

The Burton Bulletin

March 2026



*Happy
St. Patrick's
Day*

**The Burton Bulletin is a monthly publication
For the Burton Texas area.**

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I may look lazy, but on a molecular level, I'm quite busy.

AAAAA – American Association Against Acronym Abuse.

I'm trying to be independent, but no one will help.

I found your computer problem. You need a user upgrade.

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Please make check out to David Zajicek and in the notation line put Burton Bulletin. Thank you!

The more you weigh, the harder it is to be kidnapped. Stay safe and eat more cake.

Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.

I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not sure.

Rooster Talk

At the Neon Moon lately, in this little city of fewer than 300 people that quietly sits at the midpoint between Austin and Houston, beautiful in its serenity, the topic is of great financial concern. Economic stability and how best to create an economic base that can be fashioned so the City retains its unique character while affording the infrastructure that supports this comfortable, down-home feeling. With all the talk, all parties have developed opinions based on what we, the taxpayers, know. So what if you could remove all the emotion and drama by getting an impartial third party to sit down with the issue and discuss it. I am hopeful that by “sitting down” with AI and paying attention to the specifics, we can bridge the gulf between the two sides. This AI approach seems like intellectual cheating to a child of the mid-20th Century, but I find the depth of information and the speed with which it accumulates to be exceptional.

I copied the response VERBATIM:

For a very small city (like the one you described), “best” usually means a mix of discipline, diversification, and realistic expectations rather than one magic project or ordinance. Here’s a practical framework that minimizes long-term burden on residents while building stability.

1. Start with a Real Comprehensive Plan (Not Just Ordinances) Jumping straight into detailed ordinances without a shared vision often:

- Creates confusion and resentment
- Locks you into rules that don’t fit future opportunities
- Increases administrative costs for a tiny tax base

A community-driven comprehensive plan should:

- Be built with broad input (workshops, surveys, town halls at different times, online feedback for working families)

Identify:

- What you want to protect (small-town feel, historic core, open land)
- What you’re willing to change (types of businesses, housing mix, traffic patterns)
- What you cannot afford to ignore (infrastructure, school-related growth, water/sewer, drainage)

Then ordinances (zoning, development standards, etc.) are written to implement that plan, not the other way around.

2. Grow the Tax Base Without “Selling the Soul” of the Town

For a city of a few hundred people, the key is quality of tax base, not size.

Focus on revenue-positive land uses

- Small commercial / service nodes along main routes (cafes, small offices, clinics, trades, light industrial) that:
- Generate sales tax and property tax
- Don’t drastically increase school enrollment or road costs
- Encourage owner-occupied small businesses and live-work units, so dollars recirculate locally.

Use zoning to protect character and revenue

- Allow neighborhood-scale commercial instead of only big-box style zoning you’ll never attract.
- Permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and gentle density (duplexes, small cottages) where infrastructure can handle it; this:

- Increases property values and taxes
- Provides housing for teachers, nurses, and young families

- Consider design standards (building type, signage, setbacks) so new buildings fit the town visually, even as you diversify uses.
- 3. Manage Debt and Big Projects Carefully (Like the School Debt)*

Even when school taxes are partly insulated from city decisions, the combined tax bill is what residents feel.

To minimize burden:

- Coordinate city and school planning. Share projections on:

- Future housing growth
- Enrollment scenarios
- Infrastructure needs
- Develop a long-term fiscal model that shows:
- Debt service per year
- Expected tax base growth
- Best-case / worst-case scenarios
- Establish local policy guidelines, for example:

• “Total tax rate (city + school + county) should not exceed X without voter approval and clear communication.”

• “New infrastructure must show that projected tax base from the area at least covers its long-term maintenance, not just initial construction.”

When considering new debt:

- Avoid issuing debt for things that don’t expand or protect the tax base (unless essential for safety/health).
- Look creatively at phasing projects instead of doing everything at once.

4. Attract the Right Sized Economic Drivers

Big industry or large subdivisions are usually unrealistic and can overwhelm a tiny community. Look for small, compatible drivers:

- Tourism tied to your identity: historic downtown, music/nightlife, local festivals, markets, or nature-based recreation.
- Remote workers / small professional offices: with decent internet, you can attract people whose income comes from elsewhere but who pay local property and sales tax.
- Craft, food, and cultural businesses: breweries, bakeries, art, specialty retail—things that fit a small-town brand.

Tools to support this without big subsidies:

- Simplified permitting and clear timelines.
- Small façade or sign improvement grants (possibly funded by hotel occupancy tax or partnerships).
- Co-marketing via a simple city + business association website/social presence.

5. Keep Operating Costs in Check

Economic stability comes as much from controlling expenses as from raising revenue.

