

Date: February 24, 2008

To: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

From: Pitzer College (Maris Findlay, current sophomore)

Subject: Public Policy Proposal: Required Buffer Zones to Restrict the Zoning of Manufacturing and Industrial Sites Near Residential Areas

Problem: In the past decade, developers and corporations have failed to take into account negative health impacts on communities near zoned sites of industry and pollution. Riverside County, California is an example of such neglect. Development moves along at rapid speed in Riverside County without public review, thought or planning. Millions of public tax dollars are spent on the purchase and development of land, which is then leased to private industry. These private businesses, in return, bring millions in property tax dollars back to the county, which are used subsequently for the development of yet more land. However, the areas most impacted by such development have tended to be former agricultural areas and/or land in low-income and minority communities deemed as “cheap” by the county.

This unfortunate process began in 1955 when the county Board of Supervisors designated areas of low-economic production as “redevelopment zones.” The Board subsequently consolidated all redevelopment zones in the county to form one large redevelopment area. The consolidation of numerous communities in Riverside County into one large “community” has allowed the over-development by manufacturing and industrial businesses of low-income and minority communities within this larger zone while middle and upper-middle class areas reap the benefits of economic expansion and increased tax revenue without the visual or physical blight.

Industrial and manufacturing zones such as mega-warehouses draw hundreds if not thousands of trucks to their locations each day. These trucks add deadly diesel exhaust to the air that communities breathe. The USC Children’s Health Study (CHS) found that children living within 500 meters (1,500 feet) of a freeway had significant deficits in their lung function development from ages 10 to 18 compared to children living more than 500 meters from a freeway. Reduced lung function at an early age can lead to serious respiratory illnesses such as new or aggravated asthma, chronic bronchitis, increased respiratory and cardiovascular hospitalizations, lung cancer, and even premature death. Not only does air pollution cost lives, time lost from school, work, and family, it costs dollars, billions of dollars to the state of California alone. In 1998, estimates gauged the total costs for asthma in California at \$1.3 billion in hospitalization and medications. Likewise, the annual value for treatment of major and minor illnesses related to air pollution exposure in California was \$3.5 billion.

The CHS monitored levels of air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide and ozone in twelve inland valley communities in Southern California to discover that certain areas in this region, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties specifically, suffer from the highest measures of air pollutants in the nation and the fourth highest in the world. Contributors to these significant measures of air pollution are ports, traffic, and industry, as well as

geographical location (eastward moving wind patterns relocate air pollution from Los Angeles to the Inland Valley where it is trapped by the San Gabriel Mountains). The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach alone take in over 40% of all containerized imports in the United States. The ships, trucks, trains, airplanes, and equipment used to facilitate the transport and distribution of these goods release thousands of tons of polluting emissions annually. The communities that suffer the most from the resultant pollution are those that physically border these sites.

Californians suffer from heightened measures of air pollution. It is necessary that the state enact legislation that will protect community health. Studies have shown that communities 500-meters or more away from any industrial or manufacturing zone experience a significant decrease in the occurrence of respiratory illness. A mandatory 500-meter buffer zone would ensure a drop in the occurrence of respiratory illness. Furthermore, the CHS has shown that a reduction in air pollution during a child or teen's years of lung development can directly affect lung health. Cleaning up the air in a community during years of a child's respiratory growth will enhance the opportunity for lung growth. Reducing the incidence of respiratory illness in California would also reduce the outstanding costs to the state that are the result of such problems.

Solution: The legislative body of any county or city in the state of California must adopt ordinances to enact the following: A buffer zone of at least 500-meters between the new developments of any manufacturing or industrial zone from any residential area. Example: In Riverside County the above proposal would classify the following zones as manufacturing and/or industrial; I-P, M-H, M-M, M-R, M-R-A, and M-SC. The development of any such zone would require a 500-meter buffer from any zone acting as a place of residency. Residential zones that would require a 500-meter buffer in Riverside county are classified as the following; R-1, R-1A, R-2, R-2A, R-3, R-3A, R-4, R-6, R-T, and R-T-R.

To ensure continued economic development zones classified as C-1, C-P, C-O, C-T, C-R, R-5, and R-VC could be built within the buffer zone to maximize land use opportunities. These zones include general businesses, administrative and professional offices, hotels, motels, restaurants, professional studios, gift shops, automobile services and sales, liquor stores, animal hospitals, convenience markets, golf courses, clubhouses, recreation assembly buildings, riding academies and stables, etc.

Additionally, industrial and manufacturing sites must determine transportation routes that adhere to the 500-meter buffer zone so that trucks delivering or distributing goods to or from the site do not threaten community health with high levels of diesel emissions.

The legislative bodies will create a mandatory zoning commission that includes representation from community organizations such as the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice in Riverside, CA. The purpose of the zoning commission is to ensure that community health is in fact being protected. The zoning commission will be required to hold public hearings when new manufacturing or industrial zones are being approved for development. These hearings must allow for community input and recognition.

Sources

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- California Government Codes, <<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate?WAISdocID=50718625262+0+0+0&WAIAction=retrieve>>
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- Riverside County Planning Department, <http://www.tlma.co.riverside.ca.us/planning/content/zoning/ordnance/ord348_zones.html>

Index of Abbreviations

Commercial, Manufacturing, or Industrial Zones

I-P, Industrial Park

M-H, Manufacturing-Heavy

M-M, Manufacturing-Medium

M-R, Mineral Resources

M-R-A, Mineral Resources and Related Manufacturing

M-SC, Manufacturing-Service Commercial

Residential/ Agricultural Zones

R-1, One Family Dwelling

R-1A, One Family Dwelling Mountain Resort

R-2, Multiple-Family Dwellings

R-2A, Limited Multiple-Family Dwellings

R-3, General Residential

R-3A, Village Tourist Residential

R-4, Planned Residential

R-6, Residential Incentive

R-T, Mobile Home Subdivisions and Mobile Home Parks

R-T-R, Mobile Home Subdivision, Rural

Zones to be Used in Buffer Zone

C-1, General Commercial

C-P, General Commercial

C-T, Tourist Commercial

C-O, Commercial Office

C-R, Rural Commercial

R-S, Open Area Combining Zone Residential Developments

R-VC, Rubidoux-Village Commercial