

AGENDA ITEM #5

MEETING: Community Health, Environment, & Culture Committee

DATE: January 19, 2021

DEPARTMENT: Neighborhood and Housing Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Verónica R. Soto

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT: Briefing on the Brownfields Redevelopment Program

SUMMARY:

Briefing on the City of San Antonio Brownfields Redevelopment Program, including funding history and summary of projects assisted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

A brownfield is a property on which expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the possibility of environmental contamination. These sites are usually abandoned, vacant, or underutilized properties. Examples can include abandoned gas stations, dry cleaning facilities, junkyards, old car dealerships, abandoned factories, and other potentially contaminated properties.

Brownfield sites present public health hazards and may contribute to illness in the community. Further, the sites inhibit reinvestment and redevelopment, perpetuating regional environmental issues related to traffic congestion and emissions. As a result, brownfield sites present unique development challenges that require a creative and multifaceted approach to address.

The City has been involved in brownfield assessment and redevelopment efforts over the past two decades through various programs and funding sources including U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grants awarded in 1999 and 2004. More recent history of the program includes the following:

- **2011:** City Council directed staff to create a Brownfields Program under the Center City Development Office (CCDO).
- **2012:** CCDO begins to develop the City's Brownfields Program and seek opportunities for grant funding.
- **2013-2014:** Council allocated \$300,000 through the Inner City Incentive Fund for environmental site assessments and other brownfields activities – \$200,000 from fiscal year 2013 and \$100,000 from fiscal year 2014. This provided initial investment in the early growth of the Brownfields Program.

- **2014:** The Federal Center for Disease Control Brownfield Initiative awarded a \$150,000 grant to the City of San Antonio for community outreach, planning efforts, and to conduct environmental site assessments.
- **2015:** The EPA awarded the City of San Antonio a Community-Wide Brownfield Assessment Grant of \$400,000 over 3 years.
- **2016:** Council adopted the Brownfields Redevelopment Policy and Program Guidelines developed by an interdepartmental technical committee and incorporating community input. The Policy outlines the City's commitment to identify, assess, clean-up, and redevelop brownfield sites, and details the public benefits of such activities.
- **2016-2020:** The Brownfields Redevelopment Program conducted site assessments, surveys, and remediation planning through the EPA grant, with supplemental funding from the Inner City Incentive Fund (ICIF). The Community-Wide Brownfield Assessment Grant is successfully closed out.
- **2021-Present:** The City continues to provide technical and financial assistance for brownfields sites as part of comprehensive development incentive packages. Brownfields funding remains available through ICIF in the amount of \$100,000 per year.

Program Accomplishments since FY2013

- Development of Brownfield Redevelopment Policy and Program Guidelines
- Assistance in developing a City of San Antonio Municipal Setting Designation (MSD) Program. MSD is a tool used to encourage redevelopment of vacant or abandoned properties while protecting the public health. This official state designation is given to a property to certify that the groundwater is not used as potable water presently or in the future.
- Assisted in 34 Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESA), 17 Phase II ESAs, and 14 Lead and Asbestos Surveys
- Invested over \$768,000, including ICIF and EPA funding, to assist 41 projects with environmental assessments and surveys.
- Recent projects assisted include the Red Berry Mansion, Lerma's, Durango, St. John's Square, and the former Continental Hotel.

The City has not been awarded an EPA Brownfields Grant since 2015, however, funding remains available through the Inner City Incentive Fund (ICIF) to assist projects with environmental assessments and surveys. In FY2022, \$100,000 in ICIF funding is set aside for brownfields assistance. Projects eligible for assistance under the Brownfield Redevelopment Program must be located within the city limits, demonstrate a likely potential for environmental contamination, and provide a redevelopment plan for the property. When coordinated with other City incentives, brownfields funding can be effectively leveraged to support strategic redevelopment projects.

ISSUE:

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ALTERNATIVES:

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FISCAL IMPACT:

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RECOMMENDATION:

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DRAFT