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April 20, 2010

**RE: CED Committee Central Estuary Specific Plan Recommended Alternative and Public Health Concerns**

Dear Council President Brunner,

The Alameda County Public Health Department is writing to express our appreciation for including public health as a core consideration for the Central Estuary Specific Plan planning process. I am also writing to share our concern regarding the potential health implications of the *Community and Economic Development (CED) Committee Recommended Alternative*.

The City of Oakland took the unprecedented and forward-thinking step of requiring health to be considered by the consultants and community working on the Central Estuary Specific Plan. We were encouraged by the fact that the existing conditions report recognized the strong relationships between land use planning, transportation, community design and health, and included a significant amount of health-related data. We were also excited that there was a public health component to the impact analysis; specifically, that each of the alternatives was assessed for potential positive and negative health impacts.

However, while health-related information has been generated for the Central Estuary Plan, it is unclear the extent to which the data and assessment has been used in advancing the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative*. For negative health impacts to be prevented it is not enough for health to be considered; the proposed zoning and accompanying plan should reflect inputs generated by the process.

From a health perspective, there are several primary concerns related to the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative*, detailed below. ACPHD is concerned with the potential exposure of new and existing residents to these health risks, as well as cost of mitigating these risks and the lack of clarity regarding how mitigations will be funded given that there will be no changes to, and thus no new revenue and impact fees generated by, the Central-East Subarea. However, ACPHD also wants to make it clear that it supports the preservation of industrial land for well-paying, industrial jobs. Income and employment are inextricably linked to health, and the preservation and creation of jobs available to those with a high-school degree or less is essential for improving health outcomes in Oakland, particularly among those disproportionately experiencing poor health outcomes. As a result, these concerns should not be misconstrued as support for up-zoning the industrial and manufacturing areas in the Central-East Subarea to mixed-use or residential.

***Health-Related Infrastructure and Associated Costs***

From a health perspective, the *Alternatives Report* state that the south of Tidewater area was found to be the least amenable area for housing within the Plan area, primarily because it currently includes no infrastructure that supports residential uses. The recommendation for new, high-density housing and commercial uses will generate additional automobile traffic in the area, as well as a demand for pedestrian and bike facilities, and public transit. According to the "Public Health" section (pages 137-150) of the *Central Estuary Plan – Alternatives Report*, the East Subarea has the worst proximity to transit and very poor ped/bike network and connectivity to surrounding areas. As a result, encouraging the safe and sustainable use of walking, biking and/or transit among new residents and workers will require significant transportation improvements. A failure to make these improvements would result in an increase in vehicle miles traveled, thus decreasing air quality (and potentially increasing associated respiratory and cardio-pulmonary disease), and would increase the risk of

ped/bike injuries, especially given the commingling of residential and industrial uses. The *Alternatives Report* states that a substantial increase in density across the entire Central Estuary is necessary for ensuring there is money available to generate the transportation improvements and to support transit services (page 141). Because the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* has not gone through the same rigorous analysis as the previously considered alternatives, it is unclear whether it will attain a density that is significant enough to generate the funds necessary for the transportation improvements essential to avoiding auto-dependency and to mitigating the potential negative health impacts to new and existing residents.

It is important to note that the *Alternatives Report* states that there are high violent and property crime rates in this area. One of the primary deterrents to this crime, according to the *Alternatives Report*, is “ped/bike and streetscape improvements, and increasing population densities throughout the Plan area, [in order to get] more ‘eyes on the street... (page 144).” Given that the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* does not create the same level of residential density as proposed in previous alternatives, and that it may not be able to support the necessary transportation-related infrastructure improvements, crime may not be effectively deterred, placing both existing and new residents at risk.

### ***Industrial-Residential Conflicts and Mitigation Costs***

The commingling of land uses proposed in the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* does little to mitigate the noise, air and truck related conflicts that typically exist between residential and industrial uses. According to the *Alternatives Report*, building residential in close proximity to industry creates a strong likelihood of residential-industrial conflicts stemming from noise and air quality (page 140). The *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* includes an R&D buffer around the East Subarea as a way to prevent an increase in noise related stress and air-quality related disease among new residents. However, because the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* was not analyzed, it is unclear if the R&D buffer will protect both new residents’ health, and industry from development pressure related to residents’ noise and air quality complaints. Furthermore, if this mitigation is not sufficient, it is not clear who will bear the cost of further mitigations that will protect both existing industry and new residents.

### ***Environmental Contaminants and Mitigation Costs***

According to the *Alternatives Report*, there is significant soil contamination throughout the East subarea, and that it poses significant health risks to new residents unless contamination is fully mitigated (page 140). Environmental remediation adds another cost to preparing the area for development.

