



Environmental Standard

Working towards a sustainable future

Welcome 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 The City’s Solar America City designation by the US Department of Energy, an

update of the City’s energy code, and the City’s status as a green power purchaser. The special features in this issue is an article about the City’s building retrofit contract, and an article looking at household hazardous waste and how you should prepare for hurricane season. Also, be sure to check out the Environmental Spotlight, and the previous issue report.

Way to Go Houston

The City of Houston’s Environmental News

Solar City

The City of Houston was recognized by the US Department of Energy as a “Solar America City.”

The DOE announced that Houston has been selected as one of 12 cities to be recognized. Houston was chosen for its commitment and comprehensive approach to the deployment of solar technologies.

The grant makes available \$200,000 in funds to the City of Houston from the

DOE along with access to their technical resources to develop a strategy and plan for solar infrastructure in the region. BP Solar, a key partner in the proposal, will provide an additional \$200,000 in solar panels to the City of Houston as part of the matching requirement for the grant.



“Houston is in a unique position to help lead the nation to make power more affordable for all Americans. We are home to one of the largest producers of photo voltaic (solar power) cells in the country, in BP,” said Mayor White. “We have the energy expertise that, coupled with privately

funded initiatives and innovative policy-makers, can make solar power of greater use to Americans more quickly.”

The Solar America Cities initiative is one of many sustainable efforts Houston is pursuing in ensuring our region continues its strong growth and prosperity.

“These Solar America Cities aim to jumpstart integration of solar power and encourage other cities across the nation to follow suit,” DOE Secretary Bodman said during the official announcement in Denver, Colorado.

Solar panels have been placed on the City Hall Annex building as well as the City’s Code Enforcement building. These cells will produce approximately 24,000 kWh of energy annually for City use.

Upgrade of the City’s Energy Code

For commercial buildings ASHRAE 90.1 plus local amendments (like cool roofs that make sense in Houston) and for residential IECC 2006 plus local



amendments make Houston a leader in energy efficiency and sets our course towards green building for everyone in our community. Houston upgraded the

commercial energy code in April, 2008, which will allow new buildings to be significantly more energy efficient than under current codes, saving money for the owners and users and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and the need to build additional generation plants and transmission lines.

We’re Number One!

The City of Houston is now the number one municipal purchaser of green power in the nation.

Beginning July 1, 2008 the City will have contracted over 350 million kWh of wind energy annually. That eliminates – according to the EPA’s Green Power Partnership calculator - 212,183 metric tons of CO₂, which is the equivalent of eliminating over 38,000 cars from the road, or over 28,000 homes from off the grid, according to their Web site.

Energy Efficient Capital

By Jedediah Greenfield

If people were asked, where Americas “green cities” are you would most likely hear, Portland, Austin and San Francisco, for example. One city that would probably not come to mind would be the City of Houston... yet!

Those paying close attention to actions going on inside Houston’s City Hall are beginning to see that the bayou city is gradually becoming the emerald city.

The City of Houston is changing, in a good way. Sustainability is becoming a common subject that is attracting more time and talent around the floors of City Hall.

The City of Houston is leading the nation in renewable energy purchase, the City has begun to invest in solar energy technology, Houston ranked number one in total acreage of parkland among the top ten U.S. cities, and now the City will lead the world in the scope of a building retrofit program.

Mayor White's vision of Houston becoming the energy efficient capital of the world has taken a significant step forward. Mayor White and Houston City Council signed a contract with Siemens and T.A.C. America, committing 271 City facilities, totaling approximately 11 million square feet, to the Clinton Foundation Climate Initiative's Large Buildings Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program.

This program presently brings together 10 of the world's largest energy service companies (ESCOs), six of the world's largest financial institutions, and many of the world's largest cities in a landmark effort to reduce energy consumption in existing buildings across the municipal, private, commercial, educational and public housing sectors.

The City of Houston's building retrofit program is being noticed throughout the world as the largest-scale program of all participating cities, and is the 1st North American city to sign contracts and begin work.

