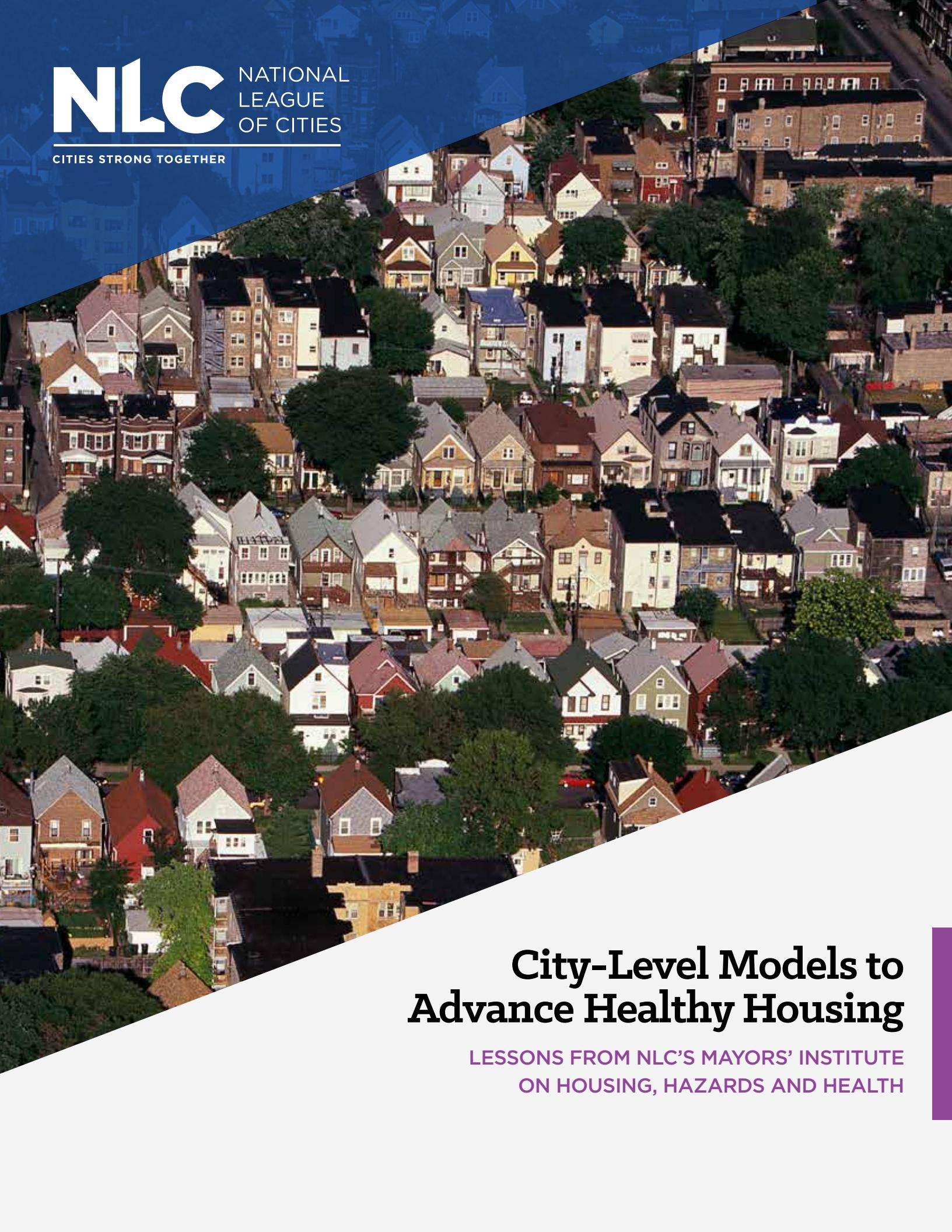




CITIES STRONG TOGETHER



# **City-Level Models to Advance Healthy Housing**

**LESSONS FROM NLC'S MAYORS' INSTITUTE  
ON HOUSING, HAZARDS AND HEALTH**



INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH,  
EDUCATION, AND FAMILIES

