

# Attachment A. King County Board of Health Guideline and Recommendation on Healthy Housing

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The board may adopt guidelines and recommendations to express its current thinking on health-related topics pertinent to King County, and to provide policy guidance for other entities. The guidelines and recommendations are advisory only and do not have the force and effect of law.

## OVERVIEW

Affordable, safe, quality housing is a social determinant of health and equity<sup>i</sup> and ensuring access to housing is a key element in creating an overall healthy community. Poor quality housing stock and decreased neighborhood safety, services and amenities, unhealthy environments, and lack of health supporting policies contribute to significant health and opportunity inequities.<sup>ii,iii,iv</sup> Healthy community design provides health-supporting environments and services such as access to transit, places to walk and bike, parks and open space, and healthy and affordable food choices. By working in partnerships to improve the safety and quality of housing and the surrounding neighborhood, a community can build resiliency and strengthen its capacity to face other challenges while providing a healthy environment for adults and children to live.

### Housing Quality and Health

Children and adults spend a considerable amount of their time indoors and as much as 65% of their time inside their home.<sup>v</sup> A 2009 statement from Steven K. Galson, Acting Surgeon General, identified the leading causes of housing-related preventable deaths, disease and disability in the United States as “asthma, lead poisoning, deaths in house fires, falls on stairs and from windows, burns and scald injuries, and drownings in bathtubs and pools.” Consequently, deficient housing conditions can contribute to illness especially in vulnerable populations such as children, persons with chronic health conditions, and older adults<sup>vi</sup> (see Appendix A for most recent King County rates of asthma, falls, and unintentional poisonings).

Unhealthy housing conditions impact health and can contribute to excess healthcare costs and lost revenue. Eliminating asthma triggers in housing can decrease missed days of school and work, hospitalizations, and associated costs of treatment. In another case, economic loss due to the impact of lead exposure on an individual’s IQ (intelligence quotient) is estimated to be up to \$1 billion annually in Washington State.<sup>vii</sup>

Housing maintenance approaches that consider the housing structure, the people in the home, and potential health hazards can support the improvement of all residents’ health.

### Equity

Communities have identified poor housing conditions and unaffordability as important underlying causes of poor health outcomes. Anyone can suffer from housing-related illnesses or injuries, but certain groups have historically had poor access to quality affordable housing because of discriminatory rental and ownership practices and policies.

King County has 863,000 housing units, and with an estimated 757,000 residents living in rental housing, this type of housing is an important option for many.<sup>viii</sup> Renters often have less control over their housing environment than owners, are frequently unable to afford repair of housing hazards themselves, and may fear retaliation or eviction if they request landlord assistance.

Residents often need to balance and prioritize housing quality, neighborhood characteristics, and affordability. In King County, twenty-eight percent of homeowners and forty-five percent of rental households, many of them older adults, pay 30% or more of their income on costs of housing.<sup>viii</sup> Spending a high proportion of income on housing reduces resources for essentials like food, heating, transportation, healthcare, and childcare and may force some to be homeless, live in shelters or substandard housing, or move frequently. Improving and preserving the quality of existing housing should be pursued simultaneously with building new affordable housing stock in King County to prevent displacement and destabilization of residents.

## **SECTION I – Local Policy Actions**

### **1. Overarching Healthy Housing Policies**

**Board of Health Guideline: Reinforce the connections between housing and health for all residents.**

#### **Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:**

- 1.1 Adopt an ordinance or resolution that reinforces the importance of housing as a determinant of health while balancing housing access, quality, and affordability.
- 1.2 Identify and collect standardized indicators to assess housing quality and include them in the inventory and analysis of housing needs and conditions as part of the King County Countywide Planning Policies.

### **2. Residential Building Design and Maintenance**

**Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County have access to housing that is dry, clean, pest-free, ventilated, thermally controlled, safe, contaminant-free, and maintained.**

#### **Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:**

- 2.1 Use a rental property maintenance code that includes healthy housing standards.

