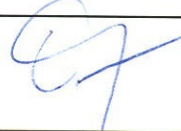

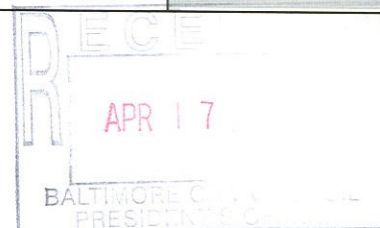


F R O M	Name & Title	Olivia D. Farrow, Esq., RS, Interim Commissioner of Health 	Health Department	 HEALTH DEPARTMENT BALTIMORE MARYLAND
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette St.		
	Subject	Council Bill 09-0106R- Outer Harbor Initiative - A Community Redevelopment Strategy		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o
409 City Hall

April 17, 2009



The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Council Resolution 09-0106R. This resolution urges the City Council to review and approve the Outer Harbor Initiative (OHI), a comprehensive redevelopment strategy aimed at redeveloping vacant, abandoned, or speculator held housing. Executed successfully, it is expected that the OHI will 1) generate decent and affordable mixed-income housing, 2) enable families to generate wealth through home-ownership, 3) engage unemployed youth in workforce development, 4) increase the City's tax base, and 5) improve public safety in redeveloped neighborhoods.

While redevelopment proposals, like OHI, are not explicitly health-related, they have the potential to significantly impact the health of those residing in target communities. The built environment, which includes elements such as vacant housing, is a critical yet often overlooked determinant of individual and community health. The presence of vacant properties in a community is associated with a range of negative health and safety outcomes, including neighborhood violence and disorder, sexually transmitted diseases, premature mortality, cardiovascular disease and homicide mortality, assault-related injuries, and fire-related injuries.¹⁻⁶

Activities of the nature proposed by the OHI show promise of both short- and long-term salutary changes for targeted communities. A number of City agencies have been dedicated to eliminating the presence of vacant properties and redeveloping the properties into affordable mixed-income housing. Continuing these ongoing efforts will help reduce social disorder and crime, both violent and property, as well as improve the overall health of the community. They will also have similar impacts on health, reducing the burden of housing costs and improving opportunities for healthy indoor living environments that are free from lead, asthma triggers, and other harmful elements.

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- 1: Keizer K, Lindenberg S, Steg L. The spreading of disorder. *Science*. 2008; 322 (5908):1681-5.
- 2: Cohen D, Spear S, Scribner R, Kissinger P, Mason K, Wildgen J. "Broken windows" and the risk of gonorrhea. *Am J Public Health*. 2000; 90 (2):230-6.
- 3: Cohen DA, Farley TA, Mason K. Why is poverty unhealthy? Social and physical mediators. *Soc Sci Med*. 2003; 7(9):1631-41.
- 4: Freisthler B, Gruenewald PJ, Ring L, LaScala EA. An ecological assessment of the population and environmental correlates of childhood accident, assault, and child abuse injuries. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res*. 2008; 32 (11):1969-75.
- 5: Boyle DJ, Hassett-Walker C. Individual-level and socio-structural characteristics of violence: an Emergency Department study. *J Interpers Violence*. 2008; 23 (8):1011-26.
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Furthermore, Council Bill 09-0106R presents an opportunity to explore an approach to (re)development that conceives of health in a broader sense than is customary for such projects. Redevelopment projects often modify elements of the built environment that are not traditionally associated with health, such as sidewalks, street lights, crosswalks, bike lanes, trees and greenspace etc. Other projects are sometimes carried out without regard to proximity to grocery stores, public transportation, or parks.

The Baltimore City Health Department fully supports efforts to encourage redevelopment in Baltimore City. Moreover, we encourage expanding traditional understandings of what is considered health-related policy, in hopes that initiatives such as the OHI will be designed with the health of Baltimore residents, in it the broadest sense, in mind from the first draft. We appreciate having the opportunity to provide comments on this resolution and look forward to continuing to work with the City Council to keep these concerns in the forefront from the outset.

Cc: Angela Gibson