## About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the nation's leading advocacy organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. Through its membership and partnerships with state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource and advocate for more than 19,000 cities and towns and more than 218 million Americans. NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

## About the Authors

The findings of this report are made possible by the insights shared by participating mayors and city team members from Rochester, New York, Memphis, Tennessee, Kansas City, Missouri, Toledo, Ohio, Nashville, Tennessee and Syracuse, New York, as well as the faculty and partners listed in Appendix A. National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families' staff including Sue Pechillo Polis, Director, Health & Wellness and Alyia Gaskins, Senior Associate, Health & Wellness with contributions from Clifford M. Johnson, Executive Director, Institute for Youth, Education and Families and Anthony Santiago, Senior Fellow have compiled these learnings and observations to further inform this critical issue of health and housing.

## Acknowledgements

As part of the NLC's multi-year initiative to engage mayors and city leaders in creating a Culture of Health, the YEF Institute led a Mayor's Institute on Children and Families (MICF) focusing on Housing, Hazards, and Health on December 13-15 in Dallas, Texas. This MICF was the first in a new series that will run through May 2019 with generous support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation for the Results-Based Leadership workshop.

The YEF Institute is committed to building upon the lessons learned from the convening to support mayors and city leaders in developing effective strategies to ensure that all children and families live in healthy homes and healthy communities.

For further information, please contact the following YEF Institute staff:

**Sue Pechillo Polis**, Director, Health and Wellness  
[Polis@nlc.org](mailto:Polis@nlc.org)

**Alyia Gaskins**, Senior Associate  
[Gaskins@nlc.org](mailto:Gaskins@nlc.org)

**Anthony Santiago**, Senior Fellow  
[Santiago@nlc.org](mailto:Santiago@nlc.org)

**Nick Wallace**, Associate  
[nwallace@nlc.org](mailto:nwallace@nlc.org)

## Overview

The environments in which children and families live, learn, work and play, including their residential housing, significantly influence their health. The presence of hazards in homes such as lead-based paint, mold, pests, among others, threaten the health, safety and lifelong potential of far too many children, youth and adults. All Americans, particularly vulnerable children, need healthy, hazard-free and affordable housing to thrive.

Municipal governments have the responsibility for enforcing local building codes and inspecting properties for health-related code violations. They are uniquely positioned to improve the conditions in which their residents live. Policies, programs and practices that leverage partners and assets both within

and outside city government are critical to ensure that all children and families live in healthy and hazard-free homes. Alleviating the economic, health and social-emotional problems associated with substandard housing can provide children and families with a stronger foundation to succeed in school, jobs and ultimately lead more fulfilling lives. In December 2016, the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute) led a Mayors' Institute on Children and Families (MICF) focusing on Housing, Hazards, and Health designed to engage cities in a peer-to-peer exchange of creative solutions to spur significant improvements in healthy housing efforts.



Following a competitive application process, six mayors participated in the MICF, including:

**The Honorable Sly James**, Mayor, Kansas City, Missouri

**The Honorable Jim Strickland**, Mayor, Memphis, Tennessee

**The Honorable Megan Barry**, Mayor, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee

**The Honorable Lovely A. Warren**, Mayor, Rochester, New York

**The Honorable Stephanie Miner**, Mayor, Syracuse, New York

**The Honorable Paula Hicks-Hudson**, Mayor, Toledo, Ohio<sup>1</sup>

Participating mayors shared case statements that outlined their specific goals and challenges related to healthy housing in their respective cities. (See table below).

