

We are here to request that the County Commissioner's Court develop a plan to address the growing number of unsightly structures and potentially environmentally hazardous properties in Titus County. While we know this issue has been discussed in the past, it is critical that action be taken soon to mitigate the rapid rise of these eyesores.

There are numerous reasons this issue is of concern to property owners:

1. They negatively impact the monetary value of neighboring properties.
2. Many of these sites are jammed with junked vehicles that pose a potential environmental hazard.
3. The health and safety risks to residents of Titus County from these environmental hazards include:
 - Contaminating tributaries of the Cypress River Basin that drain into Lake Bob Sandlin, the area's primary source of drinking water.
 - Contaminating streams and ponds that serve as water sources for livestock and wildlife.
 - Leeching harmful chemicals and petroleum byproducts into the soil and groundwater.
 - Posing chemical fire hazards that could endanger surrounding property, homes, and wooded areas.

The problem is rapidly escalating. Here are just a few examples:

Example #1 – Intersection of CR 2400 and Hwy 127

This intersection is an example of crowding numerous dilapidated mobile homes onto a property. Each mobile home has several associated vehicles, many of which don't appear operable. In recent months, the property owner has expanded his low-rent housing operation to the other side of the highway, nearly doubling the size of the problem. Not only is the property an eyesore and potential fire hazard, but it also appears there may not be an adequate sewer system. Who is responsible for inspecting, monitoring, and enforcing sewer system safety in this area?

Example #2 – 2866 Hwy 67 Postal box address 2866

Eyesore full of old scrap and containers. Looks like there's been a recent fire, one that could have likely begun as a chemical/oil fire given the surrounding containers.

Example #3 – Corner of CR 2400 & FM 899

This is in the Farmers Academy Area, across from an existing church. The property is progressing from bad to worse. It started out as some sort of shop, but now a mobile home is in the drive area and the surrounding property is full of automotive-related junk. Next door there is a caved in house, completely dilapidated, which is both a fire and safety hazard.

Example #4 – Corner of County Roads 2400 and 2411

This site appears to be a scrapyard for old vehicles. It's steadily expanding.

Example #5 – Intersection of Hwy 127 and CR 2710

People living in a tent on the side of the road who are beginning to collect/repair boats and RVs.

Example #6 – CR 2710 Post Box 454 and CR 2710 Post Box 999 and 997

Vehicle scrapyards are beginning; number of vehicles are increasing.

Example #7 – CR 2850 Post Box 619 & Post Box 2973

These are newer sites. Property is being used as a scrapyard for old washer/dryers. Number of old appliances is steadily increasing.

What all these sites illustrate is that there is obviously a contagion effect. When the problem is left unchecked, the sites expand and others follow.

The issue has negative knock-on effects for the County.

The growing number of unsightly/unsafe properties signal that the County is unable or unwilling to fend off these types of operations. Inaction can negatively impact economic development.

- If we don't act, it's going to be tough to get green businesses like Local Bounti to set up shop here. They'll be turned off by the unchecked number of unsightly, while polluting industries will see us as an easy mark.
- Residents of DFW and other nearby metro areas love the natural beauty of Titus County, and a lot of them are thinking about building second homes or retiring here. They're a good source of tax revenue for the County, but they won't spend big bucks on new homes if there is a risk their property values could plummet because the landscape is blighted with unsightly structures and/or environmental hazards.

To address this issue, we urge the County to develop a county-wide plan.

Individual property owners cannot fight this unwelcomed invasion of unsightly and unsafe sites without help. We ask our County Commissioners to:

1. Make solving the issue one of the county's highest priorities.
2. Keep the issue on the County's monthly agenda over the next three months to gather input/suggestions from concerned county residents.
3. Explore actions other counties (in Texas and nationwide) have taken to address this or similar issues. Undertake incremental steps that may act as a deterrent until a county-wide plan of action can be undertaken.
 - (Section 232.007 of County Land Use Report – Manufactured Home Rental Communities)
4. Explore ways to increase or reallocate funds within the County budget to include the hire of an environmental expert. Explore feasibility of partnering with neighboring county to share the expense of hiring an environmental expert, effectively allowing both counties to share in the expense and benefits. *(Develop a specific job description*

before determining education/experience/salary requirements to ensure that the skills/job focus meet our specific needs.)

5. Explore the feasibility of working with Rep Cole Hefner (Texas Legislative District 5) to see how he might help solve the issue with state legislation.
6. Present regular updates during upcoming County Court meetings so concerned citizens can understand what's being done and provide input.
7. Devise an actionable plan within a reasonable timeframe that can be voted on/adopted no later than March 24, 2024.

We believe acting on this issue will help protect our property values, safeguard our environment, and ensure the health and well-being of Titus County residents.