



OLIVER L. BAINES III
Councilmember, District Three

December 10, 2013

Jennifer Clark
Director, DARM
City of Fresno
2600 Fresno Street, Third Floor
Fresno, California 93721

Dear Ms. Clark:

I am concerned about a pending Site Plan Application, S-13-047, filed by McCall Pacific for a proposed plant at 175 North Hughes in my council district.

Over the course of the last few weeks I have several letters from concerned citizens and groups over the proposed site plan for a chemical storage and transfer station coming to West Fresno. I have already forwarded copies of the correspondences received to your staffer, McKenzie Contreras, handling this application.

Can you and your staff keep my office informed as to the status of this project as it flows through the development process? I want to ensure that the community can continue to weigh in at the appropriate time(s) as they come.

Until then, I will wait until all the comments are in to form a final opinion on this matter.

Should you have any questions, please contact my Chief of Staff, Gregory Barfield at 621-7834.

Sincerely

Oliver L. Baines III
Councilmember, District Three

cc: McKenzie Contreras



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Councilmember, District Three

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City of Fresno
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Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Oliver L. Baines III", is written over a blue circular stamp or seal.

Oliver L. Baines III
Councilmember, District Three

cc: McKenzie Contreras

From: [Gregory Barfield](#)
To: [Nathan Bouvet](#)
Subject: RE: S-13-047
Date: Tuesday, January 28, 2014 5:27:29 PM

Nathan

The committee was dead set against the project as well as several area residents who came to the meeting (I had a full room over this project). The concerns are about the types of chemicals that will be stored on site and transferred to/ from the plant. Although the applicant's rep stated there is oversight by the fire department and others the residents remember the Archie Crippen fire and were concerned about accidents at the plant and the effect one could have on the neighborhoods to the south / southwest.

We meet on Monday and I can poll the committee as to if they want to meet again with the applicant. Also the Councilmember has concerns about the project and has received a number of phone calls and inquires about the project and it's need to be in another location other the this proposed site.

I do hope that helps you, please let me know if you or the applicant have any other questions, would be happy to answer them for you.

Thanks
gb

Gregory A. Barfield
Chief of Staff
Office of Councilmember Oliver L. Baines III
City of Fresno
2600 Fresno Street
2nd Floor, Executive Offices
Fresno, California 93721-3600
559.621-8000
559.621-7834 (direct)
559.621-7893 (fax)

From: Nathan Bouvet
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2014 3:57 PM
To: Gregory Barfield
Subject: S-13-047

Gregory;

On December 2, 2013, the District 3 Committee recommended the denial of S-13-047, which requested a Chemical Warehouse at the west side of North Hughes Avenue between West Nielson

and West Belmont Avenues. Could you provide additional information as to the denial of the project; whereas, information in the minutes is limited? The applicant is pushing for project approval and wants to address all concerns. Given the denial and a series of letters received against the project, staff will most likely take this to the Planning Commission for further review.

With that being said, would you suggest the District meeting with the applicant and staff again?

Nathan Bowel

Planner III

City of Fresno

Development and Resource Management Department

2600 Fresno Street

Fresno, CA 93721

(559) 621-8075 - tel

(559) 498-1026 - fax

Golden Westside Planning Committee

891 W. Kearney Blvd. / Fresno, CA 93706

DEC 06 2013



"Serve the Golden Westside through open communication, whereby our community can achieve greater growth, health, economic stability, and become as prosperous as any other part of the City of Fresno."

Oliver L. Baines III, Councilmember

2600 Fresno Street Room 2097

Fresno, CA 93721

December 4, 2013

Dear Mr. Baines,

It has recently come to our attention that a new development is proposed for a site in West Fresno. Said business is operated by McCall Pacific, LLC. and is called the North Hughes Plant, 175 N. Hughes. The master application number for said site is S-13-047.

This development has the potential to cause an unbelievable catastrophic dilemma should a mishap occur on said site. The hazardous consequences for our community should there be a spill or other disastrous occurrence at said plant would be horrendous. As noted in the application, over 57,000 sq ft of storage is proposed for corrosives, combustibles, flammables, poisons and toxins.

It is clear such a business should not be located in such close proximity to residential areas, which is to the North, East and South of the proposed site.

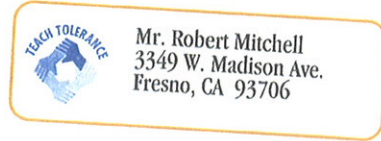
It is the above noted reason; the Golden Westside Planning committee is in opposition to this plant being located in our community.

