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CONTACTS:

Air District: communications@baaqmd.gov

City of Benicia: Sarah Shawky, sshawky@ci.benicia.ca.us or 707.746.4334

Benicia Unified School District: Georgina Martinez, gmartinez@beniciaunified.org or 707.747.8300

Air District Awards \$40 million in penalty funds to City of Benicia and Benicia Unified School District

Grants reinvest penalties from air quality violations back into the Benicia community

SAN FRANCISCO –The Bay Area Air District has awarded \$40 million in Catalyst grants to the City of Benicia and the Benicia Unified School District to fund community-driven projects that improve air quality, protect public health and strengthen community resilience.

The Air District awarded \$30 million to the City of Benicia and \$10 million to Benicia Unified School District. The Benicia Catalyst grants are funded under the Bay REPAIR, or Reinvesting Penalties for Air Improvement and Resilience program, and this announcement marks the start of implementation for these projects.

"Communities like Benicia have carried more than their share of the Bay Area's air pollution for decades," said Dr. Philip Fine, executive officer of the Air District. "By returning these penalties directly to the residents most affected, we are investing in cleaner air, healthier neighborhoods and a stronger future for the Benicia community for generations to come."

The City of Benicia will use the funding to expand clean energy and public EV charging, electrify city buildings and emergency vehicles, improve parks and shoreline access, plant more trees and support new jobs and a stronger local economy. The Benicia Unified School District will use the funding to replace gas-powered systems in school buildings with electric systems, seal air leaks, improve air filters, plant more trees and greenery for shade and cooling, and create healthier schools for students.

"This \$30 million grant is an extraordinary investment in Benicia's future, and we are deeply grateful to the Air District for this partnership. With an opportunity of this magnitude comes tremendous responsibility. We are committed to putting these public dollars to work thoughtfully

and transparently to deliver lasting benefits for our community and future generations,” said Mario Giuliani, city manager of the City of Benicia.

“This funding is a major investment in Benicia’s future,” said Steve Young, mayor of the City of Benicia and Air District board member. “These projects will help us improve air quality, modernize public facilities, expand clean energy and make lasting improvements that residents will see and benefit from across our community. I’m especially pleased that penalties collected for air quality violations are being reinvested directly in Benicia.”

“This transformational investment in Benicia Unified School District will allow us to create healthier, safer, and more energy-efficient schools by upgrading HVAC systems and adding filtration systems that reduce exposure to air pollution. Most importantly, this funding directly benefits our students, staff, and community; particularly those living with asthma, allergies, and other respiratory challenges. We are deeply grateful for this commitment to the health of our students and the future of Benicia. We welcome the partnership with the Bay Area Air District,” said Chris Calabrese, superintendent of Benicia Unified School District.

The grants were awarded through an open, competitive process informed by community priorities, public input and stakeholder engagement under the Air District's [Community Benefits Penalty Funds Policy](#).

The Air District will work closely with both grant recipients throughout implementation and will provide project updates as key milestones are reached. The funded projects will reduce air pollution, improve public health, support a stronger local economy and expand clean energy while improving quality of life for Benicia residents.

The Benicia Catalyst grants are the first awards offered under the Local Community Benefits Fund, which provides three grant types: Catalyst, Opportunity and Seed. Catalyst grants range from \$10 million to \$40 million and support large, multi-project collaborations designed to address multiple community needs.

The Air District established the Community Benefits Penalty Funds Policy in May 2024 to direct monetary penalties from air quality violations back into the communities impacted by that pollution. To date, the Air District’s enforcement actions have generated more than \$131 million that will be reinvested into Bay Area communities over the coming years. In Round 1 of the Local Community Benefits Fund, the Air District made more than \$90 million available for community-led projects in Benicia, Richmond and surrounding communities. Additional grant awards will be announced later this fall. For more information about Air District’s Community Investments program visit: [Community Investments Office](#)

The Bay Area Air District is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality and the global climate in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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