

Call to Action

This report outlines key action steps to make Boston homes healthier and greener for its children. We have provided detail in the report and supporting materials, yet implementation of the ideas requires a concerted effort by all City of Boston agencies and community partners to achieve real change.

Target the housing and housing problems we know are making children sick.

Our health data demonstrates that asthma, lead poisoning, and injury remain critical health problems for Boston children. The housing-based health problems cluster in a handful of neighborhoods. Current service programs should focus efforts in these neighborhoods and on these issues. Housing programs should focus effort on the housing in these neighborhoods. We can not shy away from these properties even knowing the effort to improve this housing will likely be harder and more costly. We must market the full range of housing programs to these neighborhoods and we should allocate targeted funds. We call on all partners, City and state agencies, community agencies, and community advocates to champion more targeted actions and increased funding of housing programs in these neighborhoods.

Focus on broad adoption of high impact, low cost housing interventions to maximize health and environmental benefits.

Boston continues to show leadership in affordable housing, by competing for funds, and delivering new and rehabilitated housing. The Department of Neighborhood Development's new construction and rehabilitation programs should aggressively include the four high-value housing interventions described in this report: spray-free and smoke-free policies; energy conservation measures; good ventilation; and elimination of water leaks and use of water saving fixtures. Partner agencies including the Boston Housing Authority and community development corporations should adopt these measures by calling for them on renovation specifications and requiring them of their property management providers. Housing subsidy providers, including Boston Housing Authority, should help promote adoption in the private housing stock. New home ownership and homeowner education programs should similarly promote these core cost-effective interventions. New and broader funding mechanisms need to be developed to help these measures be implemented in the 1-4 family housing stock.

Make every "touch" count by using existing programs and staff for greater impact through coordination.

We call on the City of Boston to move expeditiously to set up the Healthy and Green Homes Task Force to help assure true integration of the city agencies engaged in improving our housing and health. The task force will be a forum to directly address properties and support families facing housing based health issues. Through this integrated structure the City departments and agencies (Department of Neighborhood Development, Boston Public Health Commission's Community Initiatives Bureau, Inspectional Services Department

Housing Division, Boston Water and Sewer Commission, and Boston Housing Authority) will be able to more effectively integrate services for families and maximize the value of each touch.

The current intake system at the Boston Public Health Commission must be integrated to assure families fast and complete access to the range of healthy homes services available through the city. It is critical for City agencies to devise a better system for integrating home visits and inspections and assuring that all visits to homes by city health and housing personnel identify core issues and support healthy homes improvements.

Boston's wealth of talented city and community partners working together has made Boston a leader in healthy homes. Together let us take this call to action and lead Boston to an even healthier and greener future.