

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

August 25, 2022

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**SUBJECT: AIR MONITORING, BROWNFIELDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SERVICES**

The following is a response to environmental inquiries raised regarding air monitoring, brownfields, and environmental justice during the August 12, 2022, City Council Budget Work Session on the FY2023 budget.

Formally established in 1995, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) assists the City in paying for regulated environmental quality programs, projects, and services that are designed to address air, land, and water pollution and to generally improve public health, welfare, and safety. Environmental programs ensure that the City and community achieve compliance with local, state and federal environmental rules and regulations. For example, the Environmental Quality Division (EQD) has historically deployed and applied the following types of services aimed at reducing or preventing pollution in Fort Worth:

- Surface water pollutant monitoring in local creeks, rivers, and lakes
- Litter control (community cleanups, public education, operational planning)
- Soil/groundwater pollution remediation projects and site cleanup projects
- Hazardous materials management and disposal (e.g., asbestos abatement)
- Air pollutant monitoring
- Municipal environmental compliance
- Environmental compliance inspection and audits
- Environmental compliance outreach and technical education
- Environmental emergency responses

Air Quality

One of the various service areas that the EPF assists in funding is air quality. Through matching funds from the City of Fort Worth's EPF fund and grant funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the City of Fort Worth is able to provide services to ensure air quality technical guidance, compliance, and air pollutant monitoring. The City has been awarded grant funding from EPA/TCEQ for the past 25 years (since 1997) and has offered excellent air quality programming to support the community.

More specifically, air quality services include complaint investigations; air permit review and comment; annual investigation of major air pollutant sources; biennial/triennial investigation of gasoline dispensing facilities; and recurrent investigation of all other permitted and regulated air pollutant emission sources within the City of Fort Worth. Air program staff also perform ambient air monitoring and sampling operations within the City of Fort Worth to ensure accurate and valid data regarding regional pollutant levels for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. In addition, the program also performs biohazard air sampling to provide an early warning of a bioterrorism attack to regional emergency and health industry officials. The air quality program works collaboratively with the TCEQ and USEPA to perform elaborate air monitoring during inspections when it is determined that additional information is needed to make compliance determinations during an investigation at a facility or in response to complaints.

Data collected from monitoring sites serve to identify areas of regional air quality improvements and inform local decisions and actions. The air quality program works collaboratively with regional partnerships to gather and analyze air pollutant areas needing improvement or additional support. Air quality is a regional challenge; most recently, the City of Fort Worth and other jurisdictions within the metroplex have partnered through the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) to initiate a local and regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emission inventory program to understand the sources and sectors contributing to

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GHG emissions in North Central Texas. The inventory will provide information on GHG emissions by assessing GHG emission sectors, forecasting for future planning, and creating a baseline to monitor local GHG emissions on a regional scale. This information will assist the region by identifying key GHG emission sources and providing information to support regional GHG policy and management.

Brownfields

At times, redevelopment of vacant land or abandoned structures is halted by real or perceived environmental contamination. The City of Fort Worth Brownfields Program aims to achieve redevelopment through resolving concerns for environmental hazards through environmental assessments, planning, and cleanup. The program works to provide funding to evaluate and, when necessary, remove environmental contamination in order to reinvigorate redevelopment throughout our community. By applying and receiving grant funds from the USEPA, the City has most recently been able to utilize nearly \$300,000 in federal assessment grant funds to help evaluate environmental conditions at properties throughout the community. This included nineteen Phase I Environmental Site Assessments and five Phase II Environmental Site Assessments. Environmental assessments have helped to lead to new parkland, remediation, and closure projects to support private investments, and new housing and business developments that will create affordable housing and employment opportunities in areas of need.

Outside of grant-eligible projects, the EPF also helps to assess, plan, and execute environmental hazard cleanup projects to comply with federal and state regulations and to improve the community. A recent example includes assessment and remediation of soil and water pollution on City property near Brennan Avenue. Using environmental funds, staff continue to monitor groundwater at the site to ensure the project reaches closure with the TCEQ. The EPF provides secure, dedicated funding to address areas that have historically been neglected in an effort to create a clean city, alleviate environmental concerns, and promote environmental justice across the community. From time to time, vacant land and structures are brought to staff's attention by community members, councilmembers, or other concerned parties. Environmental staff work to evaluate all possible hazards and coordinate with all parties to seek resolution. Issues with structures that are privately owned and do not present conditions immediately dangerous to life or health may take longer to address, but staff are very aware and can develop long-range plans to address issues at appropriate times.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice can be defined as the fair treatment of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to development and implementation of projects and application of environmental regulations. Throughout the course of recent history, examples of environmental issues disproportionately impacting a group of people in a community can be seen. The City of Fort Worth's environmental staff routinely work cross-functionally with many departments, such as Development Services, Law, or Diversity and Inclusion to respond to environmental inquiries in a timely manner, resolve environmental concerns, and promote environmental justice for all members of the community.

The City of Fort Worth recognizes that historical zoning and permitting have led to sections of our community containing higher-than-average industrial facilities and polluting facilities. To address disparities in communities, environmental staff work with planning and zoning officials in the Development Services Department and Planning & Data Analytics Department to ensure that environmental concerns are carefully evaluated or considered for all projects and plans.

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Staff also collaborate with all interested parties regarding new or existing industrial and commercial facilities when environmental concerns arise. For new or existing facilities, staff work to ensure that best management practices are followed and compliance with local, state, and federal laws is achieved and maintained. Environmental staff also strive to ensure that every resident receives a timely response to any environmental concern, complaint, and emergency that arises. Environmental staff ensure that after-hours and on-call staff are available to respond to environmental issues at all times and coordinate routinely with Emergency Management, Police, Fire, Transportation & Public Works, and Water teams to address issues. Anyone in the community can make environmental inquiries or report environmental concerns using the MyFW app or by contacting the City of Fort Worth Call Center by phone at (817) 392-1234 or via email: 1234@fortworthtexas.gov. Environmental staff can be reached directly via email at: environmental@fortworthtexas.gov.

If you have questions concerning this information, please contact Brandon Bennett, Director of the Code Compliance Department, at 817-392-6322.

David Cooke
City Manager