To cultivate shared learning and further inform efforts, each mayor's case statement presentation was followed by a strategy session that included an exchange of policy approaches and implementation strategies. The dialogue also included robust participation of city team members who accompanied each mayor and expert faculty (see Appendix A). Several key themes essential to building a culture of health were integrated into each strategy session including:

- Equity and an emphasis on disparities in life expectancy based on zip codes within each participating city;
- Connections to the health care system and providers;

## Common Challenges and Opportunities Among Participating Cities

---

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Preparing to Introduce/Implement a Healthy Housing Ordinance</b>   | Kansas City, MO, Toledo, OH |
| <b>Developing a Healthy Housing Strategy inclusive of Affordable Housing</b>  | Memphis, TN, Nashville, TN  |
| <b>Developing More Comprehensive Healthy Housing Strategies</b><br>Building on successful inspections processes, use of data, partnerships, and lead-based paint ordinances | Rochester, NY, Syracuse, NY |

- Cross-sector partnerships to ensure more robust alignment of efforts;
- Innovations in the use of data, with an emphasis on metrics and outcomes; and
- Financing approaches with an emphasis on reimbursement through Medicaid as well as nonprofit hospital community benefit programs, among others.

Following the MICF city teams participated in a Results-Based Leadership (RBL) capacity-building workshop—in collaboration with and sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation—to enhance city implementation efforts discussed in the MICF and improve outcomes for children and families. The workshop built upon the ideas generated during the mayors' case statement presentations.

The city teams developed skills to use data to drive decisions; address racial disparities; develop strong strategies to make measurable differences in target populations; engage partners in making contributions to results; and commit to action to advance progress.

Throughout this document are city spotlights, which highlight city-led approaches that have proven instrumental to each participating MICF cities' efforts to increase the number of children and families living in healthy, hazard-free homes.

### Kansas City, Missouri: Data as a Catalyst for Change

In 2000, the Kansas City Health Department (KCHD) released the Minority Health Indicators Report, which revealed that the average age of death was lower in all communities of color, with an average of over 11 years lower life expectancy than that of white residents. The report provided the catalyst and the platform for a citywide dialogue regarding community needs, priorities, and the underlying causes of health disparities. Lack of safe, affordable, hazard-free housing was among chief concerns of the residents. In response to these community conversations, Kansas City's new five-year business plan specifically addresses healthy housing and includes a commitment to: support initiatives that seek to increase overall life expectancy and reduce health inequities in all zip codes; increase the proportion of children living in lead-free homes; implement a new five-year consolidated plan and fair housing initiative; and develop a new City Housing policy that addresses all housing types including low income, affordable, and work force housing. Kansas City is looking to adopt a Healthy Homes Rental Inspection Program, which would include the identification and abatement of lead hazards. Additionally, key stakeholders such as the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce have adopted complementary initiatives such as the Urban Neighborhood Initiative to revitalize neighborhoods and support community health. Using the life expectancy data as a guide, the city is working to develop a holistic effort to improve the conditions in which residents live.

## Lessons for the Field

Over the course of the MICF and the RBL workshop, mayors and city teams explored strategies to augment existing efforts and shared important lessons about the challenges and opportunities associated with local efforts to ensure that all residents live in healthy, hazard-free homes. These insights have implications for municipal leaders in the MICF cohort but also more broadly, including;

**1 Municipal leaders have many opportunities, often unexplored or underdeveloped, to collaborate with health systems and hospitals when advancing healthy housing policies, programs and practices.**

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requirement that nonprofit, tax-exempt hospitals conduct a community health needs assessment (CHNA) every three years is an example of one tool municipal leaders can use to engage hospital systems in data collection and funding to identify the impact of poor housing on community health and well-being. Considering uncertainty regarding possible changes to the ACA, more support for cities is needed to better navigate engagement with health care system.

**2 Cross-sector partnerships are an essential element of successful efforts to improve health conditions in residential housing.** Universities, medical-legal partnerships, community

development financing institutions, schools and business leaders, including local Chambers of Commerce, emerged as critical partners in the six participating MICF cities. Roles for these partners include data collecting, funding and/or convening, among others. More opportunities for sharing best practices and lessons learned are needed to assist city leaders in building and sustaining strong cross-sector partnerships.