Sincerely,


Debbie Darden – Chairperson

DEC 05 2013

To Honorable Councilman Oliver Baines III
City of Fresno
2600 Fresno St.



Dear Sir,

It has recently come to our attention that a new development is proposed for a site in West Fresno. Said business is operated by McCall Pacific, LLC., and is called the North Hughes Plant , 175 N. Hughes. The master application number for said site is S-13-047.

We the undersigned are in opposition to this business being located at the proposed location. We will not list all of the undesirable businesses which are presently located in West Fresno, which have adversely impacted development and growth in our community, as we feel you are acutely aware of said circumstance.

This development has the potential to cause serious hazardous consequences for our community should there be a spill or other disastrous occurrence at said plant. As noted in the application, over 57,000 sq ft of storage is proposed for corrosives, combustibles, flammables, poisons and toxins.

It is clear such a business should not be located in such close proximity to residential areas, which is to the North, East and South of the proposed site.

We the undersign request you take immediate steps to stop this dangerous operations from coming to our community.

CHARLOS C. TURNEY
Bob Mitchell
Laverne L. Turney
Lynellay Theus
Mogul Smith
Willie Davis
Irene Davis
Dorothy Andrews
Ruby J. Williams
Rita J. Andrews Garza

J. James Wilson
Marge Wright
Jane Wright
Frances J. Goodwin
Harlan Kelly
Shirley Kelly

Golden Westside Planning Committee



RECEIVED
CITY OF FRESNO

JUN 17 2014

DEVELOPMENT & RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
PLANNING DIVISION

"Serve the Golden Westside through open communication, whereby our community can achieve greater growth, health, economic stability, and become as prosperous as any other part of the City of Fresno."

June 17, 2014

Mr. Nathan Bouvet Planner III
Management Department Room 3076
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, CA 93721-3604

Dear Sir,

The Golden Westside Planning Committee strongly opposes the proposed Brenntag chemical plant site as noted in their application S-13-047. We do not feel the MEIR of the 2025 plan adopted in 2002 can apply to such a major project, allowing for the many factors which have changed since 2002.

The mitigation factor in your staff report are not sufficient to provide safety to the environment of our community and certainly presents tremendous health risk to all of us, within several miles radius of this proposed plant. Please note our following comments on the environmental determinations.

Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentration

D. with the location existing near two freeways which in itself, expose the very young and the elderly to the cumulative affects of substantial pollutant concentrations, this operation with its heavy HD traffic will have a potentially significant impact.

VII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- A. The project would have potentially significant impact. The increase in the HD from the drivers of said company and others coming to the location to make purchases, and the prolonged operation of the diesel locomotive at the location will increase greenhouse gas and PM 2.5.

VIII.

- A. The operation poses and extreme hazard to our community. The overwhelming volume of dangerous chemicals and the potential for a horrific catastrophe as a result of spill are of very significant impact and cannot be mitigated.
- B. Same as noted in A. above.
- C. There are three schools in the area of the proposed site. Two are within less than a mile and the third is just a little over a ¼ of a mile from the proposed business. The site poses a significant impact which cannot be mitigated. Given the proximity to the rail track and its proposed use, there is extreme high risk that a spill or accident could occur creating a significant hazard to our community.

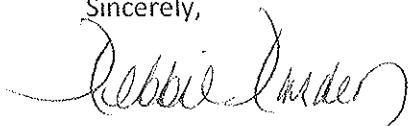
XII.

C The project will increase the noise level sufficient to cause a significant impact. The increase of HD traffic to and from the site in itself should be noted as significant increase and the prolong train traffic at the site, the extended time involved in the loading or offloading of railcars and the constant idling of locomotive diesel engine, will become a tremendous increase in the noise level in the area.

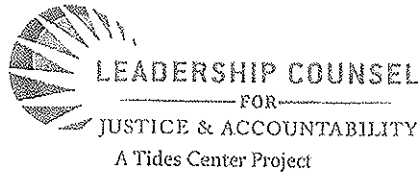
XVIII

- B. The cumulative impact cannot be considered as having no impact. The increase pollutants caused by this proposed operation will significantly impact our community. With the heavy equipment business located across the street from this site and the operation of a diesel truck driver training school located at the corner of Nielsen and Marks adjacent to the proposed site, the cumulative affect produces a potentially significant impact.
- C. The same as not in B. above.

