

IMPACT REPORT 2023



What does
the future
of I-345
(look like,
in 2023?)



Letter from the Director

We've done a lot of good over the last 30 years but few of those good things might have as much of an impact as our recently completed Joppa Environmental Health Project. It's not the first time we've advanced science in the name of environmental justice, but it might be the most consequential.

I'm extremely proud of this effort, which was three years in the making, including the years at the height of the pandemic. Despite the circumstances, 51% of Joppa households participated. Its results made headlines: residents of the Freedmen's

Town are exposed to two to three times as much air pollution and experience two to three times the amount of asthma as Dallas County and DFW as a whole. It's the first such study in DFW history, but the latest in a long line of original research that Downwinders has sponsored since its founding.

In 2023 we also expanded our Neighborhood Self-Defense Project to Fort Worth, exporting our approach to using land use reform to reduce exposure to air pollution in already overburdened neighborhoods in Cowtown. After decades of industrial encroachment, we're proud to say we were part of a year-long campaign that brought the first relief to the Echo Heights neighborhood in Southeast Fort Worth. We look forward to working with our new allies in the Fort Worth Environmental Coalition of Communities to make environmental justice an official citywide goal in its new "2050" comprehensive land use plan that begins public outreach next year.

We're doing more than we ever have. We're making CHANGE happen in more places. And we need your support more than ever before. Thank you.

Letter from Board Co-Chairs

2023 has been a year to remember.

For the first time in our history, we brought on additional staff people to support the growing demand for our programming and services. We welcomed Alicia Kendrick, who lived in Joppa and met us through the Health Project outreach, first as a Board member last year and now as our first full-time community organizer. Kiani Ned joined us as a part-time Development Coordinator to bolster our fundraising efforts to match our money with the need we see in the field. We amended our bylaws to enshrine our commitment to a Board and Staff to reflect the communities we serve.

With an increased staff capacity, we have made major strides in many areas of our program work. The 3-year landmark study in Joppa, made possible due to our SharedAirDFW monitors and partnership with Texas A&M University, came to a close with damning evidence on public health impacts of industry and the seriousness of Joppa residents to deindustrialize their community. The same study has been expanded to our partners in West Dallas to further fuel the ongoing campaign activity there. The list goes on.

We also have more local donors than we have ever had before, to keep our work going. Any contribution is a vote of confidence in our work. We need local support to keep delivering on our local campaigns that often are templates for statewide or national efforts in communities all over.

Thank you for your vote in confidence in us this year, and here's to getting even more stuff done in the new year.



Caleb Roberts, AICP



Evelyn Mayo, AICP

OUR IMPACT

THIS YEAR

In 2023 our commitment to eliminate environmental racism and harmful air pollution in Dallas-Fort Worth took us to five of its most burdened neighborhoods: Joppa, West Dallas, and Floral Farms in Dallas; Echo Heights and Northside in Fort Worth. Working with residents to mobilize and advocate for the policy changes they wanted, we won significant victories across DFW. Our secret? Downwinders remains the only group in North Texas sponsoring professional environmental justice organizers that know how to grow grassroots community power.

The first environmental health study of its kind in North Texas, the first concessions to environmental justice by Fort Worth City Hall, the first industrial closure and exit from Joppa.

These are all victories we won in 2023 using our approach to building neighborhood-based People Power.

WHERE WE ORGANIZE



Above: Community outreach by the Joppa Environmental Health Project (JEHP) team



Above: JEHP at Texas Star Ready Mix permit public meeting hosted by TCEQ



Above: COMMUNITY not COMMUTE public art demonstration advocating for I-345 removal



Above: Fort Worth Environmental Coalition of Communities advocating at Ft. Worth City Hall



Above: Singleton United/Unidos marching to GAF in West Dallas in Day of the Dead Vigil