- Shared services with county or neighboring towns (IT, dispatch, animal control, building inspection, code enforcement) instead of staffing everything locally.
- Joint purchasing for equipment and materials.
- Contract specialized work instead of hiring full-time staff you can’t fully utilize.
- Maintain strict asset management: roads, water, sewer, and facilities tracked by age/condition, so you plan replacements instead of reacting to failures. **(Continue on Page 3)**

(Continue from Page 2 – Rooster Talk)

6. Make New Development Pay Its Own Way

To avoid current residents subsidizing growth:

- Use impact fees or equivalent mechanisms for water, sewer, and roads (if state law allows).
- Require developers to build and dedicate infrastructure to city standards rather than the city paying for everything.
- Use fiscal impact analysis for sizable developments: estimate the net city position (taxes in minus city service costs over time). If a new project can't at least break even for the city over its life cycle, that's effectively an invisible tax on existing residents.

7. Communicate Honestly and Quantitatively With Citizens

To minimize perceived and real burden, people need to see the math.

- Explain, in plain language:
- “Here’s what \$1 of our city property tax buys you.”
- “Here’s what the new school debt means for a \$200,000 home at current rates.”
- Use simple visual scenarios, for example:
- Scenario A: Minimal growth, higher rates
- Scenario B: Moderate, targeted commercial growth, stable rates
- Scenario C: Aggressive growth, more traffic/infrastructure costs

This kind of transparency often reduces the “immediate ordinances vs. long-term plan” fight, because people can see the tradeoffs.

8. Process to Bridge the Divide in Your Town

Given your description of the split, a constructive path might be:

1. Adopt a temporary, narrow set of ordinances to prevent obviously harmful or irreversible actions (e.g., heavy industrial uses in the middle of town, big billboards, etc.).

2. Simultaneously commit (by resolution) to a 9–12 month comprehensive planning process with:

- A representative steering committee (business owners, long-timers, newcomers, renters, retirees, under-65 taxpayers)
- Independent facilitation so it's not seen as one faction's document

3. Use the plan to rewrite and simplify ordinances afterward, so they align with the community's chosen direction.

This approach respects those wanting immediate protections while honoring those who want a thoughtful, long-term plan.

9. A Simple Guiding Principle

For a very small city trying to be stable and fair to its citizens, you can boil this down to:

Every major decision should be tested against one question: Does this help ensure that the people who enjoy the benefits are the ones paying the costs—now and in the future?

That principle usually leads to:

- Careful debt use
- Growth that pays its way
- Preservation of core character
- Honest tax impacts

If you'd like, tell me more about your town's specific assets (location advantages, major roads, existing businesses, available land). I can sketch a draft “economic stability strategy” you could share as a Rooster Talk column or discussion starter.

So, I did. I added this statement to AI, to see if it could further enlighten us: It is home to an integrated public school system that is undergoing around \$50 million in renovations and new athletic facilities. Forty-three million dollars of debt will be paid off over 30 years at 2 ½% interest (or something close to that). So, I ponder what that means to the average people living here, specifically folks under 65 (since over 65, the school tax is frozen).

AI response:

You're right to focus on what that level of school debt means for younger and working-age residents. Let's walk through it in plain numbers, then talk about what it means per household and for the town's future.

I'll have to make a few assumptions because we don't know your exact tax base (total taxable property value in the school district). You can later plug in real numbers from the district's financial reports.

1. Rough Annual Cost of the Debt

You mentioned:

- \$43 million of debt
- 30 years
- About 2.5% interest

Using a standard 30-year loan structure at ~2.5% interest, the annual payment (principal + interest) is roughly:

About \$2.1–\$2.2 million per year

Over 30 years, that's:

- About \$43M principal
- Plus around \$20M–\$22M interest
- Total paid over time: roughly \$63M–\$65M

Again, this is a ballpark estimate. The exact number depends on the actual bond structure, any refinancings, and fines.

2. How That Translates to Tax Rates

School bond payments are usually funded by the Interest & Sinking (I&S) portion of the property tax rate (sometimes called the “debt service” rate).

To know the tax impact, we need the district's total taxable property value. Since we don't have it, here are scenarios you can adapt.

Let's say the school district's total taxable value (all property in the district combined) is:

Scenario A: \$500 million total taxable value

- Annual debt service: ~\$2.1M
- Debt tax rate needed = $\$2.1M \div \$500M = \$0.42$ per \$100 of value

For a \$200,000 home:

- $\$200,000 \div 100 = 2,000$ units
- $2,000 \times \$0.42 \approx \840 /year in school debt tax

Scenario B: \$1 billion total taxable value

- Debt tax rate needed = $\$2.1M \div \$1B = \$0.21$ per \$100

For a \$200,000 home:

- $2,000 \times \$0.21 \approx \420 /year

Scenario C: \$1.5 billion total taxable value

- Debt tax rate needed = $\$2.1M \div \$1.5B \approx \$0.14$ per \$100

For a \$200,000 home:

- $2,000 \times \$0.14 \approx \280 /year

(Continue on Page 4)

(Continue from Page 3 – Rooster Talk)

Key point:

• The larger the taxable base (more homes, businesses, industry, rising values), the lower the tax rate needed per property to cover the same \$43M of debt.