Sincerely,



Debbie Darden – Chairperson
Golden Westside Planning Committee



June 18, 2014

Nathan Bouvet, Planner III
Development and Resource Management Department
City Hall
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3076
Fresno, California 93721

SENT VIA E-MAIL

Re: Brenntag Chemical Warehouse Project
Site Plan Review and Environmental Assessment Number S-13-047

Dear Mr. Bouvet:

We are writing to provide comments to the City with respect to the Brenntag Chemical Warehouse Project and the associated Site Plan Review and Environmental Assessment Number S-13-047 (collectively, "Project"). As we have previously expressed in oral comment at public meetings on the Project and in meetings with City staff, we believe that this Project raises significant concerns when viewed individually and in the context of the existing environmental setting for the Project and the City's current economic development initiatives aimed at intensifying industrial land uses. Approval of this Project would conflict with the stated wishes of residents, applicable community plans, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and state and federal civil rights and fair housing laws.

In light of the concerns set forth in this letter, we recommend that the City deny approval of the Project. We further recommend that the City initiate a comprehensive assessment of city policy and practices to address the procedural and substantive environmental and civil rights issues highlighted by this project and to create a path forward for economic development that supports the creation of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods for all Fresno residents.

I. Deficient Cumulative Impact Analysis in Light of Available Data and City's Economic Development Initiatives

California law requires that a lead agency find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment and thereby require an environmental impact report to be prepared for the project where substantial evidence indicates that a project has possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. 14 C.C.R. § 15065(a). "'Cumulatively considerable' means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects". *Id.* The California Code of Regulations further defines the cumulative impacts of a project as "two or more individual effects which, when considered together are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." § 15355. "Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant

projects taking place over a period of time.” *Id.* Assessment of a project’s cumulative impact on the environment is a critical aspect of the environmental review process. *Los Angeles Unified School Dis. v. City of Los Angeles* (1998) 58 Cal.App.4th 1019, 1025; See *Communities for a Better Environment v. California Resources Agency* (2002) 103 Cal.App.4th 98; *Whitman v. Board of Supervisors* (1979) 88 Cal.App.3d 397, 404-405 (EIR fatally deficient in its failure to adequately discuss cumulative impacts of proposed project)

Here, the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for this Project cursorily concludes without supporting analysis that, “[T]here is no evidence in the record to indicate that the increment of environmental impacts that could be potentiated by this project would be cumulatively significant.” However, extensive evidence exists in the public sphere (which has previously and repeatedly been brought to the City’s attention) identifying the area in which the project is located and the adjacent West Fresno community as neighborhoods extremely and disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and which must factor in to an adequate cumulative impacts analysis for this Project and other new industrial projects in the area.

a. Pertinent Data Not Incorporated Into Mitigated Negative Declaration

In April 2014, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) released the Draft California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool Version 2.0 (CalEnviroScreen).¹ CalEnviroScreen is a rigorous scientific screening methodology developed to help identify California communities that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution. CalEnviro Screen 2.0 employs twelve pollution burden indicators, including indicators for air quality (ozone and PM2.5), diesel particulate matter, drinking water quality, toxic releases from facilities, traffic density, clean-up sites, groundwater threats, hazardous waste facilities and generators, among others, and seven population characteristic indicators (to measure sensitivity of the population to pollution exposure), including age (rates of children and elderly among the total population), asthma rates, and linguistic isolation, among others.

CalEPA and OEHHA used CalEnviroScreen to score and rank California’s census tracts according to the pollution burden born by their residents. The census tract in which the Project site is located, census tract 6019000700, scores within the top 5% of the most heavily burdened census tracts in the State, ranking 98% for pollution burden and 99% for population characteristics (sensitivity to pollution). With respect to individual indicators, the census tract scores in the 90th percentile for toxic releases from industrial facilities, the 96th percentile for PM 2.5 exposure, and 99th percentile for rates of emergency department visits for asthma. The West Fresno census tracts surrounding that of the Project site also rank among the most highly burdened census tracts in the State and contrast sharply with comparatively low census tract rankings in the northern areas of the City, where certain census tracts rank within the 10% least burdened tracts in the State (see attached maps and April 22, 2014 Fresno Bee article).