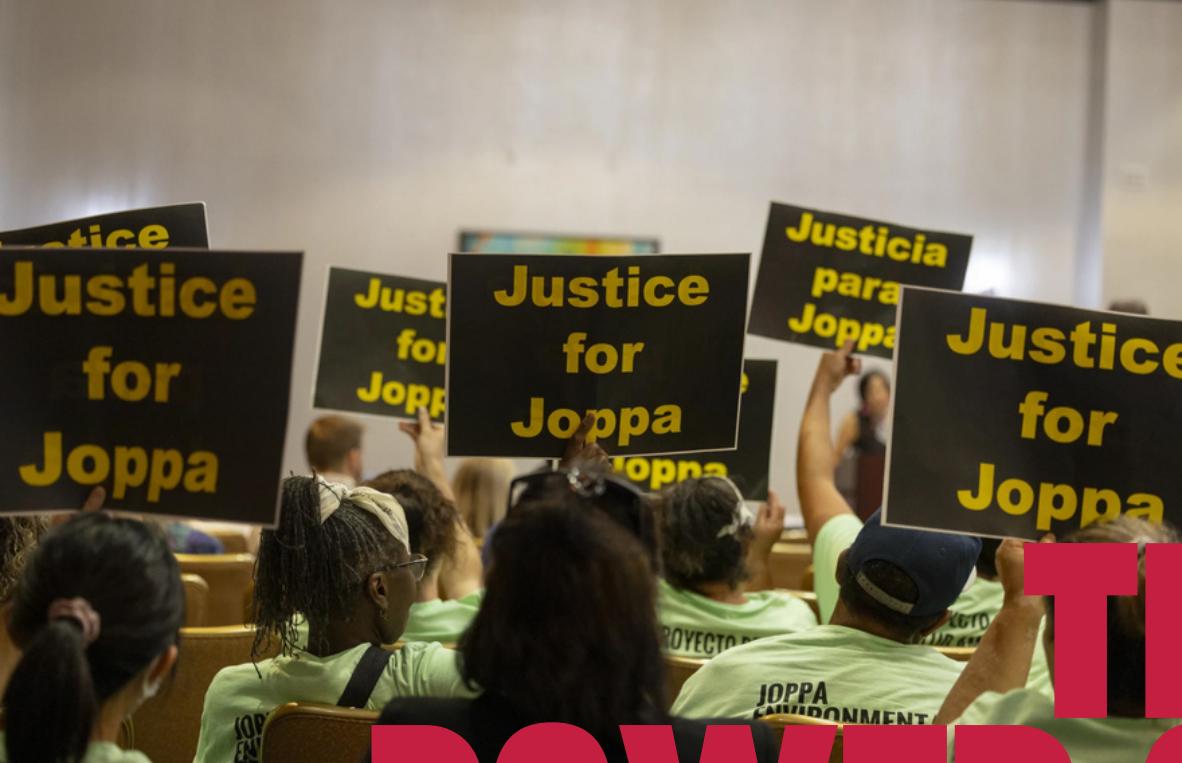
SCIENCE



ADVOCACY



WATCHDOG



THE POWER OF ORGANIZING

We're committed to reducing and eliminating exposure to harmful air pollution by rolling back the racist zoning that puts Black and Brown neighborhoods on the frontlines.

Since 2017 Downwinders at Risk has centered its fight for environmental health and justice around the idea of using land use reform to reduce exposure to air pollution. DFW Black and Brown neighborhoods are exposed to more harmful air pollution primarily because of location - segregation in zoning meant they were forced to live next to polluters. To reduce that exposure, we rollback the racist zoning still driving development in these neighborhoods. Downwinders employs professional community organizers to work with residents to do just that. We're the only group in North Texas to do so.

We build new bases of neighborhood power that didn't exist before, like Justice for Joppa/Justicia Para Joppa in that Freedmen's town, Singleton United/Unidos in West Dallas, and Neighbors United/Unidos in Floral Farms. We're doing it with the citywide Fort Worth Environmental Coalition of Communities. In each case, we assisted residents in building a new group from scratch that took on the role of a neighborhood association to improve their quality of life. And in each case we won rollbacks in racist zoning that decreased or eliminated exposure to harmful air pollution. Community Organizing works.

