

# Eastern Neighborhoods Community Health Impact Assessment (ENCHIA) Building a Vision for Healthy San Francisco Neighborhoods

*A Project of the SF Department of Public Health*

## *Community Council Members*

American Lung Association  
Asian Neighborhood Design  
Center for Human Development  
Charlie's Place  
Citizen's Housing  
Jardiniere / Nextcourse  
Low Income Investment Fund  
Mission Community Council  
Mission Economic Development  
Association  
Mission SRO Collaborative  
Neighborhood Parks Council  
Okimoto-Saijo Architecture  
People Organizing to Demand  
Environmental and Economic Rights  
Potrero Boosters  
People Organized to Win Employment  
Rights  
SEIU Local 790  
SF Bike Coalition  
SF Community Land Trust  
SF Food Systems/Food Alliance  
SOMA Family Resource Center  
South of Market Community Action  
Network  
South of Market Employment Center  
Tenants and Owners Development  
Corporation  
Transportation for a Livable City  
Urban Habitat  
Walk SF

## *Participating Government Agencies (non-voting)*

SF Department of City Planning  
SF Department of Parking and Traffic  
SF Department of Public Health  
SF Municipal Transportation Agency  
SF Police Department  
SF Recreation and Park Department  
Board of Supervisors, Maxwell  
Board of Supervisors, Ammiano  
Board of Supervisors, Daly

## *Technical Advisors*

Columbia University  
Center for Collaborative Policy

## *Sponsor and Coordinator*

Program on Health, Equity and  
Sustainability, SF Department of  
Public Health

May 23, 2006

Dear Supervisor Mirkarimi:

The members of the Community Council of the Eastern Neighborhoods Health Impact Assessment would like offer our support for your proposed amendments to Article 11 of the San Francisco Health Code—the Neighborhood Sanitation and Housing Habitability Ordinance. This letter represents the consensus position of members of the Community Council taken at our meeting of January 18, 2006. Participating government agencies are listed for identification purposes only.

Coordinated by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, the Eastern Neighborhoods Community Health Impact Assessment (ENCHIA) is a multi-stakeholder and consensus-based process formed to analyze how development in the Mission, Potrero Hill/Showplace Square and SoMa neighborhoods affect attributes of social and physical environments that are most important to health. The attached one-pager provides background and further information regarding the project.

We believe that this ordinance would help achieve a number of important public health and environmental goals with regards to multi-family housing. The proposed legislation would strengthen code requirements for the control and exclusion of disease vectors including rats and mosquitoes by requiring structural barriers to prevent their entry into buildings (e.g., wire mesh, metal thresholds, and window screens). The presence of rodents in housing is all too common and frightening experience for many living in San Francisco housing. Currently the health code only requires symptomatic control of rodents while structural barriers would prevent rodent entry. Similarly, requiring screens for operable windows used for ventilation could reduce the risks from insects that carry diseases like West Nile virus.

The legislation also would prohibit smoking in common areas of multi-unit residential buildings and address one source of noise by prohibiting the transfer of garbage from upper floors to lower floors at nighttime. The city already prohibits smoking tobacco in workplaces, restaurants, and even public parks. Prohibiting smoking in common areas of multi-family buildings would reduce another important source of environmental tobacco smoke exposure. In most multifamily dwellings, the usual practice is to bring solid waste to ground floor transfer room or outside on the night before pickup; however in some dwellings, the nighttime transfer of garbage from upper floors by City Disposal Service results in significant noise, hallway damage, and tenant fear. We agree that this practice should be prohibited.

Finally we applaud the addition of Department discretion to require owners and managers of multiple dwellings with more than three dwelling units and a history of chronic health code violations to complete Department of Public Health-approved code enforcement training sessions. This addition along with the provisions giving the department the ability to recover inspection fees and assess penalties will provide appropriate disincentives for poor property maintenance.

We are glad that this ordinance begins to take action on the important issue of housing quality for tenants of multi-family apartments and residential hotels; however, we would encourage you to consider additional requirements on residential hotels in the interest of public health. In 2004, San Francisco had over 19,000 residential hotel rooms, of which 80% were in privately owned hotels. These residential hotel rooms provide shelter for San Francisco's poorest residents. In many of these residential hotels, overcrowding and slum conditions are common. Many residents do not have enough bathrooms, common area, and kitchen facilities to meet residents' most basic needs. Such substandard conditions in residential hotels impact citywide efforts to control rodents and other disease vectors.

Straightforward structural improvements applied to both tenant rooms and common areas might prevent many of adverse health conditions found in the City's residential hotels. The ENCHIA Council would support the implementation of following requirements

- Requirements for institutional grade fixtures and surfaces in bathrooms would help maintain the function of bathrooms and sanitary conditions and prevent injuries due to slips and falls;
- Requirements for ventilation in common areas could prevent mold growth and reduce risk from the transmission of respiratory disease;
- Requirements for kitchen facilities would provide residents a means to cook for themselves and to meet their nutritional requirements; adequate kitchen facilities also have the potential to reduce fire risk; and,
- Requirements for common areas provide residents a place to socialize; informal social support mechanisms likely buffer tenants from multiple sources of stress and may assist tenants with recovery from illnesses.

For further information, please contact Lili Farhang at SFDPH at 415.252.3988. Thank you for the opportunity to write this letter of support.