

IMPACT IN PROGRESS

CASE STUDY



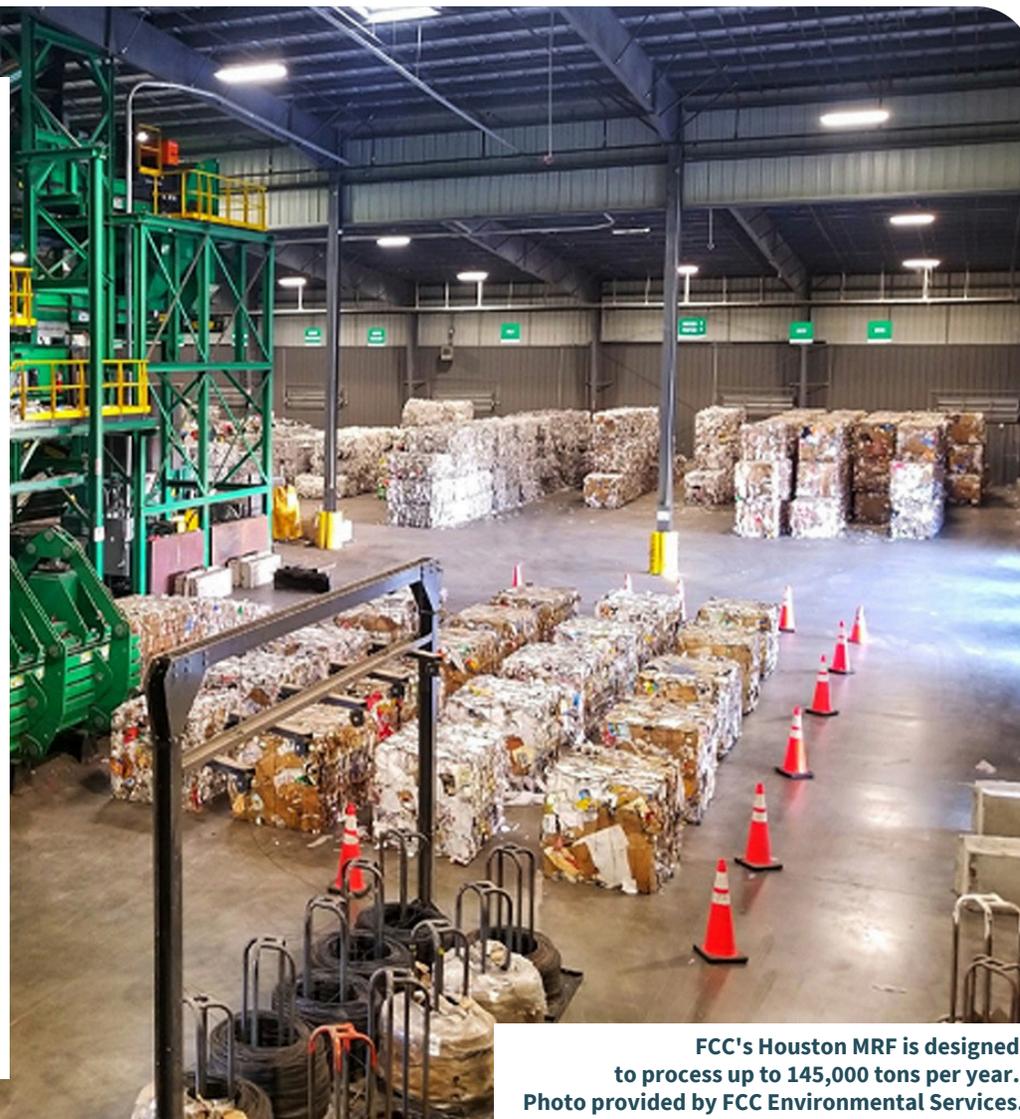
Building the Pathway: Transforming Recycling's Toughest Material Through System Investment

FCC Environmental Services, Houston, Texas

Plastic bags, pouches, and wraps, collectively known as film and flexible packaging (FFP), have long been recycling's biggest headache. They jam equipment, contaminate material streams, and rarely get recovered.

With a \$4.25 million grant from The Recycling Partnership, FCC Environmental Services is creating a pathway forward. The investment, the largest single material recovery facility (MRF) grant The Partnership has awarded, will retrofit FCC's Houston MRF to turn film and flexibles from a costly contaminant into a recoverable, revenue-generating material. If successful, the project could pave the way for giving nearly 1 million Houston households curbside access to film recycling for the first time.

“Plastic film and flexible packaging are widely used but have historically been excluded from curbside recycling due to processing limitations and contamination concerns,” said John Rabon, Vice President of Recycling at FCC. “This upgrade represents an important step forward—offering Houston residents new opportunities to recycle more and reduce what ends up in the landfill.”



FCC's Houston MRF is designed to process up to 145,000 tons per year. Photo provided by FCC Environmental Services.



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Photo from The Recycling Partnership library.

How the Retrofit Works

FCC will install three state-of-the-art optical sorters, supported by film hoods, conveyors, and electrical and mechanical upgrades. These enhancements are designed to:

- Recover nearly 4 million pounds of incidental film annually that would otherwise be lost
- Improve paper bale quality by removing stray plastics, boosting market value

WHY IT MATTERS

Extended producer responsibility (EPR) laws in states like California require companies to ensure FFP is recyclable and actually recovered. Without proven recovery pathways, those mandates cannot succeed.

This public-private partnership is building that pathway. By funding upgrades that could capture film at scale, The Partnership and FCC are laying critical groundwork for compliance strategies, stronger end markets, and a circular economy that includes film.

“To meet these mandates effectively, investment now in the supply chain to turn FFP into new products is critical,” said Kate Davenport, Chief Impact Officer at The Recycling Partnership. “This project shows how targeted improvements at MRFs can provide the feedstock for recycled film, improve bale quality, and deliver the data communities and companies need to shape effective compliance pathways.”

Building Towards Scale

The Houston retrofit is scheduled to begin in early 2026. But its impact will extend well beyond Houston. Insights gained here will inform future investments, shape national film recovery strategies, and fuel the growth of reliable end markets for recycled film.



THIS INITIATIVE NOT ONLY IMPROVES RECOVERY TODAY, IT LAYS THE GROUNDWORK FOR SCALABLE, SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

JOHN RABON,
VICE PRESIDENT OF RECYCLING AT FCC

KEY IMPACTS

- **\$4.25 MILLION PUBLIC-PRIVATE INVESTMENT**
- **IF SUCCESSFUL, NEARLY 1 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS COULD GAIN CURBSIDE ACCESS TO FILM RECYCLING**
- **4 MILLION POUNDS OF FILM COULD BE RECOVERED ANNUALLY**

This is just the beginning. Explore how this investment is building the pathway for film recycling, and read our [announcement here](#) to see how partners are coming together through our CalFFlex Initiative to make it happen.