The data provided by CalEnviroScreen, absent from the MND in its current form, is pertinent data that must be considered the City in its analysis of the potential significant cumulative

¹Available at <http://oehha.ca.gov/ej/pdf/CES20PublicReview04212014.pdf>

environmental impacts of the Project. Given the extreme burden of pollution that exists at the project site and surrounding census tracts, even relatively minor project impacts may constitute a cumulatively considerable impact triggering the requirement that an environmental impact report be prepared. 14 C.C.R. § 15065(a). The extreme sensitivity of the residential population in the project vicinity to pollution exposure, as indicated by the CalEnviroScreen data and extensive other publically available data, further demonstrates the significant nature of new project impacts. 14 C.C.R. § 15131(b) (Economic or social effects of a project may be used to determine the significance of physical changes caused by the project).

The CalEnviroScreen data also constitutes “new information” which was not known and could not have been known at the time the City of Fresno 2025 General Plan (MEIR) was certified in 2002. Accordingly, the City must examine the potentially significant cumulative effects of this Project. Pub. Res. Code § 21157.6(b)(1).

b. Failure to Consider Impact of City Economic Development Initiative to Intensify Industrial Land Use in Targeted Clusters

The MND’s cursory conclusion that the Project will result in no cumulatively significant impacts is deficient for the additional reason that the MND fails to consider the project in the context of the City’s current economic development initiative to intensify industrial land uses in industrial clusters primarily located along State Highway 180 directly North of West Fresno (the Project vicinity) and between State Highways 41 and 99 directly East of West Fresno. The Mayor has appointed a full-time Director of Economic Development to implement this initiative.

The Mayor has also convened the “Business Friendly Fresno Task Force” which has formulated recommendations aimed at facilitating and expediting review of industrial project applications (among others). The City has adopted and is currently implementing several of these recommendations, including recommendations to implement an application “triage system” to quickly move applications through the review process and increase staff positions dedicated to permit review. According to a report by the Task Force to the City Council, the City has seen at least 10 new industrial projects through an initial review process since just January 2014.

As part of its efforts to expedite permit processing, the City is also emphasizing the expansion of by-right / permitted industrial land uses (and correspondingly, requiring fewer discretionary approvals, such as site plans and CUPs) and thus limiting public input or environmental review under the City’s Development Code Update.²

The MEIR did not anticipate or consider the effects of an intensive effort by the City, involving the reworking of City policies and procedure and the dedication of new staff positions, as well as City submission of applications for state and federal funding for infrastructure and other improvements, to spur the intensification of industrial land use in the specified areas. The City’s economic development initiatives are a substantial change with respect to the circumstances under which the MEIR was certified and thus they must be considered in the environmental review conducted for this Project. Pub. Res. Code § 21157.6(b)(1)&(2).

² Currently in process and scheduled for adoption later this year.

The City's economic development initiatives and its professed results, viewed together with the existing pollution burden in the vicinity of site of the Project now under consideration, indicate that the Project would indeed produce a "cumulatively considerable" effect that must be (but has not been) fully analyzed in the Project-specific environmental review.

II. The City Must Comply with Applicable State and Civil Rights Laws

The census tract in which the project site is located is composed of 96% people of color. As such, approval of this Project may result in a disparate impact on a community of color and therefore violate state and federal civil rights and fair housing laws. 42 U.S.C. § 3601; Cal.Gov. Code §§ 1135, 1290, & 65008.

III. The Project Does Not Comply with the Edison Community Plan

The Staff Report selectively quotes from the Edison Community Plan (Plan) to support its conclusion that "[thus], the Edison Community Plan calls for industrial development in this area" and the proposed Project is "in compliance with several goals and policies" contained in that Plan. These selective citations are misleading and misrepresent the expressed aims and objectives of the Plan, which must be read in light of the Plan's text and which devote significant attention to the problems associated with concentrated industrial land use in the Edison Community and describe a community seriously overburdened by undesirable land uses and a opposed to further concentration of such uses.

Edison Community Plan's Assessment of Over-concentrated Industrial Land Use

The "Industrial" section of the Plan states, in part:

"Four of the ten major industrial districts illustrated by the General Plan are located in or near the Edison Community.

"...The appearance of...industrial uses [in and around the community] are often unappealing, thus creating a negative image of the Edison Community."

The Plan identifies as "liabilities" with respect to industrial development within the Edison Community (p. 43):

- "Many of the adverse impacts of the City's industrial development area disproportionately imposed on the Edison residents.
- "Scattered industrial activities are in conflict with existing and proposed residential areas."
- "The community is over-zoned for industrial development."
- "The continued development of intense industrial activities, without the establishment of necessary controls to reduce their environmental impact, will seriously affect the desirability of adjacent residential neighborhoods."