**3 The most promising healthy housing efforts are data-driven, relying heavily on ongoing sharing of data among key partners and agencies.**

Efforts that consider a range of indicators to evaluate the quality of housing, health outcomes of household members, the social, economic, and environmental conditions surrounding the home and the return on investment of housing interventions can lead to a more holistic effort that better engages multiple sectors and partners. Sample indicators include:

- Code enforcement complaints;
- Emergency room visits (e.g., asthma and unintentional in-home injuries);
- Elevated blood lead (EBL) levels in children;
- Energy costs as reflected through unpaid/late utility bills;

- Housing/neighborhood stability (e.g., evictions, homelessness);
- Educational outcomes for pre-K to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (e.g., attendance, test scores, reading levels, school discipline);
- Violence and crime rates; and
- Life expectancy.

**4 Innovative cities are exploring new frontiers in the quest for healthy housing, addressing a broader range of health hazards and adopting new strategies to accelerate and finance local progress.** Although lead remediation has been the primary focus of most healthy home interventions, cities are

now exploring how to expand and advance their healthy homes efforts, including:

- Leveraging the strong and growing evidence base around remediation of asthma triggers to further inform city policy approaches that include lead as well as other hazards;
- Building the data and financial support to better address a variety of hazards (as well as natural conditions that cause hazards) within the home (e.g., water damage and triggers such as mold and poor indoor air quality);
- Exploring financing models/ options available through the engagement of health

### Memphis, Tennessee: Power of Partnerships

Effective partnerships are a key element to the success of the City of Memphis' efforts to promote healthy and safe housing. The Healthy Homes Partnership (HHP), established by the University of Memphis School of Law and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, was established to eliminate the environmental and safety hazards in housing; promote collaboration among housing and legal services agencies and health care providers; and advance policy and regulatory changes to increase the availability of and access to healthy housing for all Memphis-area residents. The partnership includes more than 20 organizations representing governmental and nonprofit housing agencies, including the City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development, Neighborhood Housing Code Enforcement, Community Development Council of Memphis, and Habitat for Humanity, the Shelby County Health Department, Memphis Area Legal Services, grassroots organizations, higher education, workforce development and social service agencies. HHP has more than 80 residents in the EPA Healthy Homes Program to ensure that various agencies and providers interacting with children and families can identify housing hazards and connect families to appropriate resources. HHP recently developed the multi-agency CoactionNet client referral and data system to coordinate resources and to more efficiently connect residents to home repair and health services.

### Nashville, Tennessee: Connecting Healthy Homes and Affordability

Increases in housing costs combined with stagnant wages have caused the number of cost-burdened households in the Nashville area to grow. It is often difficult for cost-burdened households to afford rehabilitation or other improvements to ensure homes remain healthy and hazard free. Additionally, rising housing costs undermine residential stability. As housing costs rise, families are often forced to move farther from work and school and often into substandard housing, including housing that lacks complete plumbing, kitchen facilities and adequate space. To address these challenges, Mayor Megan Barry has prioritized increasing access to affordable housing throughout Nashville. In 2015, she established the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Empowerment (OEOE), which includes a specific focus on funding, building, preserving and retaining affordable housing options. One of the key priorities of the OEOE is developing innovative ways to leverage the city's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which now includes a total of \$16 million, to support healthy housing efforts to increase the number of families that can stay in their home. OEOF has added a new category to the Housing Trust Fund application to support homeowner repairs and rehabilitation. Additionally, applicants can now receive bonus points if planning to build with higher environmental standards requirements, including LEED or Energy Star standards, to reduce utility burdens on families and improve their financial stability.

plans and greater use of opportunities for Medicaid reimbursement;

- Exploring the use of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and leveraging Community Development Financing Institutions (CDFIs) to make low interest loans available for home repairs; and
- Partnering with children's hospitals and medical-legal partnerships to expand potential interventions.