### ***Health Benefits/Risks for Existing Central Estuary Residents and Adjacent Communities***

The transportation-related benefits and potential risks of the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* to existing residents is also unclear. For instance, the *Alternatives Report* states, “Placing new housing close to existing housing (as in the Central West subarea) would help to focus ped/bike improvements in as way that supports existing as well as new residents (page 141).” However, the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* does not place new housing (East Subarea-South of Tidewater) close to existing housing (Central West Subarea). As a result, it is unclear how existing residents will benefit from bike/ped improvements. Furthermore, workers and residents will be forced to travel through existing residential areas in order to access the East Subarea, as the only two roads that access South of Tidewater pass through Central West Subarea or through Fruitvale. Again, it is unclear in the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* how health risks posed to existing residents and workers in the Central Estuary and adjacent communities due to increase automobile trips through their neighborhood are considered.

### ***Recapturing Land Value Increases to Promote Health***

The *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* increases the land values of the south of Tidewater area by up-zoning the existing industrial/manufacturing land to a mixed-use/residential. In this up-zoning lies a very important opportunity to promote health for new and existing residents and workers in the Central Estuary, as well as the entire City of Oakland. Any re-zoning of land that increases the value of land and that is completed as part of the Central Estuary Specific Plan, including the proposed up-zoning of south of Tidewater included in

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the CED Committee Recommended Alternative, should be used as an opportunity to ensure that the community benefits from any new development in the area. Specifically, these benefits should include a requirement that any new housing include a high percentage of affordable housing, local hire and job training for new development, and local hire and wage standards for all permanent jobs resulting from the new development.

Using this opportunity to increase affordable housing is important from improving health. The City's chronic lack of affordable housing contributes to food insecurity and poor nutrition, especially among children, families cutting back on childcare, preventative healthcare, and prescription drugs, and increases stress and related diseases such as hypertension. Additionally, a lack of safe, affordable housing can lead vulnerable residents to settle for substandard housing situations. Moldy walls, old carpets and pest infestation are all major contributors to the development of serious respiratory and skin infections.

Using this opportunity to create job training and development-related, as well as permanent, good-paying jobs, is equally important for improving health. The populations suffering from the worst health outcomes in Alameda County also suffer from the highest un- and under-employment rates. These same populations also face barriers to employment, such as a lack of a high-school degree and/or a criminal record. Research clearly indicates that one of the best ways to improve health outcomes is to increase income levels or reduce poverty. However, as industrial and other blue-collar jobs historically available to those with a high-school degree or less leave of the area, the job prospects for those facing multiple barriers to employment are further reduced.

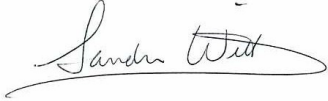
Given the need for affordable housing and good-paying jobs and job training opportunities and the potential for increases in these areas to help improve health outcomes, it is important to use any available public policy decision to increase the availability of these important resources.

### **Recommendations:**

- Conduct a thorough analysis of the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* in order to uncover the potential health costs/benefits of this alternative, as well as to reveal the potential costs/benefits to the City. As the March 23<sup>rd</sup> Supplemental Staff Report notes, much of the required infrastructure would need to precede new development, placing up-front costs on the City. Furthermore, without development of the Owens-Brockway site, there are no funds to support infrastructure improvements in the surrounding areas, creating a residential development completely disconnected from surrounding communities.
  - If significant costs to the City of Oakland are revealed, ensure that impact fees sufficient to cover the costs to the City, minus the benefits, are included in Specific Plan development standards, so that those costs are borne by developers.
  - Ensure the inclusion of health-promoting community benefits related to affordable housing and jobs are included in the Specific Plan development standards in proportion to the benefits accrued to landowners and developers due to any and all up-zoning.
  - Ensure that the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* does not place the health of existing or new residents or workers at risk, due to increases in air and noise pollution, decreases traffic safety, or exposure to soil contamination. If risks can not be avoided, require effective mitigation. Include mitigation costs in the analysis of the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* and associated development of impact fees, as described in the first two bullets. Furthermore, include mitigations in the Specific Plan's development standards. Such mitigations may include but should not be limited to: traffic calming devices, sound barriers, streetscape improvements, etc.
  - Given the extensive development costs in this area, a thorough feasibility analysis should be completed to determine the viability of new mixed-use development in the south of Tidewater area. If development is not found to be feasible, alternative uses that do not place health at risk should be considered.
  - If the *CED Committee Recommended Alternative* moves forward, the Specific Plan should include development standards that ensure that the health of existing residents benefits from new development in the Central Estuary.
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Again, ACPHD expresses its appreciation to the City of Oakland for introducing public health considerations as a core component for Central Estuary Specific Plan process. However, it is unclear how the health information introduced throughout the process was used to generate the *CED Committee Preferred Alternative*. Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations for addressing the health gaps in *CED Committee Preferred Alternative*. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 510-267-8018 or [Sandra.Witt@acgov.org](mailto:Sandra.Witt@acgov.org) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Witt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Sandra Witt, DrPH  
Deputy Director of Planning, Policy and Health Equity  
Alameda County Public Health Department

Cc: Vice Mayor De La Fuente  
Councilmember Brooks  
Councilmember Kaplan  
Councilmember Kernighan  
Councilmember Nadel  
Councilmember Quan  
Councilmember Reid  
Eric Angstadt, Strategic Planning Manager, City of Oakland  
Walter Cohen, Director, Community and Economic Development Agency  
Alex Briscoe, Director, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency