

98-06

## STATEMENT OF POLICY

### Brownfields

#### 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, non-government 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.

NACCHO commits to the following activities to advance brownfield policies and practices:

- Supporting local health departments to be actively involved in local, state, regional, and federal decision-making regarding pollution allowances, land-use planning, and other items impacting pollution prevention and mitigation.<sup>1</sup>
- Urging state agencies and local health departments to develop policies and programs to promote environmental justice, such as identifying and mitigating disproportionate exposures to environmental health hazards. These might include preventing and eliminating disproportionate siting 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.<sup>2</sup>
- Supporting state agencies and local health departments to encourage the inclusion of brownfields redevelopment in community land trust strategies.
- Supporting federal and state agencies to incorporate comprehensive, formal, and systemic integration of local public health considerations into community design processes, including community planning, regulations, design of new development and redevelopment, and design of the public realm to promote and protect the health of communities.<sup>3</sup>
- Supporting federal agencies to ensure that contamination is cleaned to appropriate health standards and does not threaten public health and the environment.
- Encouraging 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.<sup>4</sup>
- Supporting 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).<sup>5,6</sup>

- Encouraging federal, state, and local governments to require the utilization of Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) for brownfields redevelopment.<sup>7</sup>
- Supporting federal agencies in building the capacity of local health departments to participate in the redevelopment process by providing technical assistance, training, advisory groups, and other support to ensure effective participation in brownfield redevelopment assessment and remediation processes.
- Urging 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.
- Urging state and local health departments to actively incorporate NACCHO's Public Health Principles and Guidance for Brownfields Policies and Practices in their everyday work.<sup>8</sup>

NACCHO recommends that local health departments conduct the following activities:

- Engage community members affected by brownfields to empower them to participate in the redevelopment process through community engagement and education.
- Partner with governmental and non-governmental agencies seeking to evaluate the health implications of brownfields and provide support for evidence-based interventions.
- Utilize HIA resources and tools to facilitate brownfield redevelopment processes.
- Collaborate with brownfield grantees to monitor the ongoing health impacts associated with previous use.
- Apply for brownfields funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or work with a funded partner to provide health monitoring services, community engagement, and outreach to affected populations (up to 10% of the redevelopment funding can be devoted to this activity).

### **Justification**

The EPA's definition of brownfield is "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."<sup>9</sup> Communities with brownfields sites tend to have disproportionate environmental, social, and health disparities. The EPA has led the effort to address these disparities and several federal agencies have begun initiatives to support brownfields redevelopment. For example, to improve health outcomes through redevelopment, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry National Brownfields/Land Reuse Health Initiative emphasizes the integration of public health in brownfields redevelopment.

Communities and non-profit organizations across the country, with the support of all levels of government, are moving rapidly to redevelop brownfield sites. Since the inception of the

brownfields program in 1995, the EPA has identified over 450,000 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.<sup>9</sup> People in economically distressed urban areas are especially vulnerable to exposure from contaminated brownfields sites. Appropriate attention is not being given to ensure that health risks are being addressed during the development process.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11, 12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> Brownfields redevelopment has also been shown to be economically beneficial to residential property, increasing overall property values from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million within a one mile radius.<sup>15</sup>

## **References**

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**Record of Action**

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