**5 Resident engagement and consultation with building owners/landlords are important steps to ensure that city efforts**

**are responding to local needs and to minimize resistance to new measures.** Several of the participating MICF cities have an established lead coalition or advocacy group that works closely with the city to engage stakeholders, address concerns and coordinate resources.

**6 Proactive inspections<sup>2</sup> of multi-unit rental properties and creative cross-training of city employees and community partners can help cities move beyond healthy housing strategies that rely solely on tenant complaints for building code enforcement.** Cities have a range of tools, resources and partners who can be cross-trained to assist in proactively

### Rochester, New York: Proactive Action and Coordination

In December 2005, the City of Rochester adopted the Lead Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Ordinance, which required inspections for lead paint hazards as an extension of the city's existing inspection processes (Certificates of Occupancy, complaints, referrals, etc.). Over 13,000 units are inspected in some way each year and a unique Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) program provides access to approximately 4,000 structures per year for comprehensive internal inspections, making the program one of the most proactive in the country. This work has helped to reduce the number of resident children with elevated blood lead levels of 10 or more micrograms per deciliter by 80% since the adoption of the lead ordinance. Now, the City of Rochester wants to build on this work, extending efforts beyond lead to create more units of comprehensively healthy housing and improving access to healthy housing for low income families and children. The City is particularly interested in engaging the health sector for creative partnerships and funding strategies to help advance this work, leveraging its extensive housing condition data to better link improved conditions with improved health outcomes, like reducing asthma morbidity or others. City staff are also engaged in the Rochester Safe and Efficient Homes Initiative (RSEHI), which is developing an in-home assessment and referral tool that can link residents to all the relevant providers that can help make their homes safer and more energy efficient (e.g., weatherization, energy efficiency, home repair and rehab loans and grants, aging in place modifications).

identifying hazards within the home including firefighters, social service providers, physicians, community health workers and teachers. Proactive inspections and code enforcement present an opportunity and a pathway to quickly identify and address hazards as well as connect children and families to other health promoting resources such as utility assistance, food assistance and home visitation programs.

- 7** **City leaders inevitably must balance pursuit of their healthy housing goals with other, closely-related city priorities and concerns such as housing affordability, resident**

**displacement and homelessness, gentrification and historic preservation.** Other factors such as transportation and education also intersect in terms of how easily city residents can travel to jobs, schools and other destinations from their homes and how well they can perform as students, employees and in other roles. Municipal leaders are increasingly making these connections when designing and implementing healthy homes efforts, recognizing that they have a unique opportunity to engage other city departments and assets to develop more comprehensive solutions.

# Looking Ahead

The MICF on Housing, Hazards and Health generated a variety of outcomes, including;

- Peer sharing among mayors and city teams of common challenges, opportunities, practices and approaches for advancing healthy housing efforts.
  - Increased awareness among mayors and city teams of
- emerging city-level models for enforcement, inspections and community engagement in housing and health-related efforts.
- Insights and resources from expert faculty to further inform city efforts and approaches applying the latest models and policy strategies.

### Syracuse, New York: Financing Healthy Housing Efforts through Community Development

For nearly 20 years, the City of Syracuse operated a home improvement grant program, primarily financed with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, to assist owner occupants with home repairs. Despite success, administrative overhead costs and caps on funding made it challenging for the city to meet demands for assistance. In 1996, the city made the strategic decision to establish Home HeadQuarters, Inc., a non-profit dedicated to providing low-interest home loans and grants, homeowner education and counseling to support safe and affordable home ownership. Leveraging the CDBG Community Based Organization (CBO) provision, which allows a CBO to benefit from the revenue it generates through CDBG funds, the city provided the funds to help Home HeadQuarters, Inc. build its initial capital and loan portfolio and to apply and receive NeighborWorks® America and Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) designations. Home HeadQuarters, Inc. has since leveraged CDBG and other city funding to generate new capital and engage new investors to provide over \$8,800 loans and grants. Over \$83M in financing has been leveraged to make home repairs and home improvements to increase livability, safety and energy efficiency and to provide education on home hazards. The city estimates that estimate that city funds have leveraged \$4 for every \$1 invested, where previously all home improvement projects were 100% city-funded. The City is also an active participant in the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI), which includes training inspectors and contractors in home health standards, and works with Home HeadQuarters, Inc. to connect residents and landlords to high quality contractors. The City is also working with Home HeadQuarters to develop products to connect investor owners to properties within the city's land bank that are dilapidated and in desperate need of repair.

