

Res. 98-06

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT PUBLIC HEALTH PRINCIPLES AND GUIDANCE FOR BROWNFIELDS POLICIES AND PRACTICES

WHEREAS, communities across the country, with the support of all levels of government, are moving rapidly to redevelop abandoned or underused properties (brownfields), which may be contaminated by toxic or hazardous substances; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency has identified over 600,000 such sites (which contribute to urban decay as eyesores and nuisances, sites for potential dumping and future health risks, and lower quality of life) nationally, most located in economically distressed urban areas¹ and approximately 30 percent of these properties are contaminated²; and

WHEREAS, appropriate attention is not being given to assuring that health risks are being addressed as part of the development process;³ and

WHEREAS, the health of the public is intimately linked to economic prosperity and economic development, and such development may potentially affects public health, positively or negatively,⁴ and

WHEREAS, the precautionary principle states, “When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken, even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context, the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof . . . The process of applying [this principle] must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action.”⁵

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Association of County and City Health Officials encourages the development of a permanent process for integrating the work of public health, into zoning, land use and other activities related to redevelopment in coordination with relevant agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NACCHO supports the development of policies that address social injustices, which contribute to the disproportionate burden of disease, such as unjust zoning and land use laws and practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NACCHO supports land use and development policies that do not lead to urban sprawl or the displacement of populations that leads to the decay and destabilization of communities and concomitant stresses that create health problems⁶; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NACCHO advocates that health and planning agencies ensure affected community residents early, sustained, and effective participation in all stages of brownfields decision-making and that mechanisms are available to assist in making this possible

(e.g., through implementation of its *Assessment to Action* and/or *Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health* guidebooks)⁷; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that local health agency leadership should build the capacity of the community to participate by providing technical assistance, training, advisory groups and other support to ensure effective participation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that local public health agencies ensure that contamination is cleaned to appropriate health standards and does not threaten public health; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the future uses of a property do not include facilities or activities that will lead to new health problems.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that local public health agencies actively incorporate NACCHO's Public Health Principles and Guidance for Brownfields Policies and Practices⁸ in their everyday work.

Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors

September 23, 1998

Amended July 14, 1999

Updated September 2003

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Notes

1. Environmental Protection Agency, "Proposal Guidelines for Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund and Clean up Grants," Draft 9/18/02: 1. In recent years, officials at EPA have provided these estimates, as well as a General Accounting Office Report from 1987, but they have not been confirmed. States vary in their definitions and the way they count brownfields.
2. estimate by Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (2000).
3. Jill Litt, "Examining Urban Brownfields through the Public Health 'Macroscopic,'" 110(supplement 2) *Environmental Health Perspectives* (April, 2002): 183-201.
4. William Shutkin and Rafael Mares, "Brownfields and the Redevelopment of Communities: Linking Health, Economy, and Justice," in *Reclaiming the Environmental Debate: The Politics of Health in a Toxic Culture*, Richard Hofrichter, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000): 57-76; see also Urban Habitat Program, *Building Upon Our Strengths: A Community Guide to Brownfields Redevelopment in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco, 1999).
5. Excerpted from the Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle, developed January 23-25 1998, Racine, Wisconsin.
6. Mindy Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (New York: One World, 2004).
7. See NACCHO, *Assessment to Action: A Tool for Improving the Health of Communities Affected by Hazardous Waste* (Washington, DC, 2002); NACCHO, *Community Revitalization and Public Health: Issues, Roles and Relationships for Public Health Agencies* (Washington, DC, 2000).
8. NACCHO, Public Health Principles and Guidance for Brownfields Policies and Practices, Adopted by the NACCHO Board of Directors, September, 1998.