



“Reducing and Managing Costs of Houston’s Solid Waste Management Operation”

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Overview

- Houston's Problem
- The Task Force
- Implementation
- Savings



Houston's Problem



- SWMD operates without a garbage fee.
- No city-owned landfill.
- Expensive and restrictive waste disposal contracts.
- Political rusty-knife fight to make changes to programs.
- Constituents spoiled and flush with services.

The Task Force

- Appointed by then Mayor Bill White in 2004 to review Houston's rich, yet poorly funded solid waste programs.
- Chaired by current Mayor and then Controller Annise Parker.
- Compared Houston's Solid Waste System with other Texas cities and large national cities seeking opportunities for best standards.
- "Recycling and yard waste programs need to be greatly increased to benefit the environment and conserve valuable landfill airspace."



Task Force Report



- SWMD operates without a garbage fee.
- No citywide recycling program.
- No city-owned landfill.
- 40 cubic yards per home per month of heavy trash.
- Unlimited yard waste disposal.
- Expensive and restrictive waste disposal contracts.
- Political rusty-knife fight to make changes to programs.
- Constituents spoiled and flush with services.
- City leaders must make changes to reduce waste volumes and create a resource recovery tilted operation.

Landfill Disposal Savings

- Disposal contracts were highly unfavorable for efficient city SWMD operations.
- Cost city additional dollars to meet contract terms.
- Renegotiated terms saved city more than \$320 million over previous terms.
- New agreements leveraged city's fleet logistics and owned transfer stations.
- New terms created an environment for enhanced and expanded recycling programs.



Implementation – Tree Waste



- The department collected approximately 300,000 tons annually of heavy trash.
- Estimated that up to 40% of the volume is clean tree waste.
- Department gained council approval for following changes:
 - Amount per home per collection.
 - Annual schedule amended to 6 green waste and 6 junk waste.
 - Stricter enforcement of private businesses operating at city expense.
 - Gained disposal savings of approx. \$3.0 million.

Implementation – Yard Waste

- City was annually collecting approx. 60,000 tons of yard waste in petroleum bags.
- More than 90% collected went directly to landfill.
- An expensive and labor intensive process to dispose of “water”.
- Department gained approval to require biodegradable bags only for yard trimmings.
- Private partner LETCO, pays department for all yard waste collected. 10 locations gained incremental logistical savings.
- Savings totaled more nearly \$3.0 million annually.



Electronics Recycling Partnership



- SWMD has partnered with CompuCycle, LLC to conduct monthly collection events in select locations.
- The Partnership replaces city staff and equipment, all the while gaining additional revenue to expand recycling services city wide.
- Estimated savings for SWMD is approximately \$350,000 annually.

Community Service Workers

- Community Service is an integral part of SWMD operations:
 - Environmental Centers.
 - Community Clean-up events.
 - Facilities maintenance operations.
 - Container recovery and management.



Savings

- Recycling Tree Waste saves more than 50% ton.
- Recycling Yard Waste avoids all disposal costs and gains revenue.
- Grass-cycling and composting is exactly what occurs naturally, saving on watering and fertilizing.
- Houston saves between \$6 - \$8 million annually by recycling green “commodities”.
- Waste contract savings of more than \$14 million annually.



Questions