### Toledo, Ohio: City-level Policy Levers to Support Healthy Housing

After previous unsuccessful attempts, in August 2016 the Toledo City Council passed the Lead-Safe Ordinance, becoming the first city in Ohio to officially protect the most at-risk residents from lead poisoning by requiring removal and health inspections in rental properties, Section 8 housing units and home-based child care centers. The effort was championed by the Toledo Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition, which is comprised of a diverse group of supporters including the faith community, labor, health-care providers, housing advocates and public-advocacy attorneys. The Ordinance applies to approximately 55,000 rental units in the City. It is designed to prevent the poisoning of residents by requiring that the presence of deteriorated paint, which may contain lead, on the interior and exterior of pre-1978 residential structures and lead hazards on bare soil be identified and correctly addressed. By reducing and controlling the deteriorated paint hazards, the goal is to prevent potential exposure to lead hazards and to reduce the devastating effects of lead exposure and poisoning on children. To date, there are forty-one registered local lead inspectors who have begun to inspect the City's housing stock for presumed lead hazards. The Lead-Safe Ordinance has also spurred local and statewide dialogue on strategies to further protect children at most risk for lead poisoning, including new requirements for blood-level testing. Using Toledo's Lead-Safe Ordinance as an example, the state of Ohio is looking to considering statewide changes in management of lead exposures to individuals at the household level.

- Real-time capacity building through Annie E. Casey's Results-Based Leadership (RBL) workshop to drill down on discussions from the MICF and develop the skills to apply RBL competencies.
  - Collaboration labs with specific issues of focus prioritized by the MICF city teams including financing, civic engagement, enforcement, education, equity and other key topics;
  - Web forums highlighting innovative city models and practices in addressing healthy homes efforts from a variety of urban and rural perspectives;
  - Ongoing engagement with expert faculty; and
  - Other forums and engagement opportunities to both highlight and continue to inform city approaches to healthy housing.
- Over the next year, the YEF Institute will provide ongoing technical assistance to MICF participating cities that seeks to address the challenges and opportunities raised at the MICF and accelerate local progress. As part of these efforts, the YEF Institute will utilize a series of strategies, including;
- One-on-one calls with city teams to discuss barriers, opportunities and strategies to continue to advance city-led efforts;

## Opportunities for the Future



While this particular MICF focused on healthy housing, city leadership and engagement on housing spans a broad array of housing issues, including affordable housing, permanent supportive housing and the environment that surrounds the homes where city residents live, learn, work and play. As cities work to further address housing-related issues, there are several opportunities for the YEF Institute to help cities continue to strengthen existing efforts, including:

- Sharing existing and developing model city ordinances that better leverage the strong and growing evidence base specific to remediating asthma triggers in the home;
- Offering training on health and health systems to build the

capacity of city leaders and strengthen their engagement with hospitals, health plans and state Medicaid agencies;

- Developing the capacity of city leaders to leverage the expanded evidence for remediation of asthma triggers and other hazards in homes to cultivate new partnerships and funding resources;
- Exploring a variety of financing models and strategies to further diversify and expand city-led housing and health-related efforts;
- Working with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to better leverage healthy housing and Section 8 funds and provide more flexibility for cities to use these funds to address their unique housing challenges;
- Building the capacity of city leaders to engage residents and other civic organizations in housing and health related issues augmented by effective communication strategies deployed through multi-sector partners; and
- Ensuring city leaders have the skills and resources to effectively work across city agencies to develop holistic data-driven plans that meet needs of the communities facing the greatest health challenges.

