

Call to Rectify the Lead Paint Situation in Woodberry

July 20, 2022

Introduction:

Following the negligence that resulted in the showering of our neighborhood with lead paint chips, we, the members of the Woodberry community, have identified multiple aspects of the cleanup & mitigation strategy that we feel are insufficient to properly rectify the grave harm caused to our community. We are therefore calling upon TTI, the television stations, MDE, A&I, and city leaders to come together and make the following changes to their current strategy, in order to ensure that sufficient outreach, remediation, and implementation of safeguards against future incidents are implemented moving forward.

I. Outreach:

The TV Stations involved have had opportunities to address this and fallen short, relying mostly on neighborhood volunteers and happenstance for people to be educated on the situation, while their TV stations have been silent on the issue. The flyer delivered by volunteers and mailed out by TTI gives the minimum of information. We need to see MDE and Baltimore City more involved in getting needed information to citizens at risk.

Every property owner, resident, and worker in the affected area needs to be informed:

- about the presence of lead and where it came from
- of the dangers and effects of lead, especially on small children
- how to have their property professionally mitigated
- how to keep themselves and their households safe in the meantime
- about the importance of having young children tested

Direct Flyering & Mailers: The MDE has excellent flyers and pamphlets educating the public about lead that were selectively given out at the meeting. There is no reason why these informational materials should not have already been widely distributed to the neighborhood. We ask that MDE be proactive in getting educational materials to ALL residents of the impacted area.

Posting Signage: There should be signs at playgrounds and other places where children gather stating that there is a potential lead hazard and to take proper precautions, until the situation has been resolved. City Council members should be following up on this and adding their resources.

II. **Mitigation**¹:

First and foremost, the citizens of Woodberry need to see the FULL cleanup and mitigation plan that was submitted to and approved by the MDE. As key stakeholders in this process, we demand transparency in order to ensure that mitigation efforts are adequate and are being followed through.

More Resources for Clean-Up Are Immediately Needed: The pace and scale of the current force is absolutely inadequate. If A&I is delivering to capacity with less than a dozen workers here every day, additional environmental cleaning firms must be hired, or if A&I needs more funds and resources to hire and train more people, provide it. This is not a meaningful response to hundreds of homes, and miles of pavement, sidewalks, soil and vegetation. We need to see an actual, functional response, people who can clean the streets and sidewalks and other public high traffic areas while the properties are being cleaned. We are happy to make recommendations for suitable environmental cleaning firms if A&I can not scale themselves in proportion to this disaster.

Commitment to thorough inspection cleaning of properties, including yards and roofs: Many homeowners have identified gaps in the current process, in that only areas that the technicians and inspector can easily access are being cleaned and inspected. This needs to be addressed to ensure that properties are being thoroughly inspected and cleaned. Post-clean-up and post-inspection, chips are consistently found under vegetation and objects. Better communication with homeowners on how best to prepare their property is needed, as well as drastically more careful, thorough, comprehensive cleaning and inspection.

Door to Door: The approach taken thus far relies too heavily on residents self-reporting their properties. This approach neglects the properties of aging residents with low and failing vision, people with disabilities, the color blind, and people who don't realize that at this point we are looking for small red bits, not the bigger flakes that were more common at first. It also does not address the properties of those generally not paying attention, whose properties then become hazards to their neighbors. Cleaning crews and inspectors should be systematically knocking on doors, getting visuals themselves on homes that have not made contact, and leaving information behind for those who are not home.

Contacting Landlords: The City/State have the resources to identify and get in touch with absent property owners and alert them to the problem and mitigation efforts, so that inspectors can access as many properties in the neighborhood as possible. Coordination needs to happen between parties to reach all possible property owners.

Daily updates on progress, preferably accompanying a map of the area showing which parts have been cleaned, which are pending, and which cannot be addressed.

¹ As an example of a more robust response to a comparable environmental situation, see the following case study, which was managed by the EPA and addressed many of the concerns that we have raised: https://www.epaos.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=12576.

Commissioning of a community lead burden survey, to be conducted by an independent entity, to determine what additional monitoring and mitigation (e.g. soil testing, evaluation of impact on local waterways, etc) may be required for the long-term safety of the community.

III. Accountability and Prevention of Future Incidents

TTI, in collaboration with the TV stations, MDE, and Baltimore City leadership, should commit to an internal investigation to determine exactly what happened, and apply lessons learned to ensure that it never happens again. The tower is painted every 8-10 years and TTI currently needs to finish the job so carelessly started, now that the paint has been further destabilized; the community needs and deserves proper assurances that measures will be put in place to safeguard against similar disasters and ensure that future work on the tower is compliant with all state and local laws.