• If your district's base is small and mostly residential, each household ends up paying more.

3. What It Likely Means for Folks Under 65

Because over-65 school taxes are frozen (barring major improvements), the burden shifts more heavily onto:

• Homeowners under 65

• Landlords (who may pass it to renters via higher rent)

• Businesses and other taxable properties

For under-65 residents, this can mean:

1. Higher annual property tax bills

• Even if the city and county try to keep their rates steady or low, the school portion can dominate the total bill.

2. Less flexibility in the future

• With \$2M+ per year locked in for debt service, the district has less room to maneuver if:

• Enrollment drops

• State funding formulas change

• Property values stagnate or fall

3. More pressure for growth

• To keep per-household taxes from climbing, there's an implicit push to grow the tax base (more houses, more businesses, higher values). But in a community of ~300 people that wants to keep its character, uncontrolled growth can feel like a betrayal of what people love about the town.

4. How to Explain This to Neighbors in Simple Terms

You could frame it something like this:

• "We've taken on about \$43 million in long-term school debt that will be paid back over 30 years, with total payments of around \$63–65 million once interest is included."

• "That means we must find roughly \$2.1 million every year for the next 30 years just to cover these school bonds—before we pay for teachers, books, electricity, or anything else."

• "How much each of us pays depends on how big our overall tax base is. If our total taxable property doesn't grow, that \$2.1 million is divided among relatively few taxpayers, especially those under 65, because the school taxes for those over 65 are frozen."

• "So, for a typical home, this can easily mean several hundred dollars a year just for the bond portion of the school tax bill, on top of the regular maintenance & operations tax and city/county taxes."

5. Questions You Might Want the District to Answer Publicly

To give people clarity (instead of fear or rumor), you could push for the district to show:

1. What is our current total taxable value?

• And what's the projected growth over the next 10–30 years?

2. Exactly what is the current and projected I&S tax rate (the debt service rate) for the bonds?

3. Concrete examples:

• What does this mean for a \$150,000 home?

• A \$250,000 home?

• A \$300,000 home?

4. What happens if values don't grow as expected?

• Does the rate go up?

• Do we cut programs?

• Or do we rely on more state aid (if any)?

5. How do these new facilities help the long-term stability of the town?

• Do they attract enough new families/tax base to help offset the cost? Or are we mostly upgrading quality of life for current residents at a higher long-term tax price?

6. Why This Matters for Your Broader Economic Plan

For a town of ~300 people:

• \$50M in school projects is enormous relative to local wealth. Even if the district extends beyond the 300 people in town, it still represents a heavy, long-lasting commitment.

• It locks in a cost that under-65 taxpayers must cover, no matter what happens in the wider economy.

• It makes your questions about economic development, zoning, and a comprehensive plan even more urgent, because you need a healthy, appropriately-sized tax base to keep that debt from crushing younger and working families.

We talk about the economic stability a lot. And it always comes down to perspective. Hopefully this impartial view will help clarify the topic, and perhaps in this clarity we will find the common ground to not merely survive, but to thrive.

Article by Pete Horn

Saint's Patrick Day

Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17th in honor of the patron saint, Saint Patrick of Ireland and marks the beginning of Christianity in Ireland.

Maewyn Succat was the son of a Roman-British officer and deacon named Calpurnius. Maewyn was born around 385 AD in Britain and was captured when he was 16 by pirates and taken to Ireland, where he worked as a shepherd for 6 years. During this time he became very religious and decided to escape back to Britain. After his returning to home, he felt a calling to return to Ireland to convert the Irish people to Christianity.

During his time as a missionary his name was changed to Patricius (Patrick), Latin for nobleman. Saint Patrick died on March 17, 461 AD, and this date is celebrated as his feast day. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in many countries as well as Ireland, even though he actually never canonized by the Catholic Church. Some of the traditions are wearing green clothing or accessories as well as shamrocks (three-leaf clovers). Many taverns offer green-colored beer in celebration. The first Saint Patrick's Day parade was celebrated in New York City in 1766. **Article by David Zajicek**

If at first you don't succeed, redefine success.

On the keyboard of life, always keep one finger on the escape key.

When you think you have someone eating out of your hand, count your fingers.

I invented a substance that can eat through anything, but I can't find a place to store it.



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TOMMIE GILMON

For City of Burton Councilmember Pos. #2

The decisions being made at Burton City Council cover complicated issues that affect our water/sewer infrastructure, tax rates, property values, and how and when we grow as a City.

My goal is to listen to residents and business owners and bring your concerns to the table.

I have served in Position No. 2 for the past four years, and my experience will help guide me in decisions that affect all of us here in Burton.