Under the "Industries" portion of the Plan section entitled, "Major Urban Environmental Issues", the Plan further recognizes as a liability the following:

- "Many existing uses within the Edison Community adversely impact surrounding areas. These uses include industrial development, Chandler Downtown Airport, sanitary landfill, waste water treatment plant, unimproved flood control basin, and wrecking yards."

Therefore, the Staff Report's conclusion that the "Edison Community Plan calls for industrial development in this area" is incorrect. Rather the Plan spotlights concentrated industrial development as imposing a unique and disproportionate burden on the Edison Community compared to other areas of Fresno that constitutes a serious hindrance to quality of life and community development in the area.

Edison Community Plan Objectives

The Staff Report sets forth the following first and third of three primary objectives contained in the Edison Community Plan with which it contends that the Project complies (p. 15):

- Stimulate growth in the Edison Community by improving the quality of the environment and the strategic provision of public facilities improvements; and
- Stimulate an increase of income levels throughout the community through programs of economic and employment development.

Given the Plan's detailed discussion of the detrimental impacts of concentrated industrial development in the Plan area and its role in generating a negative image of the community, suggesting that further intensifying industrial development in the area with a new project "complies" with the first listed objective turns the objective on its head.

The Staff Report fails to mention the second primary objective of the Edison Community Plan which reads:

- "To provide housing in the Edison Community to accommodate the housing needs of a broad range of socio-economic groups through both new development and rehabilitation."

The need to maintain a diverse socio-economic populace and support a range of housing stock are focal points of the economic development strategy of the Plan. (See e.g., p. 6, recognizing that, "The Edison Community possesses the stabilizing effect of a 'middle class'. The continued migration of the middle class, if it is allowed to continue, will eventually transform an ethnic community into a low-income ghetto." "...priorities in the community are beginning to emphasize the need for the provision of housing opportunities for upper and middle income families to balance the trend towards low-income subsidized housing construction in recent years.").

The Plan's recognition that concentrated industrial development encircling the Edison Community impairs the area's need for the promotion of residential land use indicates that City action to further intensify industrial development in the area would compound barriers to the development of the housing market in the area and thus run counter the Plan's objective of providing housing for a broad range of socio-economic groups.

Therefore, the proposed Project does not "comply with" but rather directly conflicts with the policies and objectives of the Edison Community Plan.

IV. Supplement Description of June 9th Meetings with Residents and Community Advocates

The Staff Report for this Project includes a brief description (p. 14) of the meetings that planning staff held with residents and community advocates on June 9, 2014 to review and discuss changes to the draft MND and community concerns related to industrial land uses within Southwest Fresno. This description, though, fails to capture the following sentiments expressed, points made, and concerns raised by the meeting attendees:

- The approximately twenty four residents and community advocates present expressed a strong and overriding opposition to the project at its proposed location at 175 North Hughes Avenue.
- Several attendees expressed that, though potentially a small risk, the risk of an explosion, hazardous release, or other incident that could jeopardize the health and well-being of residents, school children, or other sensitive receptors in the project vicinity is unacceptable.
- Attendees stated that West Fresno is over-saturated with industrial land uses and other land uses which contribute to pollution, negatively impact public health, and undermine neighborhood viability.
- One resident expressed that – instead of new industrial land uses– she would like to see the City attract desirable goods and services (such as grocery stores) to her neighborhood that are found in neighborhoods in the northern part of the City such as the Woodward Park neighborhood.
- Several attendees expressed their perception that the City intends to move forward with the project despite residents' concerns and opposition to the project. They questioned the purpose of the evening's meeting if the City would not modify its course of action based on resident input.

These comments should be included in the record for this project for consideration by the Planning Commission and, if appealed, by the City Council, in determining whether it can make the required findings to approve Site Plan and Environmental Assessment No. S-13-047.

V. The City Should Deny the Project Given the Substantial and Expressed Resident Opposition to the New Industrial Project

Various residents of the project vicinity and the broader West Fresno community have expressed opposition to this Project on repeated occasions, including at the June 9th meeting with City

planning staff, the first Planning Commission hearing held on the Project on March 5, 2014, and at the community meeting at Sunset Elementary School conducted on February 26, 2014 as well as through written comment and private meetings with staff.