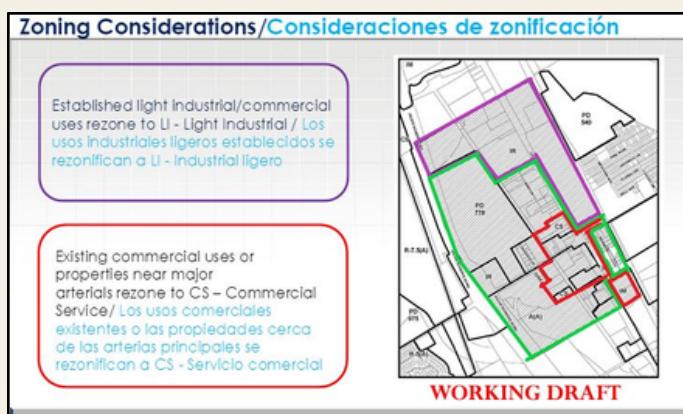
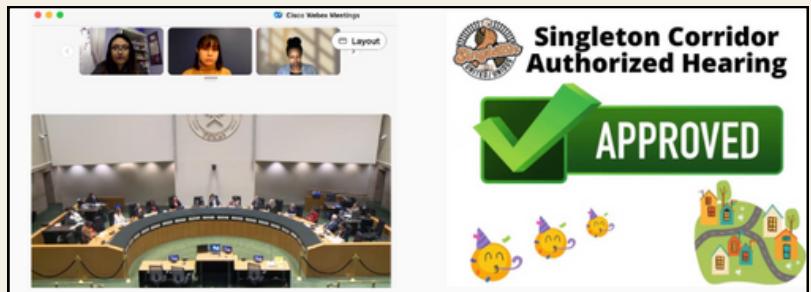


ORGANIZING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

NEIGHBORHOOD SELF-DEFENSE PROJECT

WEST DALLAS REZONING INITIATED

The process to begin implementing the neighborhood plan drafted by residents that moves industry out of West Dallas was approved by the City Plan Commission. This is the next step in finally removing racist industrial zoning in West Dallas like GAF.



FLORAL FARMS REZONING MOVES FORWARD

Thanks to the advocacy of Neighbors United/Vecinos Unidos, Dallas planning staff mostly approved the zoning changes drafted by Floral Farms residents as part of that neighborhood's plan. Residents and their allies continue to advocate for preservation of Floral Farms' semi-agricultural character as the adoption process at City Plan Commission winds through next year.

REMAPPING JOPPA

After City planning staff recommend continued industrial presence in their neighborhood as part of Dallas' new land use planning map, members of The Joppa Environmental Health Project swung into action. Over 50 residents showed up at a community meeting with those same staffers and pressed to remove all industrial uses from the new map. Staff responded by removing most industrial uses - but not all. Residents continue to lobby for a complete "de-industrialization" of Joppa.





ORGANIZING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

DEINDUSTRIALIZING JOPPA

AUSTIN ASPHALT BATCH PLANT CLOSED

One of the largest and most noxious polluters in Joppa, the Austin Asphalt batch plant, permanently closed this year thanks to the neighborhood's relentless organizing against a new pollution permit it sought.

With its last permit expiring in 2023, Austin had the option to stay in Joppa by applying for a new 10-year one, but intense neighborhood opposition forced it to realize it had no community or political support. Company spokesmen announced they would move the batch plant out of the community altogether.

Austin's departure means a significant drop in air pollution in Joppa, including Particulate Matter 2.5 as well as the clouds of road dust created by the trucks the batch plant attracted.



