

Community leaders urge Greg Abbott to reverse permit for concrete crushing plant near LBJ Hospital

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Joy Smith | Feb. 16, 2024, 3:19 PM (Last Updated: Feb. 16, 2024, 5:37 PM)



Harris Health System

Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital building

On Friday, community leaders, healthcare organizers and professionals called for Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, to reverse a permit that would build a concrete crushing plant across the street from LBJ Hospital at 5656 Kelley St.

Organizers sent 800 letters and statements to Abbott after the press conference that was held at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church on Dabney St.

Organizers included The Metropolitan Organization (TMO), which is an association of local churches throughout the region, state and local government, and Harris Health. TMO is encouraging the company to build its concrete crusher in a different place.

Pastor Father Martin Eke leads St. Francis Church, which is across from LBJ Hospital. He said it's "unconscionable" for a company to build the concrete crushing plant there.

"This community already bears the burden of too many pollutant-heavy industries," he said. "For them to be saddling us with yet another one, this close to where some of the poorest and sickest seek medical attention – it's a slap in the face."

Residents and leaders are concerned about the health effects of the area with fine particle exposure, including elevated levels of heart disease, stroke, asthma, cancer and other respiratory issues.

Rev. Charles Turner, Pastor of New Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church, said most voters in all parts of Harris County recently voted for Harris County Proposition A, which will invest over \$2 billion to build a state-of-the-art healthcare facility at the LBJ Campus.

"How can we then, turn around and tell the taxpayers this is how we're treating your money," Turner said. "That we're going to allow a concrete crushing plant to be built right next to the new hospital that you're paying for? It just doesn't make sense."

This isn't the first time Houston has seen a situation like this. Last month, the Caverdale landfill expansion was withdrawn after years of pushing it back.

Hawthorn Park Landfill, owned by USA Waste of Texas Landfills, is located in the historically Black and Hispanic Carverdale neighborhood in Northwest Houston. Houstonians living near the landfill say it has impacted property values, traffic congestion, flooding and their health.

The application's withdrawal comes nearly a year after Harris County announced legal action in an effort to stop the proposed expansion, citing the need for environmental justice.

Community leaders such as Eke, expressed how targeting and ignoring these communities have led to situations like the Fifth Ward Cancer Cluster.

"We tried to let them know that it is unfair to have the crusher company around this area because we already have 13 heavy pollutant industries around," Eke said. "So this is the 14th one, it's just too many. We have a record of many respiratory illnesses around.

This was updated at 5:37 p.m. to correct the name of Pastor Turner's church, and where the event was held.