Questions? Email me at mrstgilmon.022@gmail.com

Please vote for me on Saturday, May 2 from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Political ad paid for by Mrs. Tommie Gilmon

BERNEAKE "PEANUT" GANTT

for Burton City Council Position No. 5



With your vote, I pledge to:

- Work with the Mayor and City Council to prioritize community-driven decisions that benefit all.
- Ensure transparency in Burton City Council operations to build trust and accountability.
- Request that proposed ordinances and policies be made available in advance so that businesses and residents can provide feedback on how they will be affected.
- Address the real needs of the community with actionable solutions.

ASK ME ANYTHING: Join me on Thursday, March 19 from 5-6:30 p.m. at the Burton Short Stop. Ask me your questions, let me hear your concerns, and enjoy light hors d'oeuvres.

ELECTION DAY voting is Saturday, May 2 from 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

I have served in the past on Burton City Council as Mayor Pro-Tem. During my tenure, I presented to a panel at the Brazos Valley Council of Governments, resulting in the City being awarded a \$10,000 grant.

I am ex-military, having served in the army.

My career experience includes working in administration for the Brenham Police Department, and as a technical writer for a Brenham-based manufacturer.



Political ad paid for by Berneake Lashelle Gantt

We are all connected and, until all viewpoints are considered, we as a City cannot find peace or common ground.

Business owners pay most of our City's expenses through sales taxes, and they also pay property taxes. Citizens and businesses have seen a 13% increase in property taxes.

Burton I.S.D. is affected by decisions made at City Council and we, as a City, are affected by a school population twice our size. We're in this together.

If elected, I will consider how decisions made at City Council affect everybody.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

RE-ELECT JEFF ECKHARDT

*City of Burton City Council
Position No. 3*

In Burton, we know the value of hard work, community, and tradition.

Over the years we've grown together, faced challenges, and celebrated triumphs.

Our best days are still ahead.



Jeff Eckhardt has been a part of our community for 10 years. As a member of Burton City Council, he has been committed to listening to his constituents and wants what is best for the whole community. He wants to unite the residents, work with organizations and help small businesses thrive in Burton. Jeff is not just running for City Council — he's running to preserve the future.

Vote for Jeff Eckhardt for Burton City Council,
Position No. 3.

Political ad paid for by Jeff Eckhardt

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



The Dancing Turkey – True Story

It was around the year 1925 or 26. A young boy with a nickel “burning a hole in his pocket” was meandering around Burton, Texas trying to decide how to spend that nickel. He entered Fisher’s store, knowing full well there was hard candy, chewing gum, and other small treats he might choose. As he entered, a large sign caught his attention: “See the Turkey Dance” 5 cents. It took no time for him to make up his mind. He would pay just to see such a thing! He approached Mr. Fisher, paid his nickel, and took a seat in front of a curtain. Mr. Fisher grumbled because there were no other customers, just one little boy!

The boy observed closely as a man opened the curtain, and there was a large “Tom” turkey chained to a tin tub. “Keep your eyes on Tom’s feet,” the man said, as he stepped behind the curtain. “Tom” slowly began to lift his feet, and within seconds, he was squirming, and moving around faster and faster until he was “dancing and prancing” all around the top of the tub.

The boy jumped up, sensing that “Tom” was in pain, ran around the makeshift curtain, and there he saw the man with a large, lit candle, moving it around the bottom of the tub, heating it to a very hot temperature. THAT was what was making Tom “dance”!

Mortified by the abuse of poor Tom, the youngster bolted out the door and ran to meet his father at the lumber yard across the way. He loved animals of all kinds, and developed a lifelong determination to never purposely hurt an innocent animal for the perverse enjoyment of people!

In later years, this young boy, John Stanley, used this incident in articles he wrote, to explain his abhorrence of how animals are mistreated for people’s “entertainment” and why he never “sored” his beloved Tennessee Walking Horses with weights or caustic blistering agents to make them lift their feet, a practice that became illegal during this little boy’s lifetime!

Submitted by Gherlaine Hofman

One of our members got booted out of our weekly coffee shop meeting for wearing a tea shirt.

Being in debt attracts a lot of interests from bankers.

I married my wife for her looks, but not the one I’m getting lately.

**TRY THAT IN A SMALL TOWN – A Series
Highlighting Burton Blessings
What’s Great About Our Town: Deep
Discussions and a Nod to “The Singularity”
By Ned Ross, contributing writer**

As we awaken each morning, our routine kicks in. Some of us remain in bed long enough for a short prayer to “ground” our behaviors through the day. Others roll out and hit the ground running toward the day’s events. But all of us awaken to a continuously changing and often uncertain world. How do we cope with it all?

If we compare today’s challenges to those faced by our ancestors, we have it easy. Imagine the turmoil created by the Revolutionary War for every person in North America and Britain – men called to war and leaving families alone on the farm for years, no strong communication lines to know the fate of the soldiers or the country, no reliable currency, starvation, etc.... The Civil War years presented similar challenges. The Great Depression, WWI, WWII, Vietnam in our living rooms. All were far more stressful than today. We have it easy. The relative peace and prosperity we enjoy today is amazing.

