STATEMENT OF POLICY

Public Health Principles and Guidance for Brownfields Policies and Practices

Policy
The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) urges federal, state, and local governments, and related agencies to engage policymakers, government agencies, nongovernment organizations, businesses, and communities to produce and support policies, legislation, regulation, programs, research, and resources that support the identification, remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites, defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”

NACCHO:
- Encourages local health departments (LHDs) to develop a permanent process for integrating the work of public health, and environmental protection into planning, zoning, land use and other activities related to redevelopment in coordination with relevant agencies.
- Supports LHDs to be actively involved in local, state, regional, and federal decision-making regarding pollution allowances, land-use planning, and other items impacting pollution prevention.
- Urges state agencies and LHDs to develop policies and programs to promote environmental justice, such as identifying and mitigating disproportionate exposures to environmental health hazards including, for example, preventing and eliminating disproportionate sitings of hazardous facilities, preventing the enactment of discriminatory (including unintentionally harmful) land use laws and policies, and ensuring nondiscriminatory compliance with all environmental, health, and safety laws.
- Supports state agencies and LHDs to encourage the inclusion of brownfields redevelopment in community land trust strategies.
- Supports federal and state agencies to incorporate comprehensive, formal, and systemic integration of local public health considerations into community design processes, including community planning, regulations, and design of new development and redevelopment, and design of the public realm to promote and protect the health of communities.
- Supports federal agencies to ensure that contamination is cleaned to appropriate health standards and does not threaten public health and the environment.
- Encourages federal, state, and local governments to enact land use and development policies that prevent urban sprawl or the displacement of populations that leads to the
decay and destabilization of communities and concomitant stresses that create health problems.5

- Supports federal, state and local governments to ensure early, sustained, and effective participation by affected community residents in all stages of brownfields decision-making and that mechanisms are available to assist in making this possible (e.g., through implementation of the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health guidebooks).6,7

- Encourages federal, state and local governments to require the utilization of Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) for brownfields redevelopment.8

- Supports federal agencies to build the capacity of the community to participate by providing technical assistance, training, advisory groups and other support to ensure effective participation.

- Urges federal, state and local governments to ensure that future uses of a property do not include facilities or activities that will lead to new health problems.

- Urges state and local health departments to actively incorporate NACCHO’s Public Health Principles and Guidance for Brownfields Policies and Practices in their everyday work.9

**Justification**

Communities and non-profit organizations across the country, with the support of all levels of government, are moving rapidly to redevelop brownfield sites. The EPA has identified over 450,000 such sites10 (which contribute to urban decay as eyesores and nuisances, sites for potential dumping and future health risks, and lower quality of life) nationally. People in economically distressed urban areas are especially vulnerable to exposure from contaminated brownfields sites. Appropriate attention is not being given to assuring that health risks are being addressed as part of the development process.11 The health of the public is intimately linked to economic prosperity and economic development, and such development may potentially affect public health, positively or negatively.12,13

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 provided $100 million to the EPA Brownfields Program, which are awarded to eligible entities through brownfields job training, site assessment, revolving loan fund, and cleanup grants.14 Since the inception of the EPA’s Brownfields Program in 1995, brownfields redevelopment projects have been shown to yield significant environmental benefits when compared to other land development methods, including greenfield sites or conventional alternatives.15 Brownfields redevelopment has also been shown to be economically beneficial to residential property, increasing overall property values from $0.5 to $1.5 million within a one mile radius.16

**References**


Record of Action

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