Tell the Batch Plant and the State to Quit Polluting in Joppa

Speak Up for Your Neighborhood
Speak Up for Your Family



FIGHTING THE TEXAS STAR BATCH PLANT

Shortly after winning the closure of Austin Asphalt, over 30 Joppa residents made the trip downtown to participate in a Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) public meeting to speak out against the renewal of the Texas Star Batch Plant's operating permit. The plant on the southside of the neighborhood has been a nuisance for years. Although there's little doubt the state will permit the plant, it's now the subject of a new EPA investigation into batch plant pollution.



ORGANIZING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

CLOSING THE GAF SHINGLE FACTORY

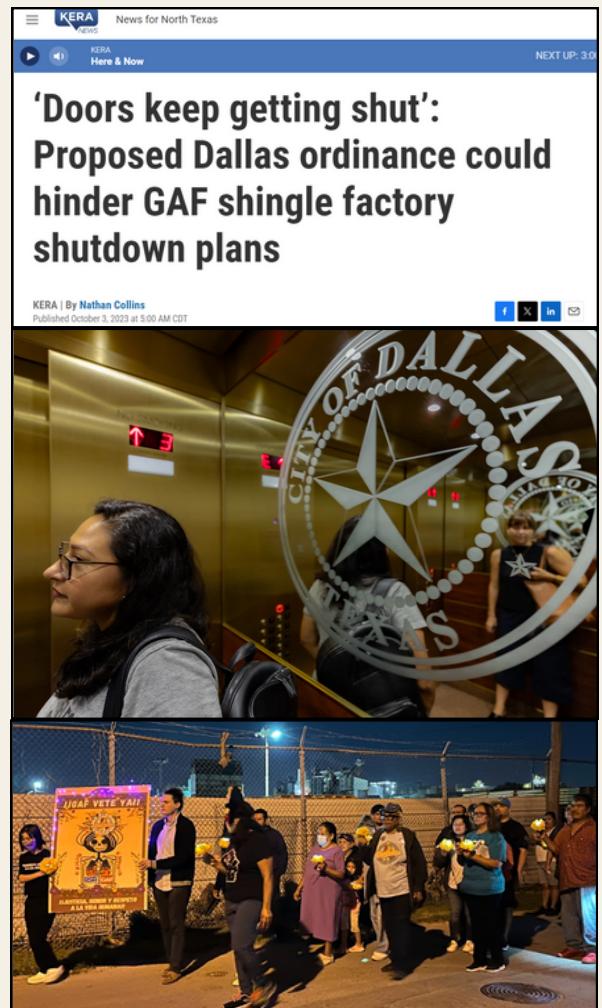
GAFS GOTTA GO / GAF VETE YA CAMPAIGN

Singleton United/Unidos and members of the GAFs Gotta Go/GAF Vete Ya Campaign attempted a second round of negotiations with the factory to shut their doors sooner than 2030. GAF refused to budge and lobbied for the State Legislature to make amortization (legal closure of adverse “non-conforming” businesses) more difficult for cities. Because GAF feared the process so much, SB 929 retroactively became law in February, months sooner than other legislation passed in Austin.

Even with the new “GAF bill,” there are ways to hold GAF accountable with the amortization process. However, when SU/U Chair Janie Cisneros attempted to initiate the amortization process at Dallas City Hall, as she’s allowed to do by law, she was blocked twice by the City Attorney’s office. Dallas officials are now attempting to change the law and remove the resident’s right to file that Cisneros tried to use. We’re helping her and her group fight back.



The fight over GAF is just one way Dallas City Hall is publicly supporting Environmental Justice, but undermining grassroots leaders who try to obtain it behind closed doors. Environmental Justice is defined by HOW decisions are made as much as the decisions themselves.



WE’RE COMMITTED TO FIGHTING FOR RESIDENTS ON BOTH FRONTS.



