To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT: SMARTREPAIR WATER CONSERVATION LEAK REPAIR PROGRAM

This month Fort Worth Water will launch the SmartRepair program, offering no-cost plumbing repair assistance to qualifying low-income homeowners. The program will cover the cost of making minor repairs to leaking plumbing and is being implemented as a best management practice (BMP) to conserve water by improving water use efficiency while keeping essential water service affordable for all city residents.

Minor water leaks account for more than 1 trillion gallons of water wasted nationwide each year. According to the EPA, 10 percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons of water or more per day. However, many low-income homeowners lack the financial resources to make necessary repairs, contributing to water waste and resulting in high utility bills. The Texas Water Development Board recognizes plumbing assistance programs for economically disadvantaged customers and replacement/retrofit of water-saving devices as water conservation BMPs for water utilities.

The City's Water Conservation Plan, adopted by City Council on April 9, 2019, includes SmartRepair as a strategy to directly reduce residential water loss to achieve the plan goal of reducing the rolling five-year average of water consumption to 136 gallons per capita per day by 2029. Fort Worth has made significant strides toward meeting that goal, reducing the 5-year rolling average gallons per capita per day from 225 gallons in 2000 to 158 gallons in 2019. This program and other conservation strategies are necessary as 30% of the state's water supply needs by 2070 will result from demand management conservation strategies and other BMPs.

SmartRepair will send a city-contracted plumber to make minor plumbing repairs for qualified low-income homeowners. By finding and fixing simple water leaks, consumers can help save water, reduce their utility bill and improve water efficiency in the home. Some of the more common types of household leaks that will be addressed include worn toilet flappers, dripping faucets and hose bibs, leaking showerheads, and broken or leaking water pipes. SmartRepair excludes repairs to sewer/wastewater piping or related backups or overflows, repair of water-using appliances and issues behind walls, under the house, or in the ground.

The cities of Dallas, Austin and San Antonio have similar plumbing repair programs. These benchmark programs were analyzed to help design the Fort Worth program.

Eligibility requirements include:
- Properties must be owner occupied and valued under $300,000.
- Household income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty level guidelines. (Ownership and income eligibility are determined by the City of Fort Worth Community Action Partners.)

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- A homeowner can use the program two (2) times, up to $3,000 total assistance.
- The program may not be used more than one (1) time in a 12-month period.
- Multi-family and rental properties are not eligible for the program. City ordinances require landlords and property managers to address leaks.

Funding for this program is included in the FY2020-21 Water and Sewer Fund adopted budget. $400,000 is available in Year 1 of the program. The Utility is working closely with the Community Action Partners program in Neighborhood Services to identify eligible homeowners to provide the necessary repairs. Water conservation staff will follow up with homeowners receiving SmartRepair assistance following the repairs to offer insight into water usage and information about water conservation techniques and practices.

Should you have any questions about the program, please contact Chris Harder, Water Director or Kara Shuror, Deputy Water Director.

David Cooke
City Manager