But we also suffer with an overload of information. Technology and instantaneous media have bombarded our brains with concerns that weren’t present in decades past. A flood here, an avalanche there, a skirmish in Africa, violent crimes. We were not aware of these stressful events years ago, but now we can’t seem to escape them.

We are at peace on a world stage, but silently in the background our world is changing in ways we cannot predict. Call it a battle of electrons and neurons. Artificial intelligence has become a part of our everyday lives. We use it for banking, shopping, engineering, lawmaking, security, law enforcement - and apparently students’ homework. The capabilities of AI are undeniable. I watched a demonstration of AI’s power at ERCOT (power grid operator) in February where three hypothetical new, large power loads were added to the grid in real time. AI crunched through 16,000 scenarios called contingencies in seconds and provided solutions for new wires to meet the demand. This would have taken a room full of engineers weeks to calculate. Amazing and good for us!

But there are hidden dangers with tech and AI. In a recent interview, Elon Musk referred to “The Singularity” as though every listener knew what that was. I had to look it up – on AI, of course – and found this:

The technological singularity is a hypothetical future point when artificial intelligence surpasses human intelligence, leading to uncontrollable, exponential technological growth. Often called an “intelligence explosion,” this event is expected to fundamentally alter human civilization, making the future unpredictable. [emphasis added]

The "Event Horizon": Similar to a black hole, the singularity represents a point in time beyond which technological and societal changes are too rapid to predict or understand.

Consequences: Potential impacts range from solving major, unsolvable human problems to risks of human obsolescence or extinction.

Not enough uncertainty for you? What made a chill run down my spine while listening to the interview was Mr. Musk stating

that this (singularity) has already occurred, that we are in the singularity today, and the hosts agreed. We are living in the beginnings of a new world, like it or not.

I am a trusting person, and I trust that our tech leaders are working toward reasonable controls and measures that ensure the success of this powerful tool. I know some of the people working on these powerful tools, and they are good, honest, well-intended people. The promise of this collective intelligence tool dwarfs anything else in our lifetimes – medical advances, surgical procedures, productivity, safety. The list is endless. But the anxiety remains at varying levels in each of us. How do we cope? In its simplest form:

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

BOOM! Reset. Pause. Breathe. There is truly only one certainty in our world, one constant, one source of comfort, one source of omnipotent brilliance, and that is God. As my stress level grows over issues like this, I pause, take a slow and deep breath, and realize I cannot worry about that which I do not control. One of the blessings of living in a tiny town is not being surrounded by a lot of media chatter. We can turn off TVs and phones and avoid the deliberately dramatic news of the day that is designed to raise our anxieties. So I share this with you to keep tabs on it, watch for positive developments, and shrug off the worrisome parts. Now let’s get back to preparing for Ranger Day, the Cotton Gin Festival, good food and good friends. And that’s what makes Burton great.

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Years ago, a Pam Am flight, waiting for start clearance in Munich, overheard the following:

Lufthansa (in German) “Ground, what is our start clearance time?”

Ground (in English) “If you want an answer you must speak English.”

Lufthansa (in English) “I am a German, flying a German airplane in Germany. Why must I speak English?”

Unknown voice from another plane (in a British accent) “Because you lost the bloody war!”

Apparently when you treat people like they treat you, they get very upset.

I saw a sign at a store that read, “We treat you like family.”

Yep, not going in there.

Converting Plastic into Fuel

Continuing in support of David's thought that some folks might find my life's journey of interest, I'm writing another episode. This takes place in the strange land of Las Vegas, in a warehouse, well off the Strip. I had been approached by an investor who was familiar with the work I'd done with gasification of biomass and production of Bio-Diesel. His question was how to convert plastic waste into a fuel or directly into electricity. While the processes were similar in outcome, making the conversion process reliable and environmentally benign was a different story. So I called an old friend, Steve Hawkes, who happens to be the best engineer I've ever known, and we set out to design and build an operational prototype to convert plastic waste into fuel oil, with collateral benefits of using off-gas to produce electricity.

After doing a bit of research, we came up with a feasible solution: Catalytic Depolymerization. The process, in some form, had been around since the beginning of the 20th Century (I've included the AI detailed explanation at the end of this article). We started by looking at both the feedstock and process parameters, with the thought that, to be truly successful, commercialization required a continuous process and the ability to meet both US and EU environmental standards. This was 2007, and both funding and investment were flowing freely. We committed to a prototype capable of being converted to continuous flow and started work. We had a few local folks helping to source materials and get the outside machining done; laid out the fabrication plan, and got everyone working on their element.



