

Draft – 3/23/17

March 23, 2017

Supervisor Federal Glover, District V
Chairperson, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
315 East Leland Road
Pittsburg, CA 94565

Re: Prioritization of Brownfields in the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative

Dear Chairperson Glover:

The Hazardous Materials Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors support an effort to assess the re-use potential of contaminated vacant or underutilized industrially-zoned sites within the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative (NWEDI) for the purpose of maximizing the benefit from their eventual development. Brownfield sites within the NWEDI are not necessarily equally well-suited for industrial or commercial reuse. Site re-use potential can differ based on the cost of clean-up, compatibility with surrounding land uses, impacts from sea level rise, access to amenities, and their value for other types of uses. An assessment and prioritization of re-use potential would help determine which sites should be focused on first for development as industrial or commercial uses, and which sites should be developed later or potentially re-purposed for different uses.

Other communities that have conducted this type of assessment have achieved benefits through the reuse of some brownfield sites for other purposes. Some communities have found that some sites may be better suited for housing, parks or open space. These alternative uses could help promote community goals identified through the NWEDI process such as affordable housing, more walkable or bikeable areas, support for public transportation, more recreational opportunities, and buffer zones from existing industrial activities. The appropriate types of alternative uses, the activities they promote and the community benefits they provide could be identified as part of an assessment of brownfield reuse by conducting a Health Impact Assessment.

The Commission understands that the Board of Supervisors Ad Hoc committee for the NWEDI will soon meet to consider funding a set of studies necessary to further the implementation of the NWEDI. The type of assessment and prioritization the Commission is proposing could easily be incorporated into the Environmental Assessment, the Brownfield Re-use or the Parcel Analysis studies being requested by County staff. Also, based on a presentation by the Center for Creative Land Recycling the Commission received last fall, proposing this type of assessment would enhance the chances of receiving Federal Environmental Protection Agency brownfield grants.

The Hazardous Materials Commission hopes to ultimately see the clean-up and productive reuse of all brownfield sites in the County, and will continue to support the work of the Board of Supervisors and County staff to that end.

Sincerely,

George Smith, Chairperson
Hazardous Materials Commission

Cc

Supervisor John Gioia, District I
Supervisor Candace Andersen, District II
Supervisor Diane Burgis, District III
Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, District IV
Rich Seithel, Department of Conservation and Development