

Priority Agenda for 2013-2014

To help guide the collaborative work of the Detroit-Wayne County Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI Detroit-Wayne County), the following priority agenda has been developed for 2013-2014:

1. Establish Healthy Homes as a Critical Housing Strategy

GHHI Detroit-Wayne County will work to establish healthy homes as the most critical housing strategy for the city's renewal, especially in the face of strong support for wide-spread demolitions.

2. Secure Resources and Support for Healthy Homes

GHHI Detroit-Wayne County will work to secure resources and community support for making Detroit a safe and healthy place for families to live in their homes as a vast majority of Detroiters will stay in existing homes and current data shows that a majority of those homes have health and safety hazards.

3. Healthy Homes Barrier Busting

GHHI Detroit-Wayne County will work collaboratively to bust barriers to healthy housing in Detroit. The major barriers that have been identified by GHHI partners are listed below in order of member priority:

i. Poor Home Condition

Faulty roofs, friable asbestos or poor housing structure can prevent a home from getting weatherization or lead abatement services.

ii. Lack of Funding

Many organizations don't have funding to carry out healthy homes programs and many of the programs that do currently have funding do not do home repairs which are in high demand.

iii. Property Taxes

Many programs, including the City of Detroit Home Repair Program, require that taxes are current. The MDCH Lead Safe Homes Program requires that taxes are minimally behind. However, families who are one or two years behind or who need just a little assistance to qualify for home repair grants are not eligible for any tax assistance. Families can receive limited help when they are at risk of foreclosure but by this time, their bill has increased with additional interest and fees. Families can get on a payment plan with Wayne County in order to prevent tax foreclosure but this plan only addresses taxes that are 3 years behind; the payments do not cover taxes that are only one or two years behind, so families must repeat the process the following year.

iv. Assistance for Non-DHS Recipients

Many assistance programs require families to be on DHS assistance but many families do not qualify and still need help.

v. Awareness for Programs with Funding

Some organizations have funding for healthy homes services but it is not widely publicized. For example, Wayne Metro has funding for Water Assistance but few other organizations know about this.

vi. CDBG Funding Prioritization

CDBG will look to CLEARCorps clients first, then seniors, then look at one zip code at a time. This leaves out a lot of people, especially if they apply late.

vii. Access to DHS Assistance

Many people who are in most need of help cannot apply for DHS assistance simply because they do not have transportation to get to the DHS office or a computer to apply online.

viii. Eligibility Restrictions for Services

Also, some programs that provide healthy homes services, including CLEARCorps Detroit, are restricted to families that have a child under 6 or under 18 with asthma leaving out many people in need of help. In addition, some programs are for state of emergency status only.

ix. Buying 'As-Is' Homes

While homebuyer programs exist, these programs may be targeted towards families purchasing homes through mortgage and down payment versus families who are buying investor-owned homes and/ or 'as-is' homes with cash sales. Education is especially important for 'as-is' homes, given the possibility of scams including very high back tax bills and unhealthy conditions in homes, but homebuyer education may not reach these families before they purchase these homes.

x. Utility Shutoffs

Due to limited resources, THAW assistance is usually only available January – March, so families who receive shut-off notices in April or May have very limited options for assistance. This creates a shut-off season that leaves many people without assistance.

xi. Water Shutoffs

While there are a variety of programs to assist with utility shut-offs, families facing water shut-off cannot access these programs because water is not considered a utility. A lack of water can lead significant health issues and other serious outcomes (e.g. an order to vacate, potential investigation by Child Protective Services) but families cannot access many forms of utility assistance.

xii. Prioritization of GHHI Issues for Families Facing Many Hardships

Some families face so many social and economic hardships that it is hard for them to prioritize a GHHI issue and stay motivated during a process that can take a long time.