In adopting the Edison Community Plan, the City made the following observation and commitment:

“Implementation of the Edison Community Plan will require a long-term commitment to action by government. Government actions must be responsive to the needs of the community’s citizens and there is need for a firm commitment to include people in the decisions which will affect their community.” (p. 27)

Inclusion in decision-making entails not only inviting community members to one, two, or three meetings, but also ensuring that community feedback shapes and guides City action. Residents’ requests are clear that they object to the imposition of this project in their community. The City should therefore deny the Project.

VI. Approval of Site Plan and Environmental Assessment Nos. S-13-047 is Discretionary and Subject to Required Findings

City planning staff have suggested to us that the City is legally obligated to approve this Project, because a chemical warehouse is a permitted use in the M-3 zone and the Project meets the required findings set forth in the Fresno Municipal Code for approval of a site plan. This is not a correct statement of law or policy.

Approval of a site plan is in nature discretionary and subject to required findings. To approve a site plan, the City must find that the project under consideration “is so arranged that traffic congestion is avoided, pedestrian and vehicular safety and welfare are protected, and surrounding property is protected from adverse effect” and that “[a]ll special conditions required by the city as a condition in a covenant, agreement, or special permit are met.” Fresno Municipal Code § 12-405-A-3.

As an entitlement subject to discretionary approval, a site plan is a project subject to environmental review under CEQA and may not be approved until appropriate environmental review is conducted and required findings made. In the case of a Mitigated Negative Declaration, the City must determine that (1) revisions to the project agreed to by the applicant would avoid or mitigate any potential project-specific effects to a point where clearly no significant effect on the environment would occur and (2) there is no substantial evidence in light of the whole record before the public agency, including written comments and public testimony, that the project, as revised, may have a significant effect on the environment, including through the contribution to cumulatively significant impacts.

The Planning Commission is prohibited from approving Site Plan and Environmental Assessment Number S-13-047 unless the commissioners, after consideration of the whole record before them, determine that the findings above have been satisfied. Given the nature and location of this Project, making the required findings for its approval is not possible.

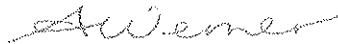
Nathan Bouvet, Planner III
June 18, 2014
Page 8

VII. Recommendations to Address Project-Specific and Policy Level Concerns

In light of the concerns discussed above in this letter, we advise that the City deny this Project and convene a task force of community stakeholders to initiate a comprehensive assessment of the factors contributing to disproportionate burden of pollution in West Fresno and other disadvantaged neighborhoods in Fresno. In particular, the task force should assess City policy and practices that may be revised to create a path forward for economic development that supports the creation of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods throughout Fresno and that observes applicable civil rights, fair housing, and environmental laws.

If you would like to discuss the issues raised or recommendations provided in this letter, please contact me via email at awerner@leadershipcounsel.org or by phone at (559) 369-2796 to set up a time to meet.

Sincerely,



Ashley Werner
Attorney
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Cc: City Councilmember Oliver Baines
Larry Westerlund, Director of Economic Development, City of Fresno

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/04/22/3889258/fresno-neighborhoods-still-riskiest.html>

Fresno neighborhoods still riskiest in state

Fresno Bee

By Mark Grossi

April 22, 2014

The state this week released a more detailed ranking of the riskiest places to live in California -- and Fresno, by far, still leads the pack.

Last year, The Bee's series "Living in a Toxic Land" broke the news about the rankings, which showed west Fresno as the riskiest place to live in all of California. San Joaquin Valley ZIP codes dominated the list.

This analysis looks at air, water, pesticides, poverty, language barriers and many other factors. The cumulative-impact approach is gaining steam in science circles.

In the latest state analysis, drinking water quality has been added -- a factor that kept many Valley locations among the riskiest places.

Fresno has 15 of the 20 worst places in the state, much of it focused downtown, south and west. The Valley accounted for 22 of the 30 worst places in California.

The big difference in this analysis compared to last year? The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) has refined the analysis, breaking it down to 8,000 census tracts instead of the 1,769 ZIP codes.

You can check the map page and find out if your census tract is in a risky area.

OEHHA is having a webinar demonstration from 11 a.m. to noon April 30 to help people understand it. Public workshops will be in Sacramento, Fresno, and Los Angeles in May.

The Fresno workshop will be from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. May 6 at the Hugh Burns State Building, Room 1036, 2550 Mariposa Mall.