

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE February 5, 2024

TO Honorable Chair Stewart and Members of the Parks, Trails, and the Environment Committee

SUBJECT **Environmental Commission Update**

## **December 2023**

### **2023 Equity Indicators Report: Environmental Justice Measures Update**

In December, the commission was briefed via memorandum on the status of the recommended Equity Indicators for Environmental Justice. New equity indicators will be made public in January 2024. After further discussion, it was determined that the commission's Recommendation 1 for land use and zoning will not be wholly incorporated but will only include sources of air emissions. The commission's recommended equity indicator is to assess overall neighborhood proximity to environmental pollution categorized as: 1) a major source of air emissions; 2) a large or small quantity generator of hazardous waste 3) a current, or former landfill site; 4) a surface water body categorized as impaired on the Texas 303d List; 5) a wastewater discharge facility; or 6) a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Superfund or Brownfields Program site or a Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Voluntary Cleanup Action Site, Municipal Setting Designation site, or other state-defined impaired property. This recommendation was unanimously supported by the Environmental Commission.

### **North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Air Quality Improvement Plan**

The commission heard a briefing on the NCTCOG, which received a \$1 million via the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Planning Grant Program to develop and implement plans to reduce greenhouse gases and other pollutants of local concern in the eligible Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Statistical Area. The grant program includes the creation of a regional climate action plan. NCTCOG is conducting public workshops, listening sessions and stakeholder engagement via survey: <https://www.publicinput.com/dfwAQIP-survey>

### **City of Dallas Brownfields Redevelopment Program**

The city's Office of Environmental Quality & Sustainability (OEQS) briefed the commission on the Brownfields Redevelopment Program, including several Brownfields sites in District 7 (Jeffries Meyers, Fair Park, Forest Forward, MLK Corridor, Mill City, Melissa Pierce and St. Philip) currently being revitalized. Commissioners requested additional information about communication to residents near contaminated sites about the nature of contamination and potential threats to unhoused community members accessing those sites, either lawfully or unlawfully.

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## **Recommendation to Adopt SolarAPP+**

In December, the commission voted unanimously to recommend adoption of SolarAPP+. See attached memo.

## **Commission Events and Outreach**

In December, the commission partnered with Dallas Code Enforcement's Keep Dallas Beautiful program to host a cleanup at White Rock Lake. Twenty volunteers joined us on Saturday, December 16, to clean the south shoreline. This month, commissioners presented to the local Sierra Club and Rotary Club memberships. Commissioner Hiromoto (D15) participated in COP28 as a virtual delegate of Architecture 2030 and authored an article in Architecture 2030 magazine on the Dallas CECAP and our city's progress: <https://www.architecture2030.org/cop28-local-advocacy-accelerates-climate-action/>.

## **January 2024**

In January, the commission was briefed on the city's Municipal Setting Designation and Environmental Due Diligence Programs.

The commission was also briefed by OEQS on the Updated CECAP Considerations for the 2024 Bond Program, as recommended by the Environmental Commission. The commission wants to acknowledge the effort of city staff to support this recommendation and to coordinate with numerous departments to ensure that the CECAP and its goals are carried out. We also want to acknowledge the Strategic Partnerships and Innovation committee, led by Chair Hiromoto, and the expert panelists who dedicated their expertise.

The commission unanimously voted to approve its FY 2023 Annual Report.

## **Amended Standard Permit for Concrete Batch Plants**

On January 24, 2024, TCEQ issued amendments to the Air Quality Standard Permit for Concrete Batch Plants. The amendments were based on an updated Air Quality Analysis for the standard permit. The adopted amendments can be found on the TCEQ's website: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/air/newsourcereview/2023-amendment-concrete-batch-standard-permit>

The amendments revise the standard permit's definitions, operational requirements, setback requirements, concrete production rate limitations, nuisance dust control provisions, and best management practices. The specific changes to setback requirements and production rate limitations vary depending on the geographic location of the CBP, the type of batch plant (central mix or truck mix), and the type of capture technology used for the loading operation.

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## **Annual Strategic Planning Workshop**

On Saturday, January 27, the commission held its annual strategic planning workshop to establish committee priorities. Members are developing work plans and a report to summarize the work.

The Environmental Commission will not meet in February and will hold its next regular meeting on Wednesday, March 13, 2024.

If you have any questions about any of these topics, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [kathryn.bazan@dallas.gov](mailto:kathryn.bazan@dallas.gov).



Kathryn Bazan  
Chairwoman, Dallas Environmental Commission

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## **Background**

In 2021, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) launched a collaborative effort with key code officials, authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs), and the solar industry to develop standardized plan review software that can run compliance checks and process building permit approvals for eligible rooftop solar systems.

- **Integrates with existing government software.**
- **Automates plan review, permit approval, and project tracking.**
- **Standardizes up to 90% of standard system plans.**
- **Provides inspection checklist and final sign-off after installation.**

View this video to see how SolarAPP+ is benefitting communities:

[https://youtu.be/xKhX\\_UAT8YQ](https://youtu.be/xKhX_UAT8YQ).

NREL conducted a control trial pilot to validate SolarAPP+ performance, as used by AHJs with diverse characteristics and needs. Highlights of key findings include:

- Pilot AHJs collectively spent 383 hours on SolarAPP+ implementation and saved 236 hours on permit and revision review during the pilot.
- By providing instantaneous review, the SolarAPP+ reduced the average permit review time to less than one day across all five AHJs.
- Participating contractors required training on how to use the application efficiently.
- Inspection passage rates for SolarAPP+ projects were comparable to traditionally permitted projects, with nominal impacts on inspection duration.
- Projects submitted through SolarAPP+ were installed and inspected on average 12 days faster than projects using the traditional process (Figure ES- 1). – NREL

NREL Pilot Program Article: <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy22osti/81603.pdf>

NREL performance review: <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy23osti/85827.pdf>

This innovative online tool instantly issues permit for code-compliant residential rooftop photovoltaic (PV) and battery systems, streamlining processes and reducing costs and time, allowing more solar to be installed faster.

## **Recommendation**

On December 13, 2023, the Environmental Commission unanimously approved the Implementation Subcommittee's recommendation for immediate implementation of the SolarAPP+ developed by NREL for the following reasons:

1. NO COST to municipalities
  - a. Implemented quickly
  - b. Free training for city employees by NREL
  - c. Saves city employees' time
  - d. Reduces burden on IT department since it is cloud-based
2. An area of relief for the solar permitting in Dallas by streamlining the process for:
  - a. City staff
  - b. Homeowners and businesses wanting to install solar
  - c. Solar installation contractors
3. SolarAPP+ significantly reduces the soft costs of solar installation including permitting, inspections and interconnect.
4. Proposed annual license requiring solar installers to submit new applications each year, ensuring compliance with Texas Solar Energy Society's Code of Ethics and addressing any pending or unresolved projects. Companies failing to address existing installation issue or customer complaints would be temporarily barred from initiating new projects until issues are appropriately resolved.  
[Houston's Journey with SolarAPP+ and the Future of Solar Permitting | Texas Solar Energy Society \(txses.org\)](#)
5. Widespread adoption of SolarAPP+ in municipalities around the country (including Houston, TX) <https://help.solar-app.org/article/108-where-is-solarapp-available>

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [kathryn.bazan@dallas.gov](mailto:kathryn.bazan@dallas.gov).



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