

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
GCA Strategies
Jardiniera / Nextcourse
Low Income Investment Fund
Mission Community Council
Mission Economic Development Association
Mission SRO Collaborative
Neighborhood Parks Council
Okimoto-Saijo Architecture
Paul Terry & Associates
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

February 15, 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.

By way of background, 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. These attributes include adequate and affordable housing; convenient access to public transit; accessible parks and public spaces; infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists; safety and security; healthy economic opportunities; unpolluted air, soil, and water; and, cooperation, trust, and civic participation.

Coordinated by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, ENCHIA is a facilitated group process in which a Community Council comprehensively assesses the effects of development on these attributes and community health. Council members consist of business owners, community service and childcare providers, public health, homeless, environmental, housing, bicycle, pedestrian, transportation, and parks advocates. City agencies providing technical support include the Departments of City Planning, Parking and Traffic, Parks and Recreation, Public Health, Police, Redevelopment, and the Municipal Transportation Agency.

Since its inception in November 2003, the ENCHIA Community Council and SFDPH support staff have:

- 1) Developed an ENCHIA *Healthy City Vision*;
- 2) Developed community health objectives to reflect that vision;
- 3) Developed indicators to measure the those objectives and vision;
- 4) Generated and presented data on those objectives and indicators; and,
- 5) Identified policies and strategies to advance those objectives.

Currently the Council is in the process of prioritizing a set of policies to advance in the next year. We are also developing a set of tools by which

to measure "Healthy Development."

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.

Overall, a majority of members of the ENCHIA Community Council believe that this policy supports San Francisco's move to become a more livable and healthy city. Specific members in support of this policy include:

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Center for Human Development
Charlie's Place
Jardiniere / Nextcourse
Low Income Investment Fund
Mission Community Council
Mission Economic Development Association
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SF Community Land Trust
SF Food Systems/Food Alliance
South of Market Community Action Network
South of Market Employment Center
Transportation for a Livable City
Urban Habitat
Walk SF

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

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