"This is yet another example of the City of Houston leading the way in

innovative environmental policy," said Mayor White, "with this program we plan to significantly cut the City's already falling energy consumption, saving the tax payers more money and reduce emissions at the same time."

The following types of City facilities will be included in this project:

- 100 Fire stations totaling 926,000 sq.ft
- 81 Police stations totaling 2.4 million sq.ft
- 34 Health facilities totaling 1 million sq.ft
- 5 Convention and Entertainment facilities totaling 3.9 million sq.ft
- 40 Libraries totaling 1 million sq.ft
- 1 Municipal Court totaling 104,000 sq.ft
- 10 General Office Facilities (e.g. City Hall, City Hall Annex, 611 Walker, etc.) totaling 1.6 million sq.ft

Such retrofit components and applications may include: lighting, space heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, building envelopes, heat recovery, energy and water management systems, environmental system controls, motors, domestic water heating, fuel switching, air distribution systems, water distribution / metering or other energy / water related improvements; e.g., utility rate improvements and renewable energy, to name a few.

The City anticipates a greater than 20 percent reduction in annual utility and operating costs through the implementation of this energy efficiency and utility conservation retrofit program. This is a multi-year contract that will result in the savings of millions of

dollars over many years and the reduction of a significant amount of

carbon dioxide, estimated to reach 300,000 tons annually.

Hurricanes and Household Hazardous Waste

By Randall Coleman

The 2008 hurricane season is upon us, and while many residents already know to stock up on bottled water, check flashlight batteries and review evacuation routes, most do not consider the importance of securing hazardous household chemicals and waste during a storm. Many common household chemicals can cause environmental harm and pollute our drinking water supply if leached into the soil or washed into rivers or the bay with receding floodwaters. It is important for residents to properly dispose of hazardous waste prior to a hurricane watch or, failing that, store their waste and hazardous chemicals inside, off the floor, and out of reach of floodwaters.



Common household hazardous waste and chemicals that should be properly secured include paints, stains and varnishes, pool chemicals, propane tanks, cleaners, polishes, pesticides and herbicides, fertilizer, automotive products, antifreeze, oil, gasoline, pharmaceuticals, and other medical waste.

Residents should not wait until a hurricane watch to get rid of their hazardous waste but follow the City of Houston's guidelines for proper hazardous waste disposal on a regular basis. These guidelines can be accessed on the City of Houston's Web site at www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste or by calling the City of Houston Household Hazardous Waste Information Line at 713-551-7355.

Environmental Spotlight

The Mayor's Office of Environmental Programming has selected the Houston Astros as the Environmental Spotlight recipient this month.

As part of their Play Green campaign, the Astros have kicked off several environmental initiatives in 2008 including composting Minute Maid Park's infield and outfield grass cuttings


to use as fertilizer, recycling all light bulbs used in the ballpark, changing the manual paper towel dispensers in restrooms to automatic paper towel dispensers in order to save on the amount of paper used, and printing several paper products such as sales brochures, napkins and paper towels on post-consumer recycled paper.

The Astros have long showed a strong commitment to environmentally friendly practices. At Minute Maid Park, grease is recycled that will later become fuel, 125 recycle bins are placed throughout the ballpark for fans to recycle plastic, aluminum, and cardboard, only eco-friendly safe chemicals are used on the

field, and eco-friendly plastic bags are used at all ballpark merchandise locations.

To see current and past environmental spotlight awardees, please visit, <http://www.houstontx.gov/environment/spotlight.html>

View Previous Issues of the *Environmental Standard*

 Our previous issue featured, an article regarding Mayor Bill White proclaiming the Month of December, Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) month, in conjunction with, "Lighten Up Texas," a statewide CFL campaign. Citizens were encouraged to begin the New Year with the resolve to become more energy efficient.

To view past issues of the *Environmental Standard*, log onto our Website 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.

Do you have an environmental question or comment for us?
If so please email us at envcomments@cityofhouston.net