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Health Impacts of Displacement: Considerations for the Pacific Renaissance Settlement

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Affordable housing is not only a fundamental human right, it is a critical public health issue. The medical literature clearly documents the powerful relationship between unaffordable housing and poor health outcomes.

One of the most frequent results of inadequate affordable housing is displacement, which has serious health consequences for children. Residential stability during childhood is associated with self-rated health status in adulthood. Additionally, increased mobility at childhood is strongly associated with adverse childhood events such as abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, smoking, and suicide.

However, children are not the only vulnerable group whose health suffers as a result of being uprooted. Seniors' health is particularly jeopardized by displacement because it often means a loss of health protective social networks. The breaking of these important bonds is associated with a greater likelihood of chronic disease, depression and most significantly, premature death.

Finally, displacement impacts whole communities, not only those forced to relocate. Displacement and neighborhood instability are linked with a loss of social capital, which in turn is related to increased violence.

Access to affordable housing, on the other hand, has been found to decrease displacement and reduce the frequency of moves among vulnerable groups, and thus a reduction in the aforementioned negative health outcomes.

The establishment and maintenance of affordable and decent housing is a critical goal for both city and county government. Too often, governments err by equating redevelopment with displacement of low-income residents. However, Redevelopment Law explicitly recognizes that the fundamental purpose of redevelopment is "...to expand the supply of low and moderate income housing, to expand employment opportunities for jobless, underemployed, and low-income persons, and to provide an environment for the social, economic, and psychological growth and well-being of all citizens."

Please ensure that redevelopment in Oakland contributes to making this city a health place for all its residents – support the Pacific Renaissance Settlement.

Thank you.