## Appendix A

# List of MICF Participating Expert Faculty and Partners

### Faculty

**Andrew Beck**

Assistant Professor, Attending  
Pediatrician  
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical  
Center

**Maureen Byrnes**

Lead Research Scientist  
Milken Institute School of Public Health at  
George Washington University

**Ryan Chao**

Vice President  
Annie E. Casey Foundation

**Michelle Miller**

Deputy Director  
HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and  
Healthy Homes

**Tom Neltner**

Chemicals Policy Director  
Environmental Defense Fund

**Ruth Ann Norton**

President & CEO  
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative

**Amanda Reddy**

Director of Strategy and Impact  
National Center for Healthy Housing

### Partners

**Donna Stark**

Senior Fellow/Program Lead  
Annie E. Casey Foundation

**Bill Shepardson**

Senior Fellow/Lead Facilitator  
Annie E. Casey Foundation

**Nicole Johnson**

Consultant/Facilitator  
Annie E. Casey Foundation

## Appendix B

# Participant List Mayors' Institute on Housing, Hazards and Health

### City of Kansas City, MO

**Sly James**  
Mayor  
City of Kansas City

**Stacie Duitsman**  
*Administrative Officer*  
Kansas City Health Department

**Naser Jouhari**  
*Senior Public Health Manager, Environmental Health Services Division*  
Kansas City, Missouri Health Department

**Amy Roberts**  
*Program Manager, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Program*  
Kansas City, Missouri Health Department

**Scott Wagner**  
*Mayor Pro Tem*  
1st District At-Large Councilman  
City of Kansas City

### Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County

**Megan Barry**  
Mayor  
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

**C. Sanmi Areola**  
*Director, Bureau of Environmental Public Health*  
Metro Public Health Department

**Erik Cole**  
*Director*  
Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity & Empowerment

**Adriane Harris**  
*Senior Advisor—Affordable Housing*  
Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity & Empowerment

### City of Syracuse

**Stephanie Miner**  
Mayor  
City of Syracuse

**Paul Driscoll**  
*Commissioner*  
City of Syracuse, Department of Neighborhood & Business Development

**Debra Lewis**  
*Lead Program Coordinator*  
Onondaga County Health Department

**Stephanie Pasquale**  
*Deputy Commissioner*  
City of Syracuse, Department of Neighborhood and Business Development

### City of Memphis

**James (Jim) Strickland**  
Mayor  
City of Memphis

**Alisa Haushalter**  
*Director*  
Shelby County Health Department

**Dwayne Spencer**  
*President/CEO*  
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis

**Paul A. Young**  
*Director*  
City of Memphis Division of Housing & Community Development

### City of Rochester

**Lovely A. Warren**  
Mayor  
City of Rochester

**Gary Kirkmire**  
*Director of Inspection & Compliance Services*  
City of Rochester

**Elizabeth Murphy**  
*Senior Community Housing Planner*  
City of Rochester, Department of Neighborhood and Business Development

**Carol Wheeler**  
*Manager of Housing*  
City of Rochester

### City of Toledo

**Paula Hicks-Hudson**  
Mayor  
City of Toledo

**Bonita Bonds**  
*Director*  
City of Toledo - Department of Neighborhoods

**Samantha Eitnir**  
*Acting Director of Community Services and Environmental Health*  
Toledo-Lucas County Health Department

**Joseph McNamara**  
*Senior Attorney*  
City of Toledo

### **Endnotes**

- 1.** While Toledo, Ohio, Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson was unexpectedly unable to join the session, a city team from Toledo participated in the MICF discussions.
- 2.** Typically, code enforcement systems are complaint based. In response a complaint from a tenant, a code enforcement officer is dispatched to perform an inspection of a unit or property. On the contrary, proactive inspections are designed to actively identify hazards through the use of mandatory or periodic inspections instead of leaving the responsibility to the tenant, who may not know their rights or feel comfortable filing a complaint.