Examples of health-related standards that may be included:

- Require building materials that are discolored or deteriorated by mold to be cleaned, dried, and repaired.
- Encourage the implementation of smoke-free policies in multi-family housing.
- Require pest management that maintains dwellings free of infestation and conditions that harbor pests by using methods that emphasize pest prevention and minimize the usage of pesticides.
- Recommend building material in maintenance and renovations that is certified as having no or low volatile organic chemicals and having no halogenated flame retardants.
- Assure that renovation, repair and painting work that disturbs painted surfaces (in pre-1978 dwellings) be performed in compliance with the requirements to reduce exposure to lead-contaminated dusts (EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule), as administered by the Washington Department of Commerce.

- 2.2 Use universal design building standards that enable people of all ages and persons with different abilities to live safely in their home.

### **3. Housing Knowledge and Education**

**Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County are provided proactive and meaningful opportunities to engage in decisions about their housing.**

**Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:**

- 3.1 Assist residents to understand their rights and responsibilities and how to be good stewards of their home.
- 3.2 Assist landlords to understand their rights, responsibilities, home maintenance requirements, and potential funding mechanisms to assist in making repairs.
- 3.3 Work to resolve housing quality issues in a way that averts the need for code enforcement or litigation.

### **4. Community Design**

**Board of Health Guideline: Residents throughout King County have access to housing that is part of a broader community that supports healthy and equitable opportunities.**

**Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:**

- 4.1 Use health and equity assessment tools for reviewing impacts of land use and community planning on displacement, siting, and design.
- 4.2 Use meaningful engagement strategies to include underserved residents in community planning and design processes and decision making.
- 4.3 Encourage policies, plans, and programs that consider bicycling, walking, and transit needs for travel to and home, school, work, and other community services.
- 4.4 Encourage policies, plans, and programs in local jurisdictions that promote access to healthy and affordable food in close proximity to housing (e.g. urban agriculture, farmers markets, farm-to-table food distribution sites, and grocery stores).

## **SECTION II – Cross Sector Partnership Opportunities**

### **5. Housing Connection to Health and Human Services**

**Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County have access to health and human services that work to improve the housing environment in ways that improve the health of residents.**

#### **Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:**

- 5.1 Cultivate partnerships across multiple sectors (including jurisdictions, housing providers, healthcare providers, and public health) in order to provide and promote services that improve both housing conditions and health.
- 5.2 Improve communication and referral services across the multiple sectors (see 5.1) to better connect residents to available services.
- 5.3 Create and enhance services (such as housing repair and healthy home visiting programs) that improve housing quality and health outcomes.

### **6. Housing Affordability**

**Board of Health Guideline: Residents in all communities in King County have access to a range of affordable healthy housing.**

#### **Key Healthy Housing Recommendations:**

- 6.1 Promote existing and seek new financing opportunities at the state and federal level that could assist property owners to improve their properties and reduce displacement of residents.
- 6.2 Develop a loan fund to assist landlords who do not have the resources to bring housing stock up to minimum health and safety standards without raising rents. Such a loan fund would tie affordability to favorable loan terms.

**Appendix A**

**BACKGROUND HEALTH DATA**

**Hospitalizations by Age Group and Select Cause – King County, WA, 2015**

	<u>Adults (18+ yrs.)</u>		<u>Children (0-17 yrs.)</u>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Rate</b>
Asthma	664	40.7	488	112.1
Falls (all intents)	6,268	384.6	182	41.8
Unintentional Poisoning	667	40.9	40	9.2

**Notes:**

- Rate is per 100,000 population
- There are no unduplicated hospitalization data at this time. An individual hospitalized more than once will be counted more than once, even if hospitalized for the same condition.

**Data Source:**

- WA Hospital Discharge Data, Comprehensive Hospitalization Abstract Reporting System (CHARS) 1987-2015. Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics.

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## Appendix B

### RESOURCES

Resources organized by guideline.

#### Section I:

##### 1. Overarching Healthy Housing Policies

Housing Facts Standard, City of San Francisco  
<http://housefacts.codeforamerica.org/SF/>

##### 2. Residential Building Design and Maintenance

National Healthy Housing Standards, 2014  
[http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/NHHS\\_Full\\_Doc.pdf](http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/NHHS_Full_Doc.pdf)

City of Tukwila, Ordinance 2481 - 2015 International Property Maintenance Code (with Specific Provisions of National Healthy Housing Standard)  
<http://records.tukwilawa.gov/WebLink8/DocView.aspx?id=267242&page=1&dbid=1>