ORGANIZING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

REFORMING LAND USE IN DALLAS AND FORT WORTH

USING “FORWARD DALLAS” TO ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

After a lot of pandemic and bureaucratic delay, Dallas’ once-in a decade comprehensive land use planning process is reaching its conclusion. Through public participation and private appointments, Downwinders and its neighborhood allies have had a significant impact on the new maps emerging from Dallas City Hall. Black and Brown communities living next to industry have been inventoried and ALL heavy industry has been removed for future land use. This is a major victory toward our goal of reversing decades of environmental racism. However in Joppa, West Dallas and Floral Farms, City staff is still leaving too wide a door open for “Light Industry” which is often “heavy” in its pollution burdens.

Residents in these EJ hotspots continue to lobby for the removal of all industrial designations for their neighborhoods as well as priority status in seeing these city maps turned into zoning changes on the ground as soon as possible.



FORT WORTH ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION OF COMMUNITIES TAKES ON CITY HALL

Like Dallas, Fort Worth is also launching a comprehensive land use planning process. We joined with residents from the Echo Heights neighborhood to prevent further industrial encroachment in their community. In November, the City Council voted to roll back over 100 acres of industrial zoning in Echo Heights - a huge win. We then helped create a new Fort Worth EJ alliance to pursue city wide environmental justice goals in the City’s “2050 Plan” that begins public outreach next year. It’s the first time Fort Worth City Hall has had to address the City’s legacy of environmental racism.



DOWNWINDERS AT RISK



TRAINING BETTER ORGANIZERS

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING



South Dallas Has a Traffic Problem

There isn't enough of it. Two guys with big brains say the highways funnel all the money north.

By Matt Goodman | August 9, 2023 | 11:43 am | Photography by Elizabeth Lavin



Co-Chair Caleb Roberts featured in D Magazine about the I-345 debate (left) and Co-Chair Evelyn Mayo engaging people in the highway diorama (right).



COLLEGE OF CONSTRUCTIVE HELL-RAISING

The College of Constructive Hell Raising celebrated its 6th graduating class this year joining the dozens of alumni of the one-of-a-kind community organizing class. The focus of this years' graduation class project was the debate around the removal or expansion of the I-345 Highway that cuts through Downtown Dallas, where a Freedman community once stood. Graduation was held at the Southern Daiqui Factory across the street from the highway and featured a diorama of the area without I-345, panels on the history of the neighborhood and speakers for the better future we could have without it.

CHANGEMAKER HOUR WITH DR. BULLARD

Along with Paul Quinn College's Urban Research Initiative and Southern Methodist University, we co-hosted Dr. Robert Bullard, "The Father of Environmental Justice" for a panel discussion and keynote address in October. Downwinders staff member Alicia Kendrick sat on the "Changemaker Hour" panel with Dr. Bullard, while Co-Chair Caleb Roberts moderated.

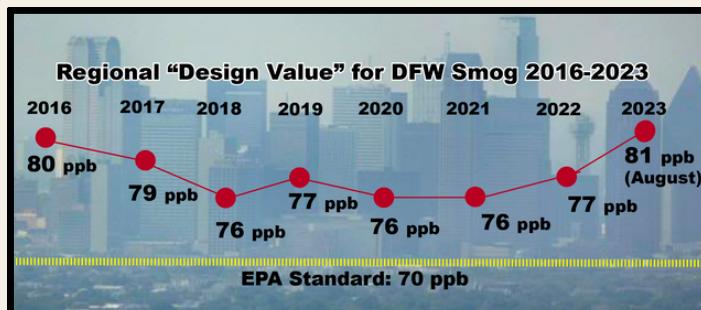




YOUR PUBLIC WATCHDOG

DAILY AIR QUALITY NOTIFICATIONS

Every day the technology allows us, we post air quality forecasts and warnings on Twitter as part of the SharedAirDFW.com network. These forecasts use real time readings from our local monitors combined with weather forecasts to give an early warning about potential problems.