Photos: me & machine, Steve wiring controls, me with finished machine (we added the "Flowmaster" bumper sticker for luck), and lower photos of the components post-assembly

The key elements were temperature, residence time, and catalyst. I focused on the feedstock, which had to be any post-consumer plastic, and how to prepare it. Steve focused on the heating chamber and condenser, then wired up the controls. While that was all underway, we acquired several bags of plastic, ensured they were ground to the specified size, and took delivery of the selected catalysts (some of which I still have). Most of our design was good, though we made several changes to accommodate our discoveries along the way. Being surrounded by ranchers and farmers who make things run, I think there are folks out there nodding right now.

The machine we built was a good, flexible design. Since we weren't sure of where we were going, and we didn't have the resources to build several different machines, we built a "Leatherman" that could handle a wide range of feedstock, temperatures, and output. Since it was critical to blend the catalyst into the plastic at high temperatures (400-600 F), everything was heavily insulated and sealed. With the process itself creating an explosive vapor at these temperatures, we maintained a nitrogen blanket (liquid Nitrogen as the source), and had to design a bushing to interface with the outside world. This bushing was custom-manufactured for us by an awesome engineer named Carruso, whose dad had been an engineer in the Apollo Program, and it was a geek's dream encounter. He not only had an excellent machine shop; he also designed and built racing engines and 3/4-sized racers. We spent hours there, and ultimately an exceptional-quality bushing was created. Other aspects were falling in place and we got the "Flowmaster" running. The chemistry part of the equation was hit and miss since neither Steve nor I are Chemical Engineers, but we followed Edison's concept when his lightbulb experiments had yielded 10,000 failed designs, he now knew 10,000 ways not to make a lightbulb.

(Continue on Page 10)_

(Con't from pg 9 – Converting Plastic into Fuel)

Through trial and error, we came to understand the plastic-to-catalyst ratio, the optimal temperature range, and the residence time. I won't bore you, but these elements are key to this work. There were interesting developments along the way, like the day we were running at a new, higher temperature range (to reduce the amount of catalyst) when the condenser fittings came apart, spewing very hot, very explosive vapor into the warehouse where we were working. Steve and I ran to the machine to shut it down while the workmen headed for the exit. It was exciting and informative. Since Steve and I saw exactly where things failed, we knew just what to rebuild... as long as it didn't explode before we got it under control. I cranked up the nitrogen blanket and closed valves while Steve killed the power to the unit and worked to keep the condenser body from failing. Man, did that place stink. Once we got everything settled down and got rid of the vapor and stench, we cleaned up and went to an all-you-can-eat seafood buffet. We felt we had earned it.

The next couple of days were spent rebuilding a new condenser design. We then ran the machine, documented the process and chemistry, and had a third-party review. We made fuel oil from plastic. I had even dumped some in my diesel jeep and drove across the desert to the canyons on it. It worked! The exhaust smell was different, and the exact mix to achieve an exact #2 Diesel was yet to be worked out.... BUT IT WORKED!

We turned the operational machine over to the investors and started planning the design of what the full sized, 20-ton of plastic, yielding 7,000 gallons of oil would look like, and what the subassemblies were. It was a beautiful fantasy, when in 2008, the bottom fell out of the financial markets - everything stopped. Our machine sat in storage for nearly a decade when an energy company bought it and moved it to their facility just outside Chicago. Steve and I got it set up and running for the new owners, and created some business relationships. The machine

has been featured a few times in the media, but we never got to build the Commercial Unit.

I'll let AI give you the textbook explanation of the CDP process:

Catalytic depolymerization is a chemical process that breaks long plastic molecules (polymers) back down into shorter hydrocarbon molecules—mainly oils and gases—using heat and a catalyst.

Here's what that means in practice:

1. Feedstock

You start with waste plastics (often polyolefins like polyethylene – PE, and polypropylene – PP, which are basically long chains of hydrocarbons similar to wax or very heavy oil).

2. Depolymerization vs. simple melting

- *Melting only softens plastic; when it cools it's still plastic.*

- **Depolymerization actually breaks the chemical bonds** in the polymer chain so the long chains fall apart into shorter molecules (like diesel-range and gasoline-range hydrocarbons).

3. Role of heat

- *The plastics are heated in an oxygen-free (inert) environment to avoid burning.*
- *Temperatures are typically in the 300–500°C range (much lower than in standard incineration).*

4. Role of the catalyst

The process is called catalytic because you add a catalyst (often acidic solids like zeolites, aluminosilicates, or proprietary mixed metal oxides).

These:

- **Lower the temperature** needed for cracking.
- **Speed up** the bond-breaking reactions.
- **Steer the reaction** toward a more useful product mix (more liquids, less gas and coke/char).

*Without a catalyst, you'd just have **thermal cracking/pyrolysis**. With a catalyst, you can get **narrower boiling ranges** and better-quality oil.*

5. What actually happens chemically

- *Plastic chains are long C–C–C–C backbones.*
- *Heat + catalyst cause **random scission** (breaking) of these chains.*
- *The broken fragments stabilize into:*
- **Liquids** (C₅–C₂₀ or so: naphtha, kerosene, diesel-range hydrocarbons)
- **Gases** (C₁–C₄: methane, ethane, propane, butane – often burned on-site for process heat)
- **Heavy waxy residues or coke** (solid carbon-rich material on the catalyst).

