

# A potentially improperly zoned, foul-smelling plant in southwest Dallas is shutting down

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A plant near homes in southwest Dallas that renders animal fat into biofuel is shutting down after The Dallas Morning News found that it appears to be operating without proper zoning.

Neighbors have complained for years about the smell of dead and rotting animals that they say comes from the facility owned by Envirotein. They say the smell has been disrupting their daily lives since 2020, when they say they first began complaining about it through the city of Dallas 311 system.

"Just awful," said Brandy Mendoza, 49, who has been living in the neighborhood with her family since the early '90s when her father bought a house. "We thought it was the neighbors creating the bad smell until one day, I asked around and everyone was getting the same disgusting odor."

She said families in the area used to have big barbecues in their backyards, with kids playing soccer. Fixing cars and trucks was one of her son's passions. Then the filthy smell came wafting through from time to time during the pandemic.

One day during the pandemic, Nathan Donohoe, 46, took a stroll around the neighborhood to find out where the odor came from. That's when he saw Envirotein and was hit even more strongly with the smell, less than a mile from his home.

After that, his family started to complain to the Dallas 311 line and app, but they said they only received notifications that their request for help was received and that the city would look into the complaint.

The factory received a certificate of occupancy on Oct. 29, 2020, from the city of Dallas to operate in an "Industrial Research District," but based on the type of work Envirotein performs and the Dallas Development Code, the factory should be in an "Industrial Manufacturing District."

According to city of Dallas Development Code 51A, which establishes

zoning districts across the city, the plant, since it renders fat, should be located in an Industrial Manufacturing District. But Envirotein is operating in an Industrial Research District, where factories with assembly lines for things like fabrics can operate.

Zarin Gracey, District 3 City Council member, said the facility will be shut down.

"I absolutely hate to see the business shut down. But when they are affecting the [quality of life](#) for the neighbors, and you have done it for so long, I want to see these things get corrected," Gracey said.

The city's Department of Planning and Urban Design and the Communication Department did not respond to requests for comment.

Shuhdy Shazaly, operational manager at Envirotein, said Monday that it is stopping all operations for two months and will be cleaned up.

Shazaly did not confirm that the city had ordered it to shut down, but said [city officials](#) have been in touch with the company and that on Friday, inspectors were at the facility. He declined to discuss zoning.

According to records obtained by The News in a Sept. 5 request, Envirotein at least twice received notice of violations from the city. The Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability investigated.

On Sept. 14, neighbors were notified that Envirotein was found in violation of nuisance conditions. "The facility had an illicit discharge of liquids originating from the boiler system onsite at the facility which impacted off site waterways," said an investigation report.

It said discharge from the facility was causing unpleasant odors and that the investigation was closed. But Mendoza and Donohoe said that the

smell persisted and they kept complaining about the odor to the city.

Despite multiple visits from city officials, neighbors say they were never told about any zoning issues.

"We can't speak on other city divisions or codes that have to do with other city departments," said Joseph Vu, air compliance manager for the city.

Franciso Esparza, 64, has lived in the area for more than 30 years. He reached a point of desperation during the hot summer months.

With no central air conditioning and relying on window units to cool his home, he had to choose between the foul odor coming through his window but cooling him off or suffering in the heat.

"We no longer knew what to do. I bought a lot of deodorants for the house and put two diffusers above the air to try to keep the smell out," Esparza said.

Now, neighbors are celebrating what is at least a temporary victory.

"We can't believe it, that means we won," said Rosa Donohoe, Nathan's wife. "We can't wait to eat a big carne asada in our backyards, and finally, the kids are going to be able to play soccer."

"This is going to be life-changing," said her husband. "After so long and keeping up with the disgusting [smell](#), we can finally breathe."

Still, [neighbors](#) and area activists say they're confused about why it took the city so long to act.

"Their noses always know," said Evelyn Mayo, co-chair of the local

environmental group Downwinders At Risk. "If it smells wrong, chances are that something is going on wrong."

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