UPHOLDING A SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Downwinders is one of the only DFW groups with the time, funds, and motivation to hold public officials accountable. We file Open Records Act requests every year to learn what's really

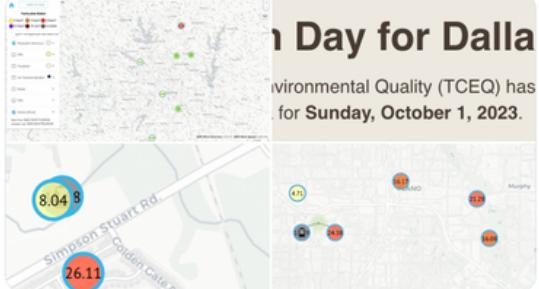


happening behind the scenes. And we file lawsuits to enforce the law and rules already on the books.



SharedAirDFW @AirDfw · Oct 1

Gooooood Morning DFW!!!!!! Sun and low winds make this AM a lot like the previous 5 days of what may be the last week of "Summer 2023." There's an Ozone Alert and PM levels are elevated at traditional hotspots. Consult your local air monitor and Please Breathe Carefully.



1 Day for Dallas

Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has for Sunday, October 1, 2023.

TRACKING OZONE POLLUTION

Since the 1990's Downwinders has been the only DFW group actively tracking the lack of progress in DFW's chronic 30-year smog problem. We're also the only DFW group suing EPA to enforce its own deadlines and rules for smog reduction. 2023 was the worst year for DFW smog in over a decade. We actually lost ground to get safe and legal air in DFW. But you wouldn't have known that if you didn't follow us - there was no mainstream media coverage of DFW's smog problem because there are no environmental beat reporter at either the Dallas Morning News or the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.



DEMOCRATIZING DATA

“Democratizing Data” means ensuring universal access to public health information for all. We help provide the tools for residents to easily gather, display, and understand what’s in the air they’re breathing.

You can’t fix air pollution problems unless you know where the air pollution is, and especially where it’s worst. Although a simple proposition, this goal wasn’t attainable for most Americans until the last few years. Only government agencies and large corporations could afford to deploy their own air monitors. Most of the time those monitors didn’t get placed in the neighborhoods that had the heaviest pollution burdens.

That has changed. Now anyone can buy their own Particulate Matter monitor from Purple Air for less than \$300. But there’s still no official support for a community air monitoring network spanning North Texas.

That’s why Downwinders at Risk is partnering with the University of Texas at Dallas, Paul Quinn College, Dallas College, Dallas County, and Plano to build the SharedAirDFW.com network. It uses state-of-the-art monitors built by the UTD physics lab and displays their information in real-time on a publicly accessible digital map.

It’s also committed to putting monitors in frontline neighborhoods. In fact, it was the presence of SharedAirDFW.com monitors in Joppa over the past three years that allowed Texas A&M University scientists to conduct the first environmental health study there. The same thing is now being done in West Dallas.

Knowledge is power and SharedAirDFW.com monitors provide a lot of information for residents to use in original research and influencing policy. The Joppa study is just one example. Identifying high concentrations of pollution, contrasting disparities in pollution levels between locations, and letting residents know when it’s potentially hazardous to go outside are just some of the things data from SharedAirDFW.com can do. In 2024, we’ll be announcing exciting new features that will make the Network even more useful.

This isn’t just information just for knowledge’s sake. It’s information meant to inform action on the ground and reduce exposure to harmful air pollution.