(Continue on Page 11)

(Con't from Pg 10 – Plastic to Fuel Converting)

6. Process steps in a typical plant

1. Pre-treatment: Sorting, shredding, drying, sometimes removing PVC (to avoid HCl release) and contaminants like metals.

2. Reactor:

- Shredded plastic is fed into a reactor with the catalyst under inert gas (often nitrogen).
- It's heated to reaction temperature; plastic melts, then cracks into vapors.

3. Vapor handling & condensation:

- The reaction vapors leave the reactor and pass through a condensation train.
- Heavier vapors condense first (heavy oil/wax), then lighter (diesel/naphtha), leaving non-condensable gas.

4. Gas use: Non-condensable gas is usually recycled as fuel to heat the reactor.

5. Catalyst regeneration: If the catalyst gets coated with coke, it can be regenerated by controlled burning of the coke in air (in a separate regenerator), then reused.

7. What the "oil" is good for^[1] Depending on design and operating conditions, the main liquid product can be:

- A naphtha-like stream that can go to a steam cracker to make new monomers (like ethylene/propylene → new plastics).
- A diesel-range fuel that can be hydrotreated and blended into transportation fuels.
- A fuel oil suitable for boilers or industrial burners.

8. Why it's interesting for plastic waste

- It can handle mixed, dirty plastics that are hard to mechanically recycle.
- Converts low-value or landfilled plastics into feedstocks or fuels.
- When integrated with petrochemical refineries, depolymerized oil can, in principle, be upgraded and turned back into virgin-quality plastics (so-called "chemical recycling").

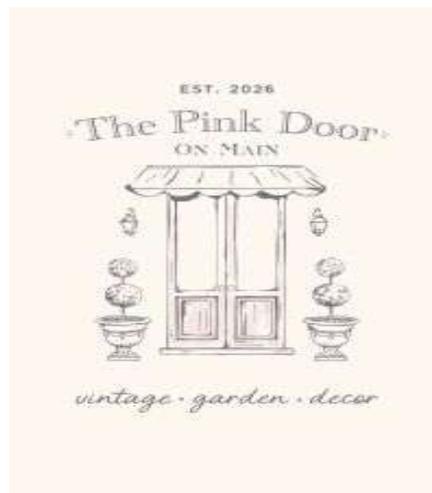
9. Limitations and challenges

- Feedstock quality: PVC, PET, multilayer films, food residues, metals, and halogens can damage catalysts and corrode equipment.
- Energy input: You still need significant heat; process economics depend heavily on using the off-gas and plant integration.
- Product clean-up: Need downstream desulfurization, denitrification, and removal of chlorine and other impurities if you want refinery-grade feedstock.
- Economics & scale: Plants must be large and well-run to compete with cheap fossil oil.

10. How it differs from other routes

- Mechanical recycling: Just melts and reshapes plastic; polymer remains intact, but quality drops each cycle.
- Gasification: Takes waste to syngas (CO + H₂) at very high temperatures; from there you can make many chemicals but the pathway is longer.
- Monomer-level depolymerization (like for PET or nylon): Breaks back to the original monomers, often with specific chemistries; much more selective but only works well for certain plastics.

Article by Pete Horn



I'm Lauren Ross, a design and cozy home enthusiast living in Burton with my husband Ned and 3 donkeys! After 20 years of decorating client's homes, I've decided to fulfill a life long dream of creating a store where I can share my love of thoughtfully curated home accessories and furnishings.

In late 2024, Ned and I inquired about the availability of an historic building that might be for sale, the building we all know and love as the Burton Bridge Ministry. It needed some TLC and someone willing to devote resources to breathe new life into it. Where most people would see a building in need of repair, we saw an opportunity to share my design ideas with the community and fulfill a lifetime dream.

The 1929 building was originally a car dealership, service garage and gas station. Over the decades it morphed into a general store, flower shop, thrift store and food pantry just to name a few. We definitely wanted to honor its legacy by preserving as much as possible of the exterior, including the old tin siding and porte cochere. The interior had been modified several times, and the new renovations included restoring the 12' ceilings, adding back windows that had been boarded up, and eliminating some walls and split levels on the interiors. Ned and I have restored five old homes dating back to 1905, so this project felt very familiar! With the help of Burton Home Builders we were able to accomplish the renovations in record time and give the building a new life.

I went through many names for the store and the one that kept coming back was The Pink Door on Main. The townspeople of Burton all know me as the new neighbor who moved into town from Austin and painted her front door pink. So The Pink Door on Main it is! All the items are hand selected by me with an eye toward comfort and beauty.

