The Challenge: Government Initiative

The Solid Waste Management Department of Houston would often get the question from residents, “where can I recycle my EPS foam?”. To fulfill the wishes of its citizens the City of Houston needed a solution that would provide the requested services in a cost-effective way.

The City of Houston was able to fulfill the requests of its citizens with a recycling program that collected approximately 200,000 lbs of Polystyrene. This was the first recycling program of its kind in the area and serves as an excellent example of government and private sector collaboration.
In 2012 the City of Houston entered into a partnership with Total Petrochemicals & Refining USA Inc. (TPRI), a local chemical company, to create an EPS recycling program for its citizens. TPRI agreed to donate the funds that allowed the City to purchase a polystyrene foam densifier, which was to be located at Houston’s Westpark Consumer Recycling Center. Houston’s Solid Waste Management Department began a campaign to educate the public of the new service and of its many benefits for the City and its citizens.

The public/private partnership was a “win-win” for both parties as it solved a problem while simultaneously creating opportunities. The addition of polystyrene foam recycling has been well received by the general public, offering a much needed recycling outlet for this material. The polystyrene foam is collected and sold to market users who develop products based on recycled plastics. This program is the first of its kind in the region and is an added revenue source for the City of Houston.

Notable Achievements

The new EPS recycling program has been a remarkable success for the City of Houston and has been well received by its citizens, which appreciate the much-needed outlet for recycling a material that previously went to waste.

By pairing with a local business, Houston was able to provide this valuable service to the public with no additional burden on the taxpayers.