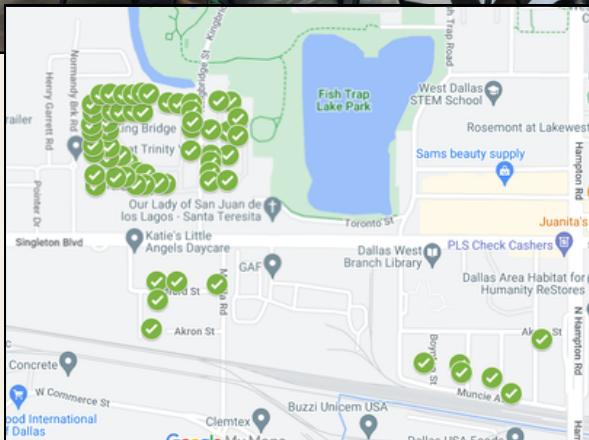
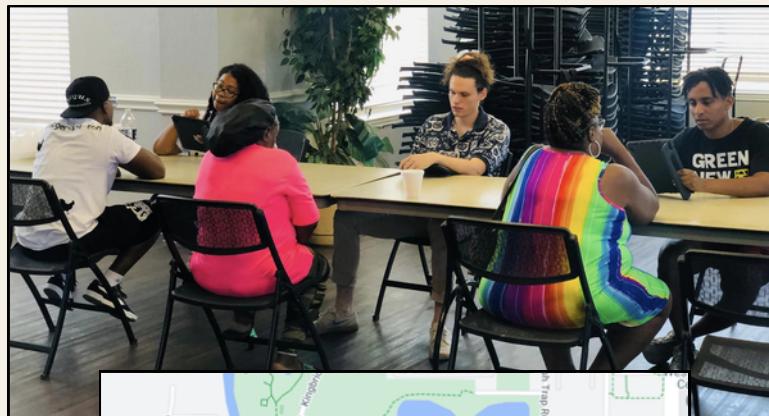
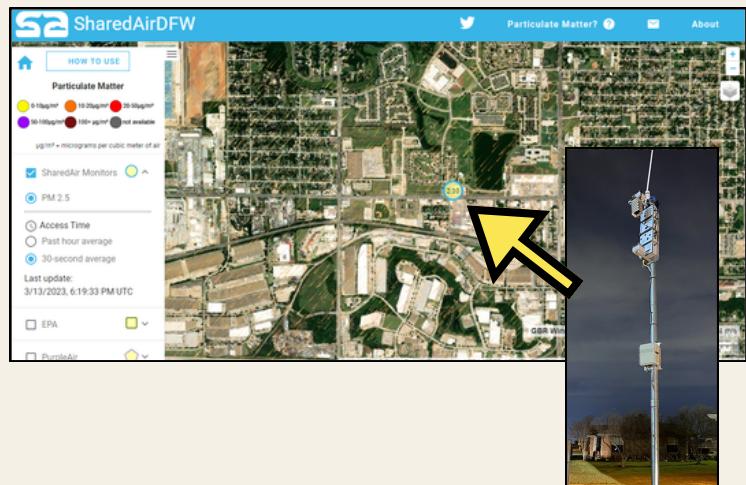


DEMOCRATIZING AIR QUALITY DATA

COMMUNITY AIR MONITORING

WEST DALLAS MONITOR

This year we installed the first SharedAirDFW.com air pollution monitor in West Dallas in the Singleton industrial corridor, across the street from the GAF asphalt shingle factory. Its real time readings are being used by Texas A&M scientists for use in the first environmental health study in the neighborhood in an effort similar to the one in Joppa that was just published.



HEALTH PROJECT EXPANSION

After successfully concluding its community health survey in Joppa, the Texas A&M scientists, Downwinders and Joppa residents working as the Joppa Environmental Health Project were invited to extend their work to West Dallas. Like Joppa, West Dallas hosts an asphalt shingle factory, a rail yard and batch plants.

Members of the local group Singleton United/Unidos also had the same public health concerns as their Joppa peers - like asthma. To date over 30% of Singleton Corridor households have participated in the survey. Results will likely be announced next Spring.

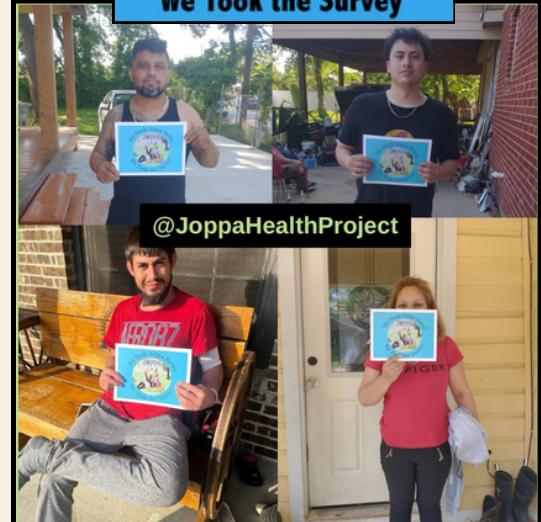


DEMOCRATIZING HEALTH DATA

JOPPA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

3-YEAR PUBLIC HEALTH STUDY RESULTS

The Joppa Environmental Health Project (JEHP), was a three-year long collaboration between Texas A&M University scientists, Downwinders at Risk, and residents of the Freedmen's Town. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with support from the Communities Foundation of Texas, the goal was to understand the relationships between soot pollution, called "Particulate Matter 2.5" and public health outcomes. Despite taking place during the Covid pandemic, 51% of Joppa's households participated. Its shocking but not unexpected results were released in October at a packed community meeting: Joppa residents are exposed to 2-3 times the amount of soot pollution and have 2 -3 times the asthma rate as the rest of DFW. It was the first environmental health study of its kind in North Texas.



SURVEY CONSENSUS: POLLUTION HARMS US

- 88% of surveyed Joppa Households agreed or strongly agreed that air pollution in the neighborhood is a problem
- 91% believed nearby industries contributed to this issue
- 83% of respondents believed that air pollution in Joppa negatively affected their health or their family's health

OUR LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023



Not pictured:
Laura Quintero Chavez



Not pictured:
Shannon Vorphal

In 2023 we amended our By-laws to do two things - ensure we always have a majority of People of Color administering our group, and automatically including representatives of neighborhood allies. We believe these changes make us look more like DFW as a whole, make us more responsive to our supporters, and make us more accountable to the neighborhoods we work with.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cindy Hua, PhD Candidate SMU
Mist O'Quinn, Sierra Club Beyond Coal Organizer
Evelyn Mayo, Professor at Paul Quinn College
Caleb Roberts, Senior Planner Gap Strategies
Laura Quintero Chavez, Dallas Truth Racial Healing & Transformation
Shannon Vorphal, Masters Student Texas Tech University
Essence O'Quinn, Bachelor of Arts Candidate UTD
Collin Yarborough, Author and PhD Candidate SMU
Satavia Hopkins, Certified Public Accountant

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS OR COALITION MEMBERSHIPS

Coalition for Neighborhood Self-Determination
GAFs Gotta Go Campaign
Joppa Environmental Health Project
Fort Worth Coalition for Environmental Justice
SharedAirDFW Network
Dallas Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Cohort
Taproot Earth
Southern Sector Rising

STAFF

Jim Schermbeck, Interim Director
Alicia Kendrick, Community Organizer
Kiani Ned, Development Coordinator



THANK YOU



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Foundation



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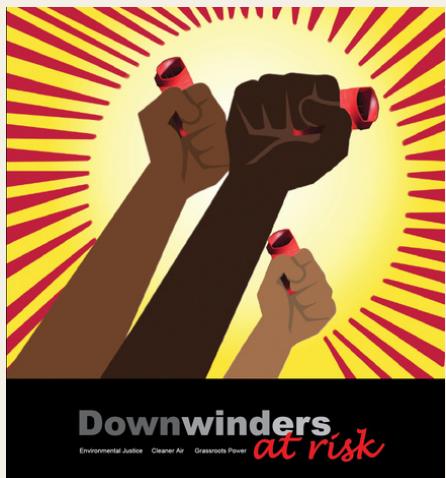
TO OUR DONORS BIG AND SMALL.

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SMALL STUFF
ADDS UP.

Contribute today.





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