

Havenscourt Safe Homes Initiative

La Clínica de la Raza in Partnership with Regional Asthma Management & Prevention (RAMP)

Promoting Healthy Housing In Oakland



THE CHALLENGE

Substandard housing conditions — including mold, pests, and deteriorating lead paint — remain a serious public health issue in Oakland, particularly in rental housing. These conditions contribute to asthma, lead poisoning, chronic stress, and other health impacts. Oakland’s complaint-based code enforcement system is largely reactive, placing the burden on tenants to report unsafe conditions despite fears of retaliation, rent increases, or eviction. As a result, many housing hazards go unreported and worsen over time.

Although the City committed nearly \$15 million from a 2019 legal settlement to establish a proactive rental housing inspection program focused on lead hazards, no new proactive inspection program has been implemented more than five years later.

WHY IT MATTERS

Unhealthy housing conditions disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color in Oakland. Oakland’s own analysis of lead poisoning data shows higher exposure to lead hazards in communities of color compared to majority white neighborhoods.¹ Children living in East and West Oakland experience substantially higher asthma-related emergency room visits and hospitalizations linked to mold, pests, and other unsafe housing conditions.²

These environmental health hazards contribute to toxic stress, trauma, and long-term health inequities. Childhood lead exposure has also been associated with developmental and behavioral health impacts that can contribute to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and negatively affect long-term wellbeing and community outcomes.³



THE SOLUTION

This initiative advocates for Oakland to transition from a reactive, complaint-based code enforcement system to a proactive rental housing inspection program that identifies and addresses health and safety hazards before they become severe. The proposed policy solution calls for the City to invest its 2019 lead settlement funds into an equitable lead abatement program tied to proactive inspections.

Youth and adult community leaders are organizing to ensure the City follows through on its commitment to use the settlement funds for community health and prevention efforts. Community advocacy has already helped advance progress, including the City hiring a consultant to support the development of an equitable lead abatement strategy integrated with a proactive inspection program.

1. Environmental Justice Solutions (2021). *Racial Equity Impact Analysis: Eliminating Lead Paint Hazards in Oakland & Alameda County*.

2. The Oaklandside (2021). “When home makes you sick: Children in Oakland are suffering from mold, pests, and toxic dust.”

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2022). *Health Effects of Lead Exposure*.