

Advanced Recycling Isn't Burning Plastic — It's the Missing Piece Houston Needs

By: Peter Fasullo

The Houston Chronicle opinion piece by Luke Metzger argued inaccurately that advanced recycling “isn't really recycling” and that plastics are “burned” at recycling facilities. Metzger's description is not how advanced recycling works.

Most Houstonians associate recycling with tossing plastics in a green bin. The system was designed to collect plastics for mechanical recycling which only delays their trip to the landfill. Plastics degrade after a few cycles and become unrecyclable. While mechanical recycling works for some plastics, it's ineffective for most of Houston's plastic waste like grocery bags, wrappers, containers, and packaging films.

Advanced recycling breaks these hard-to-recycle plastics into their original building blocks, which are then used to create new plastics. **Advanced recycling is not burning plastics.** It's like taking apart an old sweater thread-by-thread and weaving new sweater from the old threads. The result is a brand-new item from materials fully recovered from the original. That is how advanced recycling works.

Companies have commitments to use more recycled content. Mechanical recycling cannot meet that demand alone because it simply cannot recycle most plastics whereas advanced recycling can.

Houstonians should not be misled about advanced recycling or misinformed about environmental impacts. Mechanical recycling doesn't solve the waste plastic problem where advanced recycling effectively closes the loop. Houstonians deserve to know the facts and support systems that work.

Peter Fasullo is Co-founder and Chief Commercial Officer of 245Recycle, Advanced Plastics Recycling and Expertise.