Rental Housing Licensing and Inspection Program, City of Tukwila, 2011,  
<http://www.tukwilawa.gov/departments/community-development/rental-housing/>

Rental Housing Registration and Inspection Program, City of Seattle, 2012,  
<http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/codesrules/licensingregistration/RRIO/aboutrrio/>

Inspections by Local Municipalities, Washington State Legislature, RCW 59.18.125,  
<http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.125>

Chronic Offenders Registry, City of Boston, 2012  
<https://law.resource.org/pub/us/code/city/ma/Boston/chapter09.pdf>

Community Engagement & Rental Housing Inspection Program, City of Kent, 2017  
<http://www.kentreporter.com/news/kent-looks-to-start-rental-housing-inspection-program/>

##### 3. Housing Knowledge and Education

Renter's Commission, City of Seattle, Ordinance 125280, March 2017  
<http://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=5106232&GUID=4A5220D6-7070-4D6A-89A2-D3EA5EB0C4B5>

Solid Ground, <https://www.solid-ground.org/get-help/housing/for-tenants/>

Tenant's Union of Washington,  
<http://www.tenantsunion.org/en/programs/about-the-education-program1>

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### 4. Community Design

Planning for Healthy Communities Guidelines and Recommendations, KC Board of Health, 2011  
<https://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/-/media/health/publichealth/documents/healthyplaces/PHCGuidelines.ashx>

Society of Health Impact Assessment Practitioners. <http://hiasociety.org/>  
Health Impact Assessment is a process used to identify how a project, policy or program might influence health

King County, Equity and Social Justice Tools and Resources.  
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/tools-resources.aspx>  
The Equity Team has developed a variety of tools and resources to increase equity and social justice work, including resources on impact reviews, community engagement, and increasing language access.

PolicyLink. Center for Health Equity and Place.  
<http://www.policylink.org/focus-areas/health-equity-and-place>  
PolicyLink and the Center for Health Equity and Place advances health equity as an essential component of a society that values the well-being of all people by providing tools on food systems, health systems, and the built environment.

## Section II:

### 5. Connect Housing and Health Services

Breathe Easy at Home: Web-Based Referral System Linking Clinical Sites with Housing Code Enforcement for Patients with Asthma, Boston  
[http://www.cityofboston.gov/news/uploads/5823\\_4\\_20\\_33.pdf](http://www.cityofboston.gov/news/uploads/5823_4_20_33.pdf)

### 6. Housing Affordability

Property tax exemption program for preservation of certain affordable housing, Washington State Legislature, 2015-16 Senate Bill 6239  
<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6239&year=2015>

Healthy Neighborhood Equity Fund Report. Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
<http://www.mapc.org/hnef>

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.  
[https://www.huduser.gov/portal/affht\\_pt.html#affh](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/affht_pt.html#affh)

A Regional Coalition for Housing  
[www.archhousing.org](http://www.archhousing.org)

South King Housing and Homelessness Partnership  
<http://www.housingconsortium.org/skhhp/>

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- <sup>ii</sup> Smith, Kenneth. *From Health Homes to Equity*. *Journal of Public Health Management Practice*, 2010, 16(5) E-Supp, S3–S4
- <sup>iii</sup> King County. 2013. *Equity and Social Justice Annual Report*. Seattle, WA: King County.
- <sup>iv</sup> Kirwan Institute; Puget Sound Regional Council. 2012. *Equity, Opportunity, and Sustainability In The Central Puget Sound Region: Geography of Opportunity In The Central Puget Sound Region*
- <sup>v</sup> Leech J, Nelson W, Burnett R, Aaron S and Raizenne M. It's about time: A comparison of Canadian and American time-activity patterns. *J Expo Anal Environ Epidemiol*. 2002 Nov; 12(6):427-32
- <sup>vi</sup> World Health Organization. Report on the WHO Technical Meeting on Quantifying Disease from Inadequate Housing, Bonn Germany, November 28-30, 2005, World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, published April 2006. Available at: [http://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/98674/EBD\\_Bonn\\_Report.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/98674/EBD_Bonn_Report.pdf)
- <sup>vii</sup> Washington Department of Health. Healthy Homes Strategic Plan, An Integrated Approach To Protecting and Improving Human and Home environmental Health. August 2013.
- <sup>viii</sup> U.S Census Bureau. 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, King County, WA