedediah Greenfield

*T*he City of Houston launched a new Web site designed to inform and educate Houstonians on going green.

[www.GreenHoustontx.gov](http://www.GreenHoustontx.gov) is the new Web site that was launched this past summer. Residents discouraged at trying to find environmental information that formerly was housed on several of the City's various Departmental web pages, can now look in one place to find what they are looking for to go green.

“The City of Houston is working harder than ever to make Houston green,” said Mayor White. “We have made a lot of

progress, but more is needed. We need the help of every citizen of Houston to do their part. I would encourage everyone to take a little time and explore this Web site to learn what they can do to make Houston green.”

On the new Web site Houstonians can do anything from looking over the City's emission reduction plan, to finding ways they can become greener in their homes; or from reading about the sustainability projects the City is working on, to watching a HTV Green Building Special.

## Planet Forward: Make your case

A PBS Program

Join the PBS debate and help shape the upcoming show.

Planet Forward is a groundbreaking project on our energy future that will begin online with your submissions and then becomes a television show. The catch...it depends on you!



Select submissions will be featured on the Planet Forward Web site and a prime

Planet Forward launches online March 6, 2009 ([www.planetforward.org](http://www.planetforward.org)) and culminates in the PBS one hour broadcast on April 15, 2009 at 8 p.m. EST. Check your local listings, ([www.houstonpbs.org](http://www.houstonpbs.org)).

time PBS special hosted by Emmy Award winning CNN veteran Frank Sesno.

The deadline for submissions is March 10th, 2009. You'll find more information at [planetforward.org](http://planetforward.org). If you have questions or would like any further information, please email [information@planetforward.org](mailto:information@planetforward.org) or call 202-994-9284.

Planet Forward is a production of the Public Affairs Project at the Center for Innovative Media at the School of Media and Public Affairs.

## View Previous Issues of the *Environmental Standard*

Our previous issue featured, a look at some of the solar initiatives the City has including the solar panels on the City's Code Enforcement Building and on the City Hall Annex Building.

The last issue also looked at the City's innovative building retrofit program that will seek to significantly decrease the amount of energy the City uses in its

buildings by making them more energy efficient.

And finally, in our last issue we looked at preparations for hurricane season in regards to Household Hazardous Waste, and making sure we are prepared and not creating any health problems due to the hazardous material we may have around, particularly in your garage, like paints and fertilizers.

To view past issues of the *Environmental Standard*, log onto our Website [www.houstontx.gov/environment/index](http://www.houstontx.gov/environment/index).

[html](#) and select e-Newsletters from the left-hand column, from there you can select which issue you would like to view.

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Do you have an environmental question or comment for us?  
If so please email us at [envcomments@cityofhouston.net](mailto:envcomments@cityofhouston.net)