The Pink Door is filled with well-loved antiques and vintage items with a mix of thoughtfully curated products like custom pillows, tabletop décor, garden items and signature candles. The store will make you feel at home with "rooms" to shop for bedding, kitchen and bath products, garden items, stationary, and even a bit of jewelry. The antiques in the shop range from the tattered and chippy to more refined and elegant. You are sure to find something to add character and charm into your home whether it's a faded floral vintage platter or a gorgeous carved European mirror.

(Continue on page 12)

(Continue from page 11 – The Pink Door)

And there are plenty of gift items like soaps, lotions, tea towels and devotionals for that special friend or occasion. And even if you are not in need of anything, we hope you will find the store a place that you can visit to just browse or relax!

Please join us on Friday, March 13th for our grand opening. We have events scheduled all day from 10 to 6 including live music, mini highland cows from Milk and Honey Ranch, and a ribbon cutting. Check out the website thepinkdooronmain.com for the day's itinerary! We will have 2 raffles you won't want to miss! We hope you will celebrate with us!

In a Country Cemetery

Bethany Church of Burton's Annual Good Friday picnic is best described in the writing by Alpha Mell Stanley Stuart, granddaughter of early church members.

"Good Friday comes early this year so the bluebonnets will not be blooming in the old church cemetery in Central Texas, but everything else will be the same.,

On this day, families of the Burton Christian Church will drive a few miles out of town to their secluded burying place to tend the graves, clear out winter's underbrush, and share a meal together. Thus they continue a custom that began long ago indeed longer than the oldest man in the congregation can remember.

There in the shade of spreading live oaks and emerald green cedars next to the stone traces of the original house of worship, members of the church keep the faith of their fathers. This is truly a faith handed down from first generation to second, to third, for the names of those working the graves will be the same as those on many of the headstones.....Stanley, Blackburn, Derrick, Black, Bredthauer. These families would no more neglect their cemetery on Good Friday than they would conduct Sunday meetings without the Lord's Supper or baptism without immersion.

"The better the day the better the deed," says the proverb. And what better choice for cemetery chores than the day when all Christendom suffers together the memory of Him whose crucified body so long ago was taken so gently from the cross, wrapped in linen and laid to rest in a newly carved tomb.

What better day to honor the dead than the day when the Church, recoiling from the lifeless body of Jesus in the grave, quickens the faith to the resurrection of Christ, only two dawns away?

What better day to witness this faith, than Good Friday, without which there would be no Easter? Thus, the church meeting in a cemetery, caring for its graves, remembering its dead, does not end its labor there. It sets in motion for all the world to see its belief in life following the frailty of death.

And facing Easter, the Church reveals that God has kept His promise. Loving the world, He sent His Son. Believing in Him, we will not perish. Believing in Him, we have everlasting life.

At 12:00 Noon every Good Friday, Bethany Church members look forward to the tradition of its early members who gathered every Good Friday at the cemetery grounds. Their purpose was to maintain the graves of beloved ancestors after the church had moved into the town of Burton in 1913.

We no longer bring our hoes and rakes to clean up the grounds. Instead we bring chairs, tables, sumptuous side dishes and

beverages, to share along with the sausage provided by Bethany members, and Easter Eggs for the children to hide and hunt! This Good Friday Picnic has been something cherished by generations of the progeny of the earliest members of this wonderful church and even more so loved by our newer members who are astounded that suddenly on Good Friday our church yard is full to brimming with folks from near and far! No invitations! THEY JUST COME!

Article by Gherlaine Hofman

We at Bethany Church invite the public to join us on Good Friday for a luncheon as well as an Easter egg hunt along with story-telling and games for the children. Festivities start around 11am on Friday, April 3rd at Bethany Church located at 8955 Christian Cemetery Road, Burton, Texas.

The Burton Heritage Society will hold its 15th Annual Texas Ranger Day on Saturday, March 21st from noon to 4pm at the Burton Railroad Depot Museum located at 507 N. Railroad Street. There will be a chili and bean cookoff as well as other events for children and adults. For more info visit: burtonheritagesociety.org/celebrate.

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Burton City Council Meeting

In a standing room only filled with concerned citizens and business owners, Burton City Council held its meeting on February 10th at Burton City Hall. The crowd was there to voice their concerns and to oppose the hiring of AOKA. Mayor Pro-Tem Jeff Eckhardt made a motion to remove the item from the agenda. He and Councilperson Tommie Gillmon voted to remove the item from the agenda and Paul McLaughlin voted against it. Councilpersons Nathan Kalkhake and Macey Tidwell were absent, so the motion passed.

The council approved a resolution authorizing an election service contract between the City and Washington County for the upcoming general election on May 2nd.

The council approved the budget public hearing for general and water & sewer at 5:30pm at Burton City Hall on March 10th.

The Council approved to authorize the City to enter into an agreement with the TxDot to close a segment of the highway in downtown for the Annual Cotton Gin Festival scheduled for April 18th.

The Council accepted the resignation of City Secretary Angela Harrington for family matters.

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