

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Houston Land Bank and City of Houston Join Forces to Bank & Clean Up Velasco Incinerator Site

Houston, TX - September 27, 2023

In a groundbreaking collaborative effort, the Houston Land Bank (HLB) and the City of Houston have embarked on a mission to clean up the Velasco Incinerator site. This strategic partnership aims to transform the site, foster community development, and create lasting positive impacts for the 2nd Ward and surrounding area.

The Velasco Incinerator Site consists of approximately 4.56 acres of vacant land situated on North Velasco Street along the Buffalo Bayou waterfront. The site formerly operated as a municipal incinerator facility by the City of Houston from the 1950s through the late 1960s. All site buildings were removed by 1995, except for several incinerator stacks, a concrete building foundation, and a sanitary sewer lift station. During the 40 years of incinerator operations, ash and fill materials were deposited on the property at a thickness of between four (4) to 35 feet below the ground surface. Multiple environmental assessment activities conducted since 2006 have demonstrated that this waste contains elevated levels of arsenic, lead, mercury, PCBs, and dioxins and furans. The site is currently heavily covered in native grasses and trees and is bounded on all sides by chain-link fencing, maintained by the city. The site has remained vacant and blighted for decades due to the complexities of cleaning up the environmental hazards on the property.

Mayor Sylvester Turner emphasizes the potential to catalyze positive change within the community, "The Velasco Incinerator Site remediation project is not just about cleaning up contaminated land; it's about revitalizing a part of our city's history and providing opportunities for our residents."

To allow for beneficial reuse for the community and apply for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding to clean up the site, the Houston Land Bank has entered into a land banking agreement with the City of Houston. The agreement includes a requirement to work with strategic partners, local stakeholders, and the 2nd Ward community to create a greenspace and reuse plan for the site that promises tangible benefits for the local community.

The estimated clean-up costs are \$7 million and clean-up activities include but are not limited to providing a protective covering or barrier strategically placed over contaminated soil or waste material to prevent the spread of pollutants, reduce exposure to harmful substances, and promote environmental safety and health.

"This project embodies the core values of the Houston Land Bank, actively transforming our communities for the better," remarked Christa Stoneham, CEO of HLB. "We believe in the power of collaboration and need for environmental justice, and by aligning with the City of Houston, we are taking a momentous step towards restoring not only the environmental

integrity of the Velasco Incinerator Site but also rejuvenating the spirit of our local communities."

Once funding is secured, the Land Bank will diligently follow its established procedures while adhering to federal and state regulations for the remediation process. To keep the public informed and remain connected, HLB will host a public meeting on:

October 26 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at

Houston Community College – Eastside Campus

6815 Rustic Street Houston, Texas 77087

Please call HLB office at 281-655-4600, or email [brownfields@houstonlandbank.org](mailto:brownfields@